

Interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements releases latest information on cross-boundary passenger traffic estimation and arrangements for Christmas and New Year festive period

The interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements, led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, released the following information today (December 20) on the latest situation and arrangements for the upcoming Christmas and New Year festive period.

The Immigration Department (ImmD) estimates that around 13.07 million passengers (including Hong Kong residents and visitors) will pass through Hong Kong's sea, land and air control points during the upcoming Christmas and New Year festive period (from December 21, 2024, to January 1, 2025). The ImmD, in consultation with the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection and other Mainland authorities, estimates that around 11.06 million passengers will pass through land boundary control points. The number of outbound and inbound passengers using land boundary control points will be relatively higher on December 25 (Wednesday) and December 29 (Sunday), with around 595 000 passengers and 626 000 passengers respectively.

The ImmD estimates that the passenger traffic at the Lo Wu Control Point, the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point and the Shenzhen Bay Control Point will be heavy, with a daily average forecast of about 235 000, 203 000 and 131 000 passengers respectively.

In view of the New Year's Eve countdown fireworks display, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has discussed with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to extend the service hours of boundary control points on New Year's Eve, including the proposal to extend the passenger clearance service at Shenzhen Bay Control Point from the original closure time at midnight to operating overnight; and to extend the passenger clearance service at the Lo Wu Control Point from the original closure time at midnight to 2am the next day. The Mainland port authorities have duly reported to the national port authorities for approval according to the required procedures. Further details will be announced as soon as possible. The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port and the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port will maintain a 24-hour operation as usual on New Year's Eve.

To cope with the anticipated heavy traffic during the festive period, the ImmD has minimised leave for frontline officers for flexible deployment, and operation of extra clearance counters and kiosks. Additional security

guards will also be deployed to provide crowd management support.

Furthermore, the ImmD, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Customs and Excise Department and the MTR Corporation Limited will set up a joint command centre at the Lo Wu Control Point to make necessary arrangements. The ImmD will also establish close communication with Mainland authorities, including the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection. To ensure a smooth passenger traffic flow, passenger conditions will be closely monitored and appropriate traffic diversion plans will be adopted when necessary.

To avoid congestion and a longer than usual waiting time for immigration clearance, the ImmD advises all land boundary passengers to plan in advance, avoid making their journeys during busy periods and keep track of radio and TV broadcasts on traffic conditions at various control points. The expected busy times at boundary control points are available on the website of the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk. Furthermore, passengers may also check the estimated waiting times at each land boundary control point at any time or place via the Immigration Mobile Application (ImmD Mobile App). They can then plan their trips effectively and save time queuing at control points. The ImmD Mobile App can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple App Store (supports iOS version 12.0 or above), Google Play (supports Android version 8.0 or above), Huawei AppGallery (supports Android version 8.0 or above) and the APK file available on the ImmD website. Passengers can download the ImmD Mobile App by scanning the QR code (see Annex) or via the ImmD website, www.immd.gov.hk. In addition, information on public transport services to and from various control points is available on the Transport Department website at www.td.gov.hk.

For travellers making journeys to the Mainland, the ImmD reminds them to carry their proof of identity and valid travel documents for crossing the boundary. Hong Kong residents should also check the validity of their Home Visit Permits. Non-permanent residents must carry their valid smart identity card as well as their Document of Identity for Visa Purposes or valid travel document.

Holders of the acknowledgement receipt issued due to reported loss or replacement of their Hong Kong identity cards, or children under 11 years old who hold Hong Kong identity cards, should carry a valid travel document or Re-entry Permit.

About 700 e-Channels have been installed at various control points. Hong Kong residents enrolled for the Express e-Channel should re-enrol if they have been issued a new identity card. Furthermore, the Contactless e-Channel service is available at all control points now. All eligible Hong Kong residents, after enrolment, can generate an encrypted QR code through the Contactless e-Channel mobile application to enter the e-Channel, and then verify their identity with the facial verification technology for automated immigration clearance.

In addition, all control points have introduced self-service departures

for visitors to Hong Kong (Smart Departure) which provides greater travel convenience for visitors. The service employs facial recognition technology for identity verification, which allows eligible visitors holding electronic travel documents to perform self-service departure clearance through Smart Departure e-Channels without prior enrolment.

Hong Kong residents who require assistance while travelling outside Hong Kong may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the ImmD at (852) 1868.

The interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements is tasked with holistically co-ordinating and steering the preparatory work of various government departments for welcoming visitors to Hong Kong during the New Year's Eve and New Year holidays, as well as strengthening information dissemination to enable the public and visitors to plan their itineraries according to the latest situation.