

LCQ19: Crackdown on black taxis in rural and tourist areas

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

It has been reported that there are black taxis in quite a number of rural and tourist areas (e.g. Sai Kung and the Peak), and the unlawful acts of the drivers concerned (including overcharging, cherry-picking passengers, refusing hire and failing to take the most direct route) have seriously affected tourists' experience and Hong Kong's reputation as a "hospitable city". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of complaints received by the authorities since the implementation of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points system involving unlawful acts of black-taxi drivers in rural and tourist areas and, among them, the number of taxi drivers with points incurred; the respective offences in which those taxi drivers with points incurred are involved and the penalties imposed on them;
- (2) whether the authorities have stepped up law enforcement against black taxis in rural areas over the past three years; if so, of the details (including the number of law enforcement operations, the number of drivers arrested in each of such law enforcement operations, the reasons for their arrests, the number of drivers prosecuted and convicted, as well as the relevant penalties imposed); if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as some tourists have indicated that they are not clear about how to lodge complaints against law-offending taxi drivers, whether the authorities will step up publicity and education, such as by providing tourists with clear information, including taxi fares and channels for lodging complaints, at the entrances and exits of the airport, various boundary control points and major rural tourist spots; and
- (4) as there are views pointing out that the problem of black taxis stems from the inadequacy of ancillary public transport facilities in rural and tourist areas (e.g. in the vicinity of High Island Reservoir in Sai Kung), whether the authorities have considered improving the public transport services in such areas, such as increasing the frequency of green minibus services, thereby combating black taxi operations in the market and tying in with the development of eco-tourism?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Police Force

(HKPF), our reply to the Hon Vincent Cheng's question is as follows:

The Government has earlier reviewed the overall taxi operation and management, and put forward a series of measures to enhance taxi services. Such measures include introducing a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points (TDOP) system and a two-tier penalty system for certain taxi-driver-related offences, in order to combat taxi drivers' illegal acts and strengthen the deterrent effect against repeat offenders. The relevant legislative provisions were passed by the Legislative Council and are in effect.

In addition, with a view to enhancing taxi services, the Government proposes to mandate the installation of in-vehicle cameras, dash cameras and global navigation satellite systems in all taxi compartments. Installation of such devices can help caution the few black sheep in the taxi industry against violating the law, and facilitate the follow-up actions and investigations on suspected malpractices (e.g. overcharging, driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, etc) by the Police or the Transport Department (TD), thus better protecting the rights of the passengers. We have consulted the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council and the Transport Advisory Committee in end 2024, and Members have expressed support for the proposal. We are carrying out the law drafting work, and will endeavour to introduce the proposed legislative amendments into the Legislative Council in the second quarter of 2025.

(1) The TDOP system has taken effect on September 22, 2024. It covers 11 taxi-driver related offences (e.g. overcharging, refusing to accept a hire and driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, etc). If a taxi driver becomes liable to a fixed penalty for or is convicted of such taxi-driver-related offence, he or she will incur three, five or 10 points, depending on the offence committed. If a taxi driver incurs 15 or more points under the TDOP system within a two-year period, he or she will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time.

In accordance with the records of the TD, until March 9, 2025, 66 taxi drivers incurred points under the TDOP system. The relevant offences committed include overcharging, refusing to accept a hire or driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route. Among all, five taxi drivers incurred three points, 12 taxi drivers incurred five points and 49 taxi drivers incurred 10 points. So far, no taxi driver is liable to disqualification from driving a taxi due to incurrence of 15 or more points.

The TD and the HKPF do not maintain the breakdown of the numbers of complaints about taxi services and the numbers of taxi drivers who incurred points under the TDOP system by countryside and tourism zone.

(2) The numbers of enforcement actions taken as well as the numbers of prosecution and conviction against the offences related to taxi services during the period from 2022 to the third quarter of 2024 are set out at the Annex. The Security Bureau and the HKPF do not maintain the breakdown of the aforementioned figures by countryside and tourism zone.

(3) To help tourists understand the taxi fare arrangements in Hong Kong, the

TD has published leaflets showing the taxi fare rates and the reference fares for journeying to and from major tourist areas and attractions in Hong Kong for distribution to tourists at the airport, major border crossings and tourist spots (e.g. Shenzhen Bay Port, Lok Ma Chau Control Point, Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point and Hong Kong Disneyland). The TD has also uploaded the leaflet onto its website for public viewing. The telephone numbers of the 1823 Call Centre, the Transport Complaints Unit (TCU), the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the HKPF are also provided on the leaflet for tourists to seek assistance and lodge complaints when needed. The Government has set up signs of the telephone number of the TCU at major public transport interchange as well. And the TD has also set up taxi information boards at major taxi stands to display information on taxi fares.

If a member of the public suspects that a taxi driver has committed offences such as refusing to accept a hire or overcharging, he or she can record the name of the driver, vehicle registration mark of the taxi, time and location, etc, and report the matter to the HKPF.

(4) The Government attaches importance to the travelling needs of tourists to and from countryside and major tourist areas. Having regard to factors such as tourist traffic and overall operation of attractions, the relevant arrangement of public transport services is timely reviewed. In respect of the area of the High Island Reservoir in Sai Kung, apart from travelling by urban or New Territories taxi, citizens and tourists may make use of New Territories green minibus route no. 9A (Pak Tam Chung – the East Dam, High Island Reservoir) on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. Green minibus route no. 9A has been in service since July 2018. The TD has been liaising with the minibus operator continuously with regard to passenger needs, in order to coordinate with the operator on service enhancement in the form of extension of service period and service hours, as well as increasing the frequency of the services.

The timetable of green minibus route no. 9A which is temporarily implemented from December 7, 2024 to March 30, 2025 is as follows:

From Pak Tam Chung	From the East Dam, High Island Reservoir	Frequency (minutes)
On Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays		
9.30am to 6.10pm	10am to 6.30pm	20

The TD will maintain close liaison with relevant departments, and adjust the public transport services arrangement with operators to meet the needs of the citizens and tourists when required.