

Rumours on Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise clarified

In respect of rumours on the Internet that the current Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise ("Replacement Exercise") was not necessary, a Government spokesman today (August 3) seriously dismissed the rumours and urged the public to have their smart identity cards replaced in accordance with the replacement schedule.

According to the Immigration Department, the Replacement Exercise launched at the end of last year is mainly due to the fact that it has been over 10 years since the issue of the smart identity card of the previous generation in 2003, and the card materials have been getting old. Coupling with the expiry of the 10-year maintenance of the smart identity card system, the system supplier has declined to continue to provide maintenance and repair services. To ensure the effective use of different functions of the smart identity card by the public, it is necessary to introduce the new generation smart identity card and implement the one-off four-year Replacement Exercise for all smart identity card holders. After discussions at the Legislative Council and upon the Government's assurance of addition of multi-level safeguards in the new smart identity card, the Legislative Council approved a commitment in May 2015 to implement the current Replacement Exercise.

Access to chip data must be initiated by the cardholder through taking out his/her smart identity card and placing it onto an authorised optical card reader. The reading process is conducted with the combination of optical card reader and wireless transmission technology. Before communication and data reading, the identity of the chip and the optical card reader must be defined and mutually authenticated. All communication and data transmission would be encrypted throughout the whole process; and could not be conducted if the distance between the chip and the optical card reader is more than two centimetres.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer reiterated that the smart lampposts do not carry any facial recognition function and cannot detect or read information of identity cards. In addition, the Government had said earlier that it would not implement the Mainland's social credit system in Hong Kong.