

# LCQ13: Cross-boundary transport arrangements for large-scale events

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

It has been reported that on New Year's Eve last year, the day on which the "Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations" fireworks musical on Victoria Harbour (the Show) was held, about 200 000 Mainland travellers entered Hong Kong throughout the day. However, the two boundary control points (BCPs), which operated overnight, and the cross-boundary transport services were unable to cope with the flow of outbound passengers after the Show, resulting in some travellers sleeping on the floor of MTR stations and many feeling disappointed. On the other hand, the Financial Secretary indicated last month that more mega events and activities would be staged in 2024 to attract tourists. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the various relevant policy bureaux have undertaken any planning in respect of tourist reception options prior to the staging of the Show; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as the Government has indicated after the aforesaid incident that it will discuss with the relevant Mainland authorities the extension of the opening hours of some rail-based BCPs on days when large-scale events are held, whether the Government will introduce the relevant measure before the Lunar New Year next month; if so, of the details;

(3) as the Government has indicated that on the day of the Show, about 20 000 travellers chose to return to the Mainland on the same day, whether the Government will consider enquiring about the itinerary arrangements of travellers upon their entry into Hong Kong, so as to enable the various relevant policy bureaux to obtain the latest big data through the e-government concept, thereby facilitating better planning for the transport arrangements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it will study the enhancements to transport arrangements on the days of large-scale events, such as accepting reservations online or through social media to enable travellers to take cross-boundary coaches in urban areas after the events, or arranging special departures on the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link to the Mainland;

(5) as it has been reported that on New Year's Eve last year, many taxis displayed an "Out of Service" sign, and some taxi drivers did not charge fares according to taximeters, whether the Government will deploy additional manpower (e.g. civil servants of the non-disciplined services) to crack down

on such situations during large-scale events, and whether it will introduce an online hailing taxi service for travellers (e.g. a designated hotline for the Huanggang Port) in view of large-scale events to facilitate travellers' immigration clearance and at the same time improve the business environment of the taxi trade; and

(6) given the chaos in transport connectivity during the arrival of a mega cruise vessel in Hong Kong in August last year and the incident on the night of the Show, whether the Government has conducted another comprehensive assessment to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Chan Hok-fung, having consulted the Security Bureau and the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the reply is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) organised the largest-ever "Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations" firework musical on New Year's Eve, which was one of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's mega events in 2023. The event attracted a total of 480 000 locals and tourists on both sides of the Victoria Harbour to welcome 2024. Visitors had very high satisfaction towards the fireworks according to the HKTb's analysis. Various media from the Mainland and overseas made live broadcast or reported the event, which brought great publicity and promotion to Hong Kong. In preparation for the firework musical, the Tourism Commission and the HKTb held an inter-departmental meeting with relevant government departments and maintained close communication with them to facilitate various departments to grasp detailed information and operational issues of the event for planning ahead matters related to major events under their respective portfolios such as crowd control, land and sea transportation, as well as emergency rescue services, with a view to ensuring the smooth implementation of the event.

Relevant departments of the HKSAR Government have been maintaining close liaison with relevant Mainland and Macao authorities to make comprehensive preparation and planning before festive periods, deploy staff flexibly and formulate contingency measures with a view to ensuring the orderly operation of boundary control points (BCPs).

(2) In view of the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong since early February last year, the Hong Kong and Shenzhen governments have been closely monitoring the demand for clearance services at various land BCPs. On the basis of the 24-hour passenger clearance services at Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Control Point and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, we may discuss with Mainland authorities on extending the operating hours of the passenger clearance service at certain land BCPs as and when necessary to further facilitate the flow of people between the two sides.

Regarding extension of service hours of land BCPs prior to Lunar New Year next month, the HKSAR Government is actively discussing different proposals, including extending service hours of certain land BCPs, with Mainland authorities with a view to facilitating the dispersal of cross-boundary visitors during special days or major events.

(3) 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 during holiday periods.

(4) Currently, if visitors would like to take cross-boundary coaches to travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong, apart from purchasing tickets at cross-boundary coach terminus, they may also pre-order coach tickets on websites of relevant cross-boundary coach operators, or through mobile applications such as WeChat and Alipay. The Transport Department (TD) has all along been maintaining close liaison with the cross-boundary coach trade and urged the trade to further enhance the use of social media of the Mainland to disseminate information on the operation and ticketing in relation to cross-boundary coach service with a view to facilitating Mainland visitors to plan their journey in advance.

The HKSAR Government will also co-ordinate with public transport operators (including the MTR Corporation Limited) on public transport service arrangements, in order to tie in with the opening hours of BCPs.

(5) Under the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374D) (the Regulations), the fare for hiring of taxis should generally be calculated in accordance with the scale of fares specified in Schedule 5 to the Regulations (i.e. the fare as shown on the taximeter). If a taxi picks up passengers directly on the street or at a taxi stand on a non-booked basis, the taxi driver should charge the meter fare. Besides, under Regulation 38 of the Regulations, a registered owner of a general taxi may also hire the taxi to a hirer on a hire-as-a-whole basis.

On the enforcement front, the Police has been closely monitoring and following up complaints about taxi drivers suspected of committing offences. If a member of the public suspects that a taxi driver has committed offences such as refusal to hire and overcharging, he or she can record the name of the driver, vehicle registration mark, time and location, etc., and report the matter to the Police. If there is sufficient evidence, the Police will definitely take enforcement action. Besides, the Police conducted a special operation during the National Day Golden Week last year to combat illegal activities of taxi drivers. The Police will continue to deploy appropriate resources to combat taxi driver-related offences.

To facilitate passenger diversion during major festivals, the TD will

continue to remind the taxi trade to pay special attention to the situation at BCPs and areas with more tourists. At present, there are already taxi operators providing online taxi booking services to facilitate hailing of taxis by passengers. The HKSAR Government has also amended the legislation to introduce a taxi fleet regime, under which taxi fleet licensees will be required to provide online booking channels (including mobile application and website) for passengers to hail fleet taxis. The TD plans to invite applications for taxi fleet licences in the first half of this year so that the fleet taxis may commence operation as soon as possible.

(6) The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism convened a meeting on January 15, 2024, to co-ordinate the preparation for visitor arrivals to Hong Kong during the eight-day Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland from February 10 to 17. In view of the anticipated increase of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, various relevant departments of the HKSAR Government and organisations are working closely together, making early preparations for deployment of resources as well as stepping up co-ordination and communication with their respective Mainland counterparts so as to create good travel experiences for the visitors arriving in Hong Kong during the Golden Week.

In view of the surge in passenger and vehicular flow during festive periods, the Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre, composed of relevant departments including the Customs and Excise Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, and the Immigration Department, will be activated during the period to monitor the situation at each BCP and take contingency actions where necessary. Manpower will be deployed flexibly according to the passenger flow, and more e-Channels and counters will also be opened to facilitate passenger and vehicular movement, so as to ensure that BCPs are operating in an orderly manner.