

LCQ13: Ameliorating congestion at Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (November 15):

Question:

It is learnt that since the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong, the number of users of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) has increased drastically, and congestion has even occurred during long holidays. Situations relayed by some members of the public include: (i) dozens of tour groups of about 1 000 people going through immigration clearance at the same period of time; (ii) no proper diversion of Hong Kong residents and visitors to Hong Kong at the outbound and inbound private car kiosks, resulting in an increase in the time taken for immigration clearance, in particular after the implementation of the Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge; and (iii) some visitors being caught in traffic congestion for more than three hours before they could go through immigration clearance during the Chung Yeung long holidays just passed. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information of the HZMB Hong Kong Port (i) since the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong this year, and (ii) during the Labour Day Golden Week, the National Day Golden Week and the Chung Yeung long holidays this year respectively: (a) the average daily numbers of outbound passengers and (b) inbound passengers, (c) the daily numbers of outbound private cars and (d) inbound private cars, and (e) the average and the longest waiting time for immigration clearance at the passenger counters and the outbound and inbound private car kiosks respectively;

(2) of the details of the measures currently taken during peak hours or on the days with more visitors to alleviate congestion at the HZMB Hong Kong Port (such as setting up dedicated passenger channels and waiting areas for tour groups, diverting tour group passengers and non-tour group passengers, as well as increasing manpower to shorten the waiting time);

(3) of the operational processes of diverting Hong Kong residents and visitors to Hong Kong at the outbound and inbound private car kiosks of the HZMB Hong Kong Port (especially during peak hours or on the days with more visitors), and whether it has plans to increase manpower to alleviate the pressure on boundary control points;

(4) as it is learnt that many Hong Kong people have views on the situation of immigration clearance at the HZMB Zhuhai port and Macao port, whether the

Government has met with the relevant departments of Macao and Zhuhai in respect of relevant matters and relayed them to such departments; if so, of the details (including the number of meetings held and the matters discussed); and

(5) as some members of the public have relayed that serious congestion occurred at the HZMB Hong Kong Port during the past Chung Yeung long holidays, whether the authorities had made preparations and deployments before such long holidays, and whether they have conducted reviews afterwards, so as to properly cope with similar situations in the future?

Reply:

President,

Since the cross-boundary traffic returned to normal following the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and the introduction of the Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, there has been a surge in the number of cross-boundary passengers and vehicles using the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Port, especially during long holidays, which leads to increased service demand at the control point. The Government has been closely monitoring the passenger flow and vehicular flow at various boundary control points (BCPs) with an aim to make necessary arrangements to cope with any emergencies that may arise.

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Steven Ho is as follows:

(1) Usage of HZMB Hong Kong Port by passengers and private cars is set out at Annex.

The HZMB Hong Kong Port has been operating smoothly since the resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Generally speaking, 98 per cent of Hong Kong residents (including those travelling via passenger clearance building and vehicle clearance kiosks) were able to have their clearance procedures completed within 15 minutes. Ninety-five per cent of visitors (including those travelling via passenger clearance building and vehicle clearance kiosks) could complete the procedures within 30 minutes. For clearance of private cars, except those selected for further examination, customs clearance for all private cars was completed within 60 seconds. In the last Chung Yeung Festival Holiday, there was no serious traffic congestion at the HZMB Hong Kong Port. During peak periods, vehicles could in general complete the clearance process in around 35 minutes at the HZMB Hong Kong Port.

(2) At present, drop-off and pick-up locations at the arrival hall and the departure hall of the HZMB Hong Kong Port passenger clearance building are different for passengers taking cross-boundary coach (including coaches for tour groups) and those taking shuttle buses to achieve traffic diversion. In addition, to address the congestion that may be caused by tour groups during long holidays or peak periods, relevant departments make flexible deployment

for operation of additional immigration counters and vehicle clearance kiosks to divert passenger and vehicular flow. More security guards are also deployed to provide crowd management support. Close liaison is maintained with the relevant Mainland authorities to closely monitor passenger flow and to implement appropriate measures whenever necessary to ensure smooth passenger flow at the control point.

(3) At present, clear electronic signage are displayed above the vehicle clearance kiosks for diversion of vehicles to different lanes for immigration clearance. The Immigration department makes flexible arrangements at the private car kiosks of the HZMB Hong Kong Port to facilitate the provision of immigration clearance services for Hong Kong residents and visitors. To ensure smooth vehicular flow, staff at the HZMB Hong Kong Port closely monitors the vehicular flow and make appropriate diversion adjustments to the clearance kiosks according to the actual circumstances on site so as to cope with the vehicular flow.

(4) and (5) Since the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland in February 2023, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Macao Special Administrative Region have been closely monitoring the passenger and vehicular flow at HZMB and established the "Joint Works Committee of the Three Governments" (JWC) to promote co-ordination and co-operation on issues relating to HZMB operation. The HKSAR Government will continue to relay observations and recommendations through JWC on the operation of HZMB.

In addition, relevant government departments have been maintaining close liaison with relevant Mainland and Macao authorities (such as the Mainland and Macao immigration authorities, Gongbei and Macao Customs) in respect of clearance and enforcement matters at HZMB Hong Kong Port. The Mainland Customs, Macao Customs and Hong Kong Customs have also established a hotline and notification mechanism for sharing the latest situation of passenger flow and vehicular flow of Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai ports such that necessary arrangements could be made to cope with any emergencies that may arise at the control points.

In view of the surge in passenger and vehicular flow during holiday periods, the Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre, composed of relevant departments including Customs and Excise Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, and the Immigration Department, etc, will be activated during the periods to monitor the situation at each BCP and take contingency actions where necessary. The relevant departments will also flexibly deploy manpower according to the passenger flow, open more e-Channels, counters and vehicle clearance kiosks to facilitate passenger and vehicular movement to ensure smooth operation at the BCPs. Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai have been maintaining close liaison for reciprocal notification of real-time passenger and vehicular flow situation for taking contingency actions where necessary.

In addition, prior to major long holidays, the HKSAR Government will announce through press releases and social media apps the expected passenger flow during the holiday period, and encourage the public and passengers to plan their trips in advance and make good use of BCPs with less passenger

traffic, while appealing to Mainland travellers and Hong Kong residents planning to enter or leave Hong Kong to cross the border during non-peak hours as far as possible, with a view to minimising the congestion at land BCPs during the morning and evening peak hours in holiday periods.

Relevant departments of the HKSAR Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the relevant Mainland and Macao authorities to make full preparation and planning before festive periods, deploy staff flexibly and formulate contingency measures with a view to ensuring that BCPs are operating in an orderly manner.