

LCQ5: Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It has been reported that the numbers of inbound and outbound passenger trips at the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point (HYW BCP) have continued to hit record highs, resulting in snaking queues during both weekends and holidays. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has examined the reasons for the occurrence of snaking queues at HYW BCP; whether it will consider upgrading HYW BCP to increase its clearance capacity and discuss with the Office of Port of Entry and Exit of the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government short and medium-term improvement measures, including increasing the number of entry/exit gates and X-ray machines, as well as implementing the various enhancement measures under the Special Action Plan for Improving the Efficiency of Shenzhen Ports; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it has been reported that Macao introduced iris self-service channels at the Border Gate Port last year, whether the authorities have plans to introduce the relevant technology or upgrade the Automated Passenger Clearance System to tie in with the future implementation of the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode at HYW BCP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it has been reported that the public car park at HYW BCP is often full during weekends, and that the use of the nearby private car park by members of the public has also caused traffic chaos, whether the authorities will review the user-friendliness and intelligence of the booking system of the car park so as to increase the efficiency of its use, and introduce measures or consider widening the roads around HYW BCP to improve traffic conditions?

Reply:

President,

The Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point (HYW BCP) is the first BCP which adopts the design of "direct access to people and vehicles", with a designed handling capacity of about 30 000 passenger trips daily. The HYW BCP has been well-received by the public since the commissioning of passenger clearance service in February 2023. As at September 2024, the HYW BCP recorded a daily average of about 70 000 cross-boundary passenger trips, and during weekends and public holidays, a daily average of over 80 000 cross-

boundary passenger trips. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government will continue to enhance the handling capacity of BCPs and apply innovative technology to provide more efficient clearance services.

Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Transport and Logistics Bureau, a reply to the questions raised by Hon Chan Yuet-ming is as follows:

(1) The relevant departments have been taking various measures, including flexible deployment of manpower, optimisation of workflow, and effective use of information technology, etc., to enhance the handling capacity and efficiency of the HYW BCP.

To further increase the overall handling capacity, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has set up 10 additional mobile counters in the passenger arrival hall of the HYW BCP, and completed the enhancement works in early June this year to replace certain traditional counters with e-Channels, thereby increasing the total number of e-Channels in the passenger arrival hall from 14 to 18. The Customs and Excise Department has also been adopting a risk management approach to select passengers for examination to avoid inconvenience caused to other cross-boundary passengers. During festive periods or long holidays, relevant government departments will minimise leave for frontline officers, operate additional counters and channels, and deploy more security guards to assist in crowd management to ensure smooth passenger flow at the BCP.

In the light of the above measures, citizens can complete immigration clearance in a few minutes during non-peak periods of ordinary days at HYW BCP; whereas for weekends and festive peak periods, citizens can complete immigration clearance within 15 minutes most of the time. Since the commissioning of passenger clearance service in February 2023, there were only four occasions during long holidays on which citizens' average waiting time was recorded to exceed 15 minutes. The average waiting time did not however exceed 30 minutes on such occasions.

In view of the considerable number of tour groups choosing to enter and exit Hong Kong through the HYW BCP, the Tourism Commission has been maintaining close liaison with the tourism industry for making necessary arrangement for clearance of the tour groups. Relevant departments have also maintained close liaison with the Mainland port authorities through the established port hotlines and real-time notification mechanism, to closely monitor the passenger traffic at the BCP and to take diversion measures when necessary to ensure smooth operation of the BCP.

The HKSAR Government has also maintained close liaison with relevant Mainland authorities to discuss and take forward various BCP enhancement measures. It is understood that to take forward items related to clearance in the "Special Action Plan for Improving the Efficiency of Shenzhen Ports", relevant Mainland authorities have implemented various enhancement arrangements, including introducing diversion measures at the port building and setting up waiting area for tour groups near the control point, etc,

while exploring other enhancement measures.

(2) Apart from the common fingerprint and facial recognition, biometric authentication also includes other technologies such as iris and palm print recognition, etc. Every technology has its own advantages and limitations. Taking iris recognition as an example, its accuracy is higher as iris features of each individual are different. However, iris recognition may not be applicable to people with eye diseases (such as cataract) due to damaged iris features.

It is understood that the "iris recognition self-service channels" implemented in Macao at present allow registered Macao residents, under the "separate-location arrangement" mode, i.e. clearance procedures are conducted at the places of departure and arrival in each jurisdiction, to use the iris recognition technology to undergo clearance at Macao side. This mode does not apply to the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode at the moment.

As visitors will only need to have their identities verified once to complete the respective clearance procedures of both sides under the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode, the detailed operation would need to be agreed by the Shenzhen and HKSAR Governments before confirmation. The two Governments are discussing the operational details in depth regarding the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode at the new Huanggang Port, and the current plan is to use facial and fingerprint information for identification of cross-boundary passengers.

(3) There are two fee-paying public car parks in the non-closed areas of the HYW BCP, which have been leased out to car park contractors for operation by the Government Property Agency (GPA), providing a total of 415 private car, 36 motorcycle and 15 light goods vehicle parking spaces. Since its operation in February 2023, the GPA has been reviewing the parking need and the operation of the online pre-booking system, and had rolled out two enhancement measures last year including, accepting on-site booking of parking spaces for private cars and motorcycles during non-peak periods, i.e. except for weekends, public holidays and their preceding working day, since July, and releasing the parking spaces of cars leaving early for public use since October.

The GPA is also currently enhancing the online pre-booking system. At present, the online pre-booking system only allows the public to reserve parking spaces from two hours prior to entry. The GPA is planning to shorten it to half an hour with the implementation expected to take place in end-2024 or early 2025.

In addition, the Transport Department will maintain an effective communication with the operators of the car parks in the vicinity of the HYW BCP and request them to properly manage the car parks to avoid congestion. The Police will also assist in traffic management and diversion when necessary.

Lastly, I appeal to members of the public to check the website and the mini programme of the ImmD and Shenzhen authorities to understand the clearance status and choose the appropriate BCP before travelling to the Mainland; and to avoid making their journeys during peak periods to prevent congestion.