

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.

LCQ16: Handling of views expressed on Mainland social platforms

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

It has been learnt that in recent years, many Mainland netizens have expressed their complaints against Hong Kong through the social platform Xiaohongshu, with some Mainland bloggers describing this as "bashing Hong Kong has now become a kind of political correctness", and the relevant contents have aroused enormous reverberations from the HKSAR Government. For

example, following the disrespectful remarks and behaviour of an airline's cabin crew towards Mainland passengers, the Chief Executive immediately gave a high-profile response, pointing out that the incident had "hurt the feelings of Hong Kong and Mainland compatriots"; in the light of allegations of impolite treatment of Mainland tourists during their stay in Hong Kong, the authorities immediately encouraged the trade to promote courtesy activities; after the "Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations" fireworks musical on Victoria Harbour on New Year's Eve last year, when a large number of Mainland tourists were stranded on the streets, Mainland netizens criticized Hong Kong for its lack of contingency measures and poor hospitality to visitors, the Government also immediately held an interdepartmental meeting to formulate measures for a prompt response. Some members of the public have relayed to me that while Mainland residents' remarks are often taken very seriously by the HKSAR Government, on the contrary, the persistent views of many members of the public in Hong Kong have not received the same level of attention and response from the official authorities over a long period of time (e.g. calls for the suspension of Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions or payments for MPF contributions to be made by the Government on people's behalf during periods of economic downturn, tax rebates, withdrawal of the "harsh measures", stamp duty reduction, concession of Government rent of owner-occupied properties, expansion of public dental services to provide the grass roots with, among others, services that are expensive in the private market such as endodontic treatment, dental prosthetics and dental implant), and this will easily lead to the perception of favouritism and even "Xiaohongshu administering Hong Kong". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have reviewed the views directed against all major and minor issues in Hong Kong expressed through Xiaohongshu, and of the criteria adopted for determining whether and how to handle such views;

(2) of the government departments or officials currently responsible for monitoring, collecting and handling complaints or views about Hong Kong expressed on Mainland social platforms; and

(3) whether the Government will take into account views expressed on social platforms such as Xiaohongshu when formulating policies that may involve Mainlanders; of the Government's approaches and the criteria for (i) handling such views, and (ii) balancing the interests of both sides when discrepancies arise between such views and the mainstream views in Hong Kong, so as to avoid the aforesaid unnecessary perception among members of the public?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Information Services Department (ISD), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Paul Tse is as follows:

In considering the formulation of various policies and measures, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has all

along adhered to the "people-oriented" philosophy of governance, actively listened to the aspirations and views of the public from different sectors through various channels, and responded to their needs by making appropriate arrangements. ISD has been monitoring media reports and messages posted on major social media platforms to assist bureaux and departments in gauging public opinion in a timely manner. ISD is committed to raising public awareness and support for government policies and measures through dissemination of news and information through multiple channels, such as print and digital media, the Internet, social platforms, press conferences and briefings. Views on Hong Kong, whether expressed on local or Mainland social media, carry equal weight to the Government of the HKSAR.

We have noticed that Mainland residents from time to time shared and occasionally commented on content related to Hong Kong, including pop culture, social customs and tourist attractions on social media platforms, such as WeChat, Douyin, Sina Weibo, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili, etc. Some of these posts may lead to heated discussion and feedback from netizens. The Mainland Offices of the Government of the HKSAR (Mainland Offices) and ISD have been keeping abreast of the reports and views related to Hong Kong on digital media and social platforms in the Mainland, responding to them when necessary and referring them to the relevant bureaux and departments for follow up as appropriate. At the same time, the Mainland Offices have made good use of the Mainland social media to promote Hong Kong's advantages and enhance Mainland residents' understanding of Hong Kong.

The Government of the HKSAR will continue to listen carefully to the views of all parties and continue to enhance various policy measures in a pragmatic manner, with a view to facilitating the overall development of Hong Kong and enhancing people's sense of happiness and contentment.

LCQ1: Mass transit systems in East Kowloon and Kai Tak

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

â€œIn the Hong Kong Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) promulgated last month, the Government recommends the construction of smart and green mass transit systems in East Kowloon and Kai Tak respectively, and they are expected to be commissioned between 2034 and 2038. However, it has been reported that the East Kowloon Line and the Kai Tak rapid transit, which the Government initially proposed to construct, were

originally expected to be commissioned in 2025 and 2023 respectively. Some members of the public are disappointed that having waited for 10 years for the commissioning of the relevant projects, they have to wait for another 10 years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the aforesaid East Kowloon and Kai Tak projects are smart and green mass transit systems and proposed alignments are in place, of the reasons why they still need at least 10 years to be commissioned;

(2) whether it will accord priority to kick-starting the Kai Tak project, and expeditiously study the connection of its alignment to the MTR Yau Tong Station, so as to meet the transport demand of the Kai Tak Sports Park as early as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the ancillary transport facilities to be put in place to meet the relevant demand; and

(3) whether it will study a separate alignment covering Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen in the East Kowloon project, so as to respond to the transport aspirations of residents in the mid-levels of Wong Tai Sin; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Highways Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department and the Transport Department (TD), the reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang is as follows.

