

LCQ6: Immigration and customs clearance measures that facilitate inbound tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

There are views pointing out that enhancement of the immigration arrangements for visitors is crucial to attracting more high value-added and high-end visitors to Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are quite a number of views that it will further promote inbound travel of high-end visitors if the co-location or other innovative immigration and customs clearance arrangements are adopted for private jet and cross-boundary helicopter passengers, whether the authorities have initiated discussions with the relevant Mainland departments in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as there are views pointing out that the large-scale arts, cultural and sports events to be held at the Kai Tak Sports Park will attract internationally renowned superstars and high-end visitors to come to Hong Kong and drive up the demand for helicopter services, whether the authorities have considered opening up the heliport of the Government Flying Service Kai Tak Division for operating the relevant cross-boundary flights as well as flights within Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that there are often long queues of people at the immigration counters of the Hong Kong International Airport during peak hours, which brings negative impact on the experience of visitors, of the authorities' specific plans in place to expedite the adoption of automated systems using innovative technologies to enhance the efficiency of passenger clearance, and whether the authorities will consider providing fast tracks for business travellers, with a view to offering more expeditious immigration services?

Reply:

President,

In recent years, the market landscape for cross-boundary helicopter services has been evolving. With the rapid development of road, rail and maritime networks connecting cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, continuous increase in cross-boundary passenger flow, as well as

the emergence of new technologies (e.g. Advanced Air Mobility), the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is keeping a close watch on the development trend and market demand for local and cross-boundary helicopter services, and will review the development of related facilities continuously, taking into account the views of the industry and the utilisation of existing heliports.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, the reply to the Hon Yiu's question is as follows:

(1) The Memorandum of Understanding under the Air Services Arrangement between the Mainland and the HKSAR was expanded in 2019 to enhance cross-boundary helicopter services between Hong Kong and eligible take-off/landing points within the whole Guangdong Province, thereby greatly enhancing the choice of potential take-off/landing points and the flexibility of services. At present, helicopter take-off/landing points in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province that fulfill the relevant customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) arrangements include Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and the cross-boundary heliport at the rooftop of the Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal in Sheung Wan.

The HKSAR Government will continue to work closely with the Mainland authorities to facilitate the development of cross-boundary commercial helicopter services, including studying the feasibility of setting up more take-off/landing points that fulfill relevant arrangements. To support the said development, the two governments may also explore the adoption of convenient and efficient clearance modes, with a view to enhancing passenger clearance efficiency.

The Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre at HKIA is equipped with security and CIQ facilities. To enhance the transit convenience for business jet and cross-boundary helicopter passengers, HKIA launched the Business Jet & Commercial Flight Wing-to-Wing Transfer Service in March last year, which allows relevant passengers arriving at HKIA to directly proceed to transfer to commercial flights, and vice versa. As the service can save about one-third of the transit time for travellers, it will help promote their use of business jet and cross-boundary helicopter services and transit through Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government and the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) will continue to closely monitor the market demand and the operation of relevant facilities.

Since 2019, several Mainland helicopter operators in the market conducted trial flights between Hong Kong and Shenzhen/Guangzhou. For example, in September last year, the first cross-boundary helicopter flight between Guangzhou and Hong Kong took place. The HKSAR Government will continue to facilitate trial flight activities, with a view to implementing cross-boundary helicopter services between Hong Kong and Guangdong as soon as possible.

(2) Regarding the "heliport" site at the end of the former Kai Tak runway, when seeking funding approval from the Legislative Council for the works

project of the Kai Tak Division of the Government Flying Service in 2018, the HKSAR Government has indicated that it will reserve the flexibility to co-locate cross-boundary helicopter service facilities at the site in future, if necessary. The Division has been designed to ensure that necessary equipment can be provided to support the future co-location of the site with the cross-boundary heliport.

As mentioned above, the HKSAR Government is closely monitoring the development trend and market demand for helicopter services, and will review the development of related facilities in a timely manner.

(3) The Immigration Department (ImmD) has been striving for innovation in enhancing the clearance efficiency of e-Channels and expanding the service target group in order to provide immigration services of the highest quality to members of the public and visitors.

Firstly, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Business Travel Card holders and eligible frequent visitors can choose to enroll for the e-Channel service and perform self-service immigration clearance. The ImmD has also launched the Smart Departure service, which uses facial recognition technology to verify the identity of passengers, allowing eligible visitors to use the self-service departure service at HKIA and various ports.

For visitors from the Mainland and Macao, the ImmD lowered the eligible age of holders of the Mainland's electronic Exit-Entry Permits for travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao to use the e-Channel service from 16 years old or above to 11 years old or above in April 2023. The ImmD also launched the Mutual Use of QR Code between HKSAR and Macao SAR Clearance Service jointly with the Macao authorities in July last year, allowing eligible residents of both places to use QR Codes to pass through the automated clearance channels.

The ImmD will also flexibly deploy manpower, operate additional counters and channels during peak hours to ensure smooth passenger flow at HKIA. Looking ahead, the ImmD will continue to use innovative technologies to enhance the level of clearance facilitation.

