

CSTB convenes meeting to strengthen co-ordination of preparation work for receiving mega cruise ships (with photo)

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) convened a meeting yesterday (December 3) to strengthen preparations for receiving mega cruise ships homeporting at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) in the coming months.

The meeting was chaired by the Commissioner for Tourism, Mrs Angelina Cheung, and attended by representatives of the Transport Department (TD), the Hong Kong Police Force, relevant cruise lines, transport services providers, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the cruise terminal operator.

Mrs Cheung said, "The Government attaches great importance to facilitating operations on international cruise lines, and aspires to furnish cruise passengers with better visiting experiences, thereby consolidating Hong Kong's position as a major homeport in Asia and attracting more ship calls."

Departing from Shanghai, Spectrum of the Seas will berth at the KTCT on December 6 (Friday) until the afternoon on the same day with some 4 900 passengers from different places, beginning its seasonal homeport deployment in Hong Kong with a total of eight ship calls in the coming two months. The Government welcomes the ship to choose Hong Kong as its homeport, and looks forward to working with the trade to better prepare to receive cruise passengers.

At the suggestion of the CSTB, the cruise lines will collect information from passengers and persons-in-charge of the tour groups on board regarding post-disembarkation arrangements such as planned destinations and whether a vehicle pick-up has already been arranged. The cruise lines will pass such information to the terminal operator so that the transport arrangements can be adjusted and enhanced as necessary.

Transportation services at the KTCT will be strengthened during the disembarkation period between 7am to 10.30am on December 6, with due regard to the disembarkation arrangements by the cruise line, and to enable passengers to head to different destinations. Improved services include:

(a) apart from four regular franchised bus routes and one minibus route, two additional express bus routes will be in service, connecting the Kai Tak MTR Station and the West Kowloon High Speed Rail Station (via Tsim Sha Tsui) respectively. Franchised bus companies will step up service levels to meet demand when necessary, and will deploy more buses with luggage racks to serve

passengers with luggage. At least 53 flights of buses will be in operation;

(b) coach operators will provide free and paid shuttle services as well as support pre-arranged tours organised by local travel agents. At least 38 coaches will be in operation; and

(c) with regard to taxis, since the taxi supply may fluctuate during peak hours, shift-change hours and inclement weather conditions, in addition to the existing mechanism of frequently notifying the taxi trade before and during the disembarkation period via instant message platforms, the TD has also recently communicated with the taxi trade specifically on cruise ship calls, and will further assist in informing the taxi associations in advance before the arrival of mega cruise ships. If an exceptionally strong demand is anticipated, the terminal operator will, depending on the ground situation, increase the face value of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) coupons distributed to each taxi that picks up passengers at the KTCT to \$100 as appropriate. Real-time messages to the taxi trade will also be refined by including the forecast taxi demand on top of the time of disembarkation and real-time waiting situations.

Furthermore, the CSTB reminded parties attending the meeting to work together and take other necessary measures to ensure that passengers can leave the terminal for their destinations quickly and smoothly. In particular:

(a) making available to passengers, through cruise lines and before the ship's arrival, specific information about various transport options so that passengers can decide on their transportation arrangements in advance;

(b) imposing appropriate crowd management measures, through cruise lines, the terminal operator and relevant parties early and in a timely manner, and deploying sufficient manpower and signage at the KTCT to guide and assist passengers; and

(c) informing the terminal operator immediately of any congestion and major traffic incidents in the vicinity of the KTCT and along major trunk roads so that appropriate contingency measures can be imposed and alternate advice to passengers could be given.

â€‹The Government has long been providing, and will continue to provide, necessary support to the terminal operator with regard to receiving cruise ships. The terminal operator should continue to discharge its responsibilities of co-ordinating various departments, cruise lines, and service providers on making appropriate transportation plans and on ensuring efficient, smooth and effective management of cruise passenger flows. Stakeholders will continue to maintain close communications on the ship calls at the KTCT, plan in advance and co-ordinate different aspects for receiving cruise passengers to Hong Kong. The CSTB will also closely monitor the implementation of the strengthened measures and will further review and adjust the arrangements for ship calls thereafter.