(1) In response to the public aspiration for an early commissioning of the smart and green mass transit systems in Kai Tak and East Kowloon, we have reviewed the required procedures and commenced the preparatory works on planning, investigation and design of the two projects proactively since the Chief Executive announced the proposed initiatives in 2023 Policy Address. Specific tasks comprise the consultation of relevant District Councils and tender invitation for engagement of the consultants for carrying out the investigation and preliminary design in the first quarter of this year. We also plan to invite concerned suppliers and operators around the world to submit expressions of interest in the fourth quarter of this year in order to finalise the specific requirements and design of the systems and their associated infrastructure. Meanwhile, we will carry out the relevant statutory procedures, such as Environmental Impact Assessment, gazettal and authorisation of scheme, planning application for the proposed sites for the depots, etc concurrently. Moreover, since the systems will be commissioned in Hong Kong for the first time, we will also need to work out the related financial arrangement, operating requirements and regulatory framework. We will expedite the original work programme and strive to invite tenders for construction of the two projects in 2026 with an aim to award the contracts in 2027 respectively.

As mentioned above, it will be the first time for the proposed smart and green mass transit systems to be commissioned in Hong Kong. Apart from the procedures mentioned above, the project will also involve a number of

technical challenges. The alignments of both systems will be subject to the existing or planned development along the corridors as well as the existing roads and underground utilities. Therefore, we need to sort out the spatial constraints of the proposed alignments, technical requirements and interfaces with the existing development. In particular, the East Kowloon project which is about 7 kilometres long will have a very extensive scope of works and will run along hilly terrains, leading to higher engineering complexities and more design uncertainties. Part of the alignment and stations will have to be constructed on carriageways with congested underground utilities. We also need to avoid affecting the existing heavily trafficked New Clear Water Bay Road and Clear Water Bay Road during construction. In addition, part of the corridor and depot will be constructed on steep slopes with more extensive site formation works required.

Notwithstanding the above, we will strive to carry out more advance studies and design works in parallel and continue to actively explore technical proposals to shorten the construction period. For example, we may explore starting the advance works as early as possible, bringing forward the commencement of part of the system testing as well as adoption of Design for Manufacturing and Assembly, Multi-trade Integrated Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing, etc, to strive for earlier completion of the works.

(2) As mentioned in Part 1 of the reply, we endeavor to implement the smart and green mass transit system in Kai Tak as soon as possible. We have listened to opinions of local community for a wider coverage of the systems in Kai Tak and East Kowloon, including the one suggested by the Hon Yang to extend the project in Kai Tak to MTR Yau Tong Station as well as extending the East Kowloon system to cover areas around Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen. The Government has to further study the technical feasibility of the suggestions and the implications on the implementation programme and overall cost effectiveness of the projects. We will exchange views with the suppliers and operators on the feasibility to expand or adjust the alignments. We anticipate that upon completion of refining the studies of the projects, we will explore the feasibility of further expanding the projects in Kai Tak and East Kowloon more extensively.

As regards the transport arrangement of Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP), KTSP is in proximity to nearby MTR Kai Tak Station and Sung Wong Toi Station with about 10 minutes' walking distance from both stations. Apart from using the convenient railway network to and from KTSP, the public can take a number of bus routes at nearby bus stops, such as Shing Kai Road, to and from KTSP and different districts of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. KTSP will also have facilities like taxi stands and public car parks, etc, to meet the travelling need of the public in different modes. When there are major events to be held at KTSP, depending on the scale of the events and the need of the participants, the TD will arrange special bus services to meet the additional transport need arising from the events.

(3) According to the preliminary technical feasibility study, no matter whether extending the East Kowloon system to Tsz Wan Shan or constructing an independent transit system to connect it to nearby railway stations, the space for constructing the elevated structures on narrow roads in Tsz Wan

Shan area is very limited. Nevertheless, after we have received the expressions of interest from the concerned suppliers and operators, we will exchange views on the feasibility of expanding the system and again review the feasibility and the overall cost effectiveness of expanding the system to Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen areas.

At present, the major roads in Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen areas, such as Po Kong Village Road, Hammer Hill Road, Tsz Wan Shan Road and Chuk Yuen Road, etc have sufficient capacity to meet the road traffic demand in the areas. A number of franchised bus and green minibus services are available in Tsz Wan Shan and Chuk Yuen for bringing the public to and from nearby railway stations (including Wong Tai Sin Station, Diamond Hill Station and Lok Fu Station) and other areas. The current public transport services can generally meet the demand. The TD will continue to closely monitor the traffic situation and demand for public transport services in the areas. As mentioned above, we will further review if there is room for constructing a cost-effective smart and green mass transit system on top of the existing road infrastructure and public transportation services.

â€‹Thank you, President.

Phishing instant messages related to The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited relating to phishing instant messages, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the instant messages concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

[Update on Pok Oi Hospital missing patient incident](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesman for Pok Oi Hospital (POH) made the following update today (January 17) regarding a patient leaving the hospital without notification earlier:

The 71-year-old male patient who left the hospital without notification yesterday (January 16) was located last night. The patient has been returned to the hospital for treatment and he is now in stable condition. POH has informed the patient's family accordingly.