

LCQ9: Adopting payment means commonly used on the Mainland

Following is a question by Prof the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 28):

Question:

It is learnt that the number of Mainland tourists is increasing gradually, but they generally face payment problems in spending and travelling. For instance, during the Labour Day Golden Week just passed, as a large number of Mainland tourists wished to take ferry rides, they needed to wait in long queues to buy Octopus cards for making payment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number of businesses in Hong Kong that accept electronic payment means other than Octopus and, among them, the number of businesses that accept the payment means more commonly used by Mainland residents (e.g. Alipay and WeChat Pay); if not, whether it will compile such statistics, so as to gain an understanding of the actual situation of businesses' acceptance of payment means;

(2) as it is learnt that Mainland residents are accustomed to using payment means such as Alipay and WeChat Pay, but the majority of businesses and ferries in Hong Kong still only accept payment by cash or Octopus, of the measures put in place by the authorities to encourage more large and small businesses to provide the QR code payment means commonly used by Mainland residents; before such payment means become popular, of the authorities' plans to publicise the payment means commonly used in Hong Kong to tourists wishing to visit Hong Kong, so that they can make preparations in advance; and

(3) as it is learnt that Mainland residents can use the mobile application "Super App" to pay the fares of public transport modes in a number of provinces and municipalities, of the current number of types of public transport modes in Hong Kong that accept payment via that application; whether the Government will consider requiring the payment systems of all public transport modes to be connected with that application, so as to facilitate payment of fares by Mainland tourists?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau as well as the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Prof the Hon Wong is as follows:

(1) and (2) Hong Kong has a mature electronic payment (e-payment) ecosystem with various non-cash payment options available for consumers, e.g. mobile payment tools such as e-wallet applications on mobile phones have been increasingly popular. Merchants will offer suitable payment options for consumers taking into account circumstances of business operation, customer habits, operating cost, etc. The Government currently does not hold statistics about the number of merchants in Hong Kong accepting e-payment options other than Octopus. The Government will keep in view market development and continue to promote the wider use of e-payment through appropriate financial technology infrastructure and regulations. For visitors, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has been providing them with a series of practical information through the DiscoverHongKong website, including introducing the commonly used payment options in Hong Kong. The website publicises the functions of Octopus and advises visitors to purchase an Octopus card or download the Mobile Octopus (tourist version). Furthermore, there are travel websites providing Octopus card advance purchase services, allowing visitors to purchase an Octopus card online prior to their arrival in Hong Kong and then pick it up at a designated counter at Hong Kong International Airport.

(3) The Government has been promoting the introduction of different e-payment systems by various public transport operators to enhance the travel experience of the public and visitors on the one hand, and to facilitate the efficient integrated development of Hong Kong and the Mainland on the other hand.

At present, most public transport operators accept different means of e-payment (including QR code payment in super apps like WeChat and Alipay). The MTR and franchised buses, which are most commonly used by the public and visitors and together account for some 75 per cent of daily public transport patronage in Hong Kong, accept QR code payments, in addition to Octopus. With regard to taxis, some taxi drivers currently accept e-payment (including Octopus and Alipay) for settling taxi fares. Besides, a number of online taxi hailing mobile applications accept various means of e-payment (e.g. credit card) for settling fares of pre-arranged journeys. Tramways and Star Ferry are stepping up their efforts to introduce e-payment systems other than Octopus. Tramways is expected to introduce QR code and contactless credit card payments from the third quarter of this year, while Star Ferry is expected to introduce QR code payment in the third quarter of this year the earliest.