

LCQ4: Consolidating Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 27):

Question:

It is learnt that currently, the five major airports in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) (i.e. Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (GBIA), Shenzhen Baoan International Airport (SBIA), Zhuhai Jinwan International Airport (Zhuhai Airport) and Macau International Airport) have overlapped among themselves in terms of flight destinations and sources of passengers. In addition, GBIA and SBIA have been actively expanding their international routes in recent years and have gained, one after another, a place among the globe's busiest airports. On consolidating Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that it is proposed in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub, and to pursue differential development and positive interaction of airports in the Greater Bay Area, of the Government's work and accomplishments in this regard;

(2) whether it will consider implementing the "co-location arrangement" at HKIA, so as to enhance passenger handling efficiency and competitiveness of Hong Kong's aviation services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Chief Executive has stated in the 2020 Policy Address that the Central Government allows the Airport Authority Hong Kong to inject equity into the Zhuhai Airport on the basis of market principles, of the progress of the relevant work and implementation timetable; whether the Government has estimated the benefits to be brought to Hong Kong's aviation services upon injecting equity; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as it has been reported that even if HKIA's Third Runway System could be completed in 2024 as scheduled, it would reach its full transport capacity in 10 years' time, and that it will take at least 10 years to build another airport or the fourth runway, whether the Government will expeditiously commence a study on the relevant issues; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

"Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" stated support for the enhancement of Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub. "Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" also clearly supported the consolidation of Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub and suggested that airports in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) should pursue complementary development and healthy interactions, and build a world-class airport cluster.

The Government and the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) are on one hand enhancing co-operation and interaction with other airports in the GBA, and on the other hand pursuing different airport infrastructural projects in order to increase the capacity and functionality of HKIA. At the same time, we are also improving the service standard of HKIA to consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub.

With regard to the enhancement of the interaction with other airports in the GBA, the AAHK has been actively participating in the Forum for Five Pearl River Delta Airports to discuss the direction of development of the airports in the region and means to boost co-operation to promote sustainable development of the aviation industry. HKIA is also striving for better use of regional resources and improving service efficiency through strategic co-operation with airports in the GBA for the common benefits as well as greater international competitiveness of the GBA. Among such important initiatives is the co-operation with Zhuhai Airport. The Central Government staunchly supports the equity injection into Zhuhai Airport by the AAHK, which will help to pool the respective comparative advantages enjoyed by HKIA through its international aviation network and Zhuhai Airport through its expanding Mainland aviation network, achieve greater connectivity between the two airports in both passenger and air cargo services, and lay ground for co-operation on high-end aviation industrial developments. We are now proactively following up on the issue of equity injection and look forward to co-operation between the two airports soon for better synergy.

In terms of airport infrastructure, the AAHK is pursuing various projects in earnest to enhance HKIA's capacity and functions in an effort to develop HKIA into an "Airport City". With the flight check of the third runway of HKIA smoothly completed according to International Civil Aviation Organization standards in early April 2022, the AAHK is now actively preparing to commission the third runway in 2022, while the entire Three-Runway System is expected to be completed in 2024. Upon its expansion, HKIA is expected to be able to handle the targeted 120 million passengers and 10 million tonnes of air cargo annually from 2035 onwards. The Government will closely monitor the development of the aviation industry and air traffic demand and suitably plan for the next phase of the development of HKIA.

The AAHK also strives to improve HKIA's services, especially in enhancing the connectivity between HKIA and the GBA as well as HKIA's clearance efficiency. The AAHK has rolled out various relevant measures,

including providing sea-air intermodal passenger transfer service, which allows passengers going to and from nine ports in the GBA using SkyPier to complete airline check-in, baggage check and Mainland immigration and customs clearance at the Mainland ports concerned, and to transfer at HKIA without the need to go through Hong Kong's immigration procedures. Such service will be extended to the SkyPier Terminal which is under construction, thereby allowing passengers from Macao and Guangdong travelling to Hong Kong through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to enjoy the aforesaid seamless transfer service as well. The AAHK has also set up city terminals in strategic locations in the GBA. Passengers from the GBA can check in at the city terminals before taking transportation for HKIA for convenient baggage drop-off and boarding for departure. The Government and the AAHK will continue to explore other possible measures, including implementing the co-location of Hong Kong and Mainland customs, immigration and quarantine facilities at HKIA, to facilitate more efficient clearance at HKIA and enhance passengers' travelling experience, thereby consolidating and enhancing HKIA's status as an international aviation hub.

We will continue to closely monitor market changes in the aviation industry and review the air traffic demand forecast at appropriate junctures in complement with the overall development of the aviation industry. With HKIA's past experience in pursuing co-operation in the Mainland and its status as the benchmark for airports all over the world, it will surely be able to continue to contribute to the development of the GBA. The Government will strive to co-operate with neighbouring airports to build a wholesome cluster of airports with synergy, as well as to support the development of the national aviation industry.