

C for T meets taxi trade and reiterates determination to continuously combat illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities and formulate legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms within 2025 (with photo)

The Commissioner for Transport, Ms Angela Lee, met with some 20 taxi trade representatives and Legislative Council Member concerned this afternoon (May 15), and exchanged views on their concerns about illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities, regulating online car hailing platforms and improving taxi service quality, reiterating the Government's determination to continuously combat illegal hire car services in accordance with the law and formulate legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms within 2025. Representatives of the Transport and Logistics Bureau also attended.

Trade representatives comprising various stakeholders, including trade associations, taxi dealers, taxi fleet operators and vehicle owners, attended the meeting. Ms Lee said, "Combating illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities, regulating online car hailing platforms and improving taxi service are the common goals of both the Government and the trade. We had candid exchanges at the meeting and we understand the taxi trade's concern regarding online car hailing platforms and illegal hire car activities. The Government is determined to continuously combat illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities with a view to protecting the safety and interests of the public."

The Transport Department (TD) sternly pointed out that any online car hailing platform operator providing carriage of passengers for reward services must comply with the laws and regulations. The Hong Kong Police Force have been continuously combating illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward across the territory during the past several months. Appropriate enforcement actions will be taken immediately for cases with sufficient evidence and enforcement actions are ongoing. Meanwhile, the Government is proactively studying legislative amendments, so that vehicles involved in the offence of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward can be impounded even if the driver's identity cannot be confirmed, heightening the deterrent effect against illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities.

In addition, the TD has stepped up publicity on the penalties of illegal carriage of passengers for reward. For the first conviction, the maximum fine

is \$10,000 with six months of imprisonment while the vehicle licence concerned will be suspended and the vehicle will be impounded for six months. Drivers are urged not to defy the law. Further, passengers using illegal hire car services may be at risk, as the vehicle's third party insurance may become invalid in case of a traffic accident.

At the meeting, the taxi trade also made suggestions on regulating online car hailing platforms and their vehicles and drivers. Ms Lee said that the Government is actively conducting a study on the overall demand and supply of personalised point-to-point transport services. She stressed that the service sustainability will be taken into account, meeting passengers' needs for point-to-point services while safeguarding passenger safety and upholding service quality. The Government will holistically consider the report to be submitted by the Working Group for Enhancing Personalised Point-to-Point Transport Services under the Transport Advisory Committee, the views collected including the taxi trade's views and relevant data in formulating legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms and licensing requirements for their vehicles and drivers within 2025, aiming to promote the platforms' operations in a regulated manner.

Ms Lee was pleased to note that the taxi trade representatives shared the need to act in concert to improve taxi service quality, including pressing ahead for the taxi fleets' completion of gearing-up work for the commissioning of their services by end-July 2025, thereby improving passengers' riding experiences and enhancing the trade's competitiveness. The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the taxi trade to achieve the common goal of bringing mutual benefits to the transport sector and commuters at large.

