

CS chairs interdepartmental working group meeting on festival arrangements (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today (May 26) chaired a meeting of the interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements to holistically co-ordinate and steer the preparatory work of various government departments for welcoming visitors to Hong Kong during the Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland. The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing; the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law; the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung; the Under Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, and representatives from other relevant government departments also attended.

Mr Chan said, "On the instruction of the Chief Executive, the Working Group has consolidated the experience gained from receiving Mainland visitors during the Labour Day Golden Week of the Mainland in early May, and has evaluated the situation of visitors to Hong Kong during the Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland for the purpose of advance planning. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will maintain close liaison with relevant organisations and the travel trade to collaboratively enhance various aspects of receiving visitors, with a view to offering a high-quality experience for them."

Estimated visitor flow and preparatory work

According to the Immigration Department (ImmD)'s estimate, around 3.2 million passengers (including Hong Kong residents and visitors) will pass through Hong Kong's sea, land and air control points during this year's Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland (i.e. from May 31 to June 2), among which around 2.73 million passengers will pass through land control points.

The ImmD estimates that the peak period of outbound passengers using land boundary control points (BCPs) is expected to be May 31 (Saturday) with around 570 000 passengers; while the peak period of inbound passengers using land BCPs is expected to be June 1 (Sunday) with around 540 000 passengers. Passengers are advised to plan in advance, avoid making their journeys during busy periods and keep track of radio and TV broadcasts on traffic conditions at various control points. The busy times at BCPs are available on the website of the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk. Furthermore, residents and passengers may also check the estimated waiting times at each land BCP at any time or place via the Immigration Mobile App. They can then plan their trips effectively and save time queuing at control points.

In terms of Mainland inbound visitors, it is estimated that around 380 000 passengers will visit Hong Kong via various sea, land and air control points during the three-day Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland. The daily average visitor arrival is expected to increase by 16 per cent

year-on-year.

According to the estimate of the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) and the trade, it is anticipated that around 340 inbound tour groups will visit Hong Kong during the Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland, representing an increase of about 30 per cent as compared with last year's Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland. Major tourist spots have formulated special arrangements to handle the expected increase of people flows.

The TIA has also reminded travel agents receiving Mainland inbound tour groups to adopt appropriate diversion measures to enable proper management of visitor flows and tour buses, with a view to offering a pleasant travel experience to visitors. In addition, District Offices will closely monitor the flow of visitors within their respective districts and notify relevant departments having regard to the actual circumstances with a view to strengthening management of the relevant spots.

Co-ordinate control points, traffic and public transport facilities

Relevant departments have minimised leave for frontline officers to enable flexible deployment of manpower and operation of additional counters and channels, with a view to diverting passenger and vehicular flows. The Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre set up by the Hong Kong Police Force, the ImmD, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), and other relevant departments will be activated from May 31 (Saturday) to June 2 (Monday) to monitor the real-time situation at various control points. The Joint Command Centre will maintain close liaison with the Mainland port authorities through the established port hotlines and real-time notification mechanism, and take timely contingency actions as necessary to flexibly deploy manpower at BCPs to ensure smooth operation of the control points. The Security Bureau will also activate the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre to monitor and co-ordinate public order at various BCPs, step up monitoring of major tourist hotspots as directed by the Chief Executive, and facilitate interdepartmental follow-up actions where necessary to respond promptly to various kinds of emergencies.

For transport arrangements, the Transport Department (TD) has co-ordinated with relevant operators to enhance transportation services connecting various BCPs, including increasing the frequency of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) shuttle bus (Gold Bus) to within one minute during peak hours, and Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang cross-boundary shuttle bus (Yellow Bus) to about two minutes at its highest frequency, as well as increasing the quota of cross-boundary coaches to strengthen services, and formulating a contingency plan by providing a dedicated passage for public transport vehicles at Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port and Shenzhen Bay Port as necessary to ensure smooth public transport services. In addition, Zhuhai's traffic management department will arrange a dedicated lane at the HZMB for the use of the Gold Bus, cross-boundary coaches and large vehicles when necessary. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will also enhance the train services of the East Rail Line between Admiralty and Lo Wu/Lok Ma Chau at different times from May 31 (Saturday) to June 2 (Monday) to provide convenience for the

travelling public and visitors. During these periods, the train frequencies to and from Lok Ma Chau will increase to approximately every 7.5 to 10 minutes, while services for Lo Wu will be enhanced to approximately every 5 to 6.3 minutes. Relevant mobile network operators and the MTRCL have also enhanced the telecommunication network and Wi-Fi capacity at high-traffic points to provide convenient access to the network for passengers in need.

Regarding local public transport services, the TD has approached various public transport operators proactively to enhance their capacity, and reserve sufficient vehicles and manpower to meet the travel needs of visitors, including the public transport services for various tourist hotspots. The Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre (ETCC) of the TD will continue to operate 24 hours a day to closely monitor the traffic conditions and public transport services in all districts, BCPs, and major stations across Hong Kong, and take prompt measures to address service demands and disseminate the latest traffic updates through various channels.

Protection of visitors

The TIA will conduct inspections in districts where relatively more registered shops for inbound tour groups are located during the Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland, and offer assistance to visitors and tourist guides to protect inbound tour group visitors' rights. Additionally, the Police will continue to step up enforcement actions against any illegal acts of taxi drivers including overcharging and refusing hires. The C&ED will also step up inspection of shops serving visitors to combat unfair trade practices.

Weather forecast

It is expected to be windy with one or two showers on Tuen Ng Festival (May 31). The weather will be hot with sunny intervals and a few showers on June 1 and June 2. The chances of rainstorms or direct impact of tropical cyclones in Hong Kong are relatively low during the period. The above forecast is a preliminary assessment, and the Hong Kong Observatory will update the forecast depending on the latest change in weather.

Information dissemination

To assist visitors in planning their itineraries, the Government will strengthen information dissemination including the latest inbound visitor arrivals, the situation at various BCPs, transport arrangements, latest weather forecast, etc, to enable residents and visitors to plan their itineraries according to the latest situation.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board will launch a dedicated webpage for the Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland, offering a range of practical information including operational arrangements of major local attractions, arrangements for public transport and cross-boundary services as well as various featured activities. The page will also link to the ImmD's webpage on immigration statistics for visitors' reference. The content of the dedicated

page will be continuously updated to assist both locals and visitors to plan their itineraries and participate in the various featured activities.