At the same time, the AAHK is committed to enhancing passenger experience and operational efficiency, including –

(i) introducing the facial recognition technology-based application Flight Token in October 2022 to speed up the whole departure process. Coupled with the concurrent launch of Flight Token e-Channels by the ImmD, Flight Token allows registered passengers of designated airlines to show their faces for identity verification without the need to repeatedly present their travel documents and boarding passes throughout the departure process;

(ii) introducing a new smart security screening system in July 2024, which obviates the need for passengers to take out liquids, aerosols or gels, and electronic devices such as laptops from their carry-on luggage during security screening, thereby further enhancing the overall efficiency of security screening; and

(iii) HKIA provides Courtesy Channel in the Arrival Halls and Departure Halls to facilitate security screening and immigration clearance for visitors invited by the AAHK or the airlines.

We will continue to closely monitor the market demand and the operation of relevant facilities, with a view to continuously maximising the convenience for visitors. Thank you, President.

LCQ11: Management of bicycle parking spaces in public housing estates

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

It is learnt that at present, quite a number of public housing estates (PHEs) in Hong Kong are provided with bicycle parking spaces for use by residents. However, some members of the public have from time to time relayed that the bicycles parked at such parking spaces have been damaged or even stolen. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of PHEs provided with bicycle parking spaces and the number of bicycle parking spaces in each PHE; whether the Government has plans to review if such bicycle parking spaces are sufficient for use by residents based on the usage situation;

(2) of the total number of cases or complaints received by the Housing Department (HD) or the Police in the past five years about theft or criminal damage of bicycles parked at bicycle parking spaces in PHEs, and the number of PHEs involved;

(3) whether the HD has formulated specific guidelines and measures on the management of bicycle parking spaces, such as the frequency of inspections by security personnel and/or the number of surveillance devices, etc; if so, of the details; if not, whether it has plans to formulate the relevant guidelines and measures, so as to reduce the number of cases of bicycle theft or criminal damage; and

(4) given that the HD has earlier on launched "Well-being design" guide, which will serve as a reference for the future design of new PHEs and the improvement works of existing estates, and it is learnt that the newly completed Yip Wong Estate in Tuen Mun has adopted the "Health & Vitality" concept covered in the guide by placing the bicycle parking spaces near the

Tuen Mun River cycle track so that residents can conveniently take their bicycles for cycling, whether the HD has plans to gradually review the management of bicycle parking spaces in various PHEs and apply the guide to older estates to enhance the quality of life of residents?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang is as follows:

(1) to (3) The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) currently provides about 22 000 bicycle parking spaces in 72 public housing estates to facilitate residents' temporary parking of their bicycles if necessary. The number of bicycle parking spaces in each public housing estate is at Annex. If the bicycles are not frequently used, residents should store their bicycles at home.

The Housing Department has established guidelines and measures for frontline estate management staff on the use and management of bicycle parking spaces in public housing estates. It also issues notices to remind residents of the rules for using the bicycle parking spaces. If any irregularities are observed, frontline management staff may take possession of the bicycles or properties placed or abandoned in the bicycle parking spaces. To assist daily estate management, estate management offices may install closed circuit television surveillance system at suitable locations taking into account the environment and situation in individual estate. If residents found their bicycles stolen or damaged, they should report the case to the Police or frontline estate management staff for follow up. The HA does not keep a central record of the number of theft and criminal damage cases or complaints related to bicycle parking spaces in public housing estates.

(4) In September 2024, the HA has published the "Well-being design" guide, which serves as a reference to the design of new public housing estates and the refurbishment works of existing estates in future. The "Urban Integration" well-being concept in the guide includes design suggestions fostering bicycle-friendly neighbourhoods. For example, in the newly completed Yip Wong Estate in Tuen Mun, the ingress and egress of the bicycle parking spaces are placed at a location that conveniently connects to the Government cycle track outside the Estate. Additionally, the bicycle parking area features distinctive mural decorations, making it easy for users to identify the location of their parking spaces. Apart from application of the "Well-being design" guide in new housing projects, the HA would also take into account the situation of individual public housing estate and the infrastructure in the neighbourhood, and introduce the same concepts to existing public housing estates to enhance the sense of well-being of the residents.

LCQ20: Development of artificial intelligence

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

There are views that the development of artificial intelligence (AI) is ever-evolving and has become an important driving force for developing new quality productive forces and promoting technological revolution and industrial transformation. It has been reported that some AI enterprises on the Mainland have recently developed large language model with higher efficiency and lower cost, demonstrating the enormous potential of AI innovation. Moreover, the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint published by the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau in 2022 proposes to focus on the development of AI and data science industries. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will expeditiously formulate a comprehensive AI development blueprint and strategy, and provide comprehensive supporting policy measures in respect of the cooperation among the Government and the industry, academia, research and investment sectors, including the formulation of relevant legal and regulatory frameworks, land supply, dedicated funding, tax concessions, training and admission of talents, technological research and development (R&D), market development and regional cooperation, so as to capitalise on Hong Kong's edge to promote AI's R&D and application with enhanced speed and efficiency; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will allocate additional resources to expedite the admission and training of AI talents and support the application of AI in the industries and public services, as well as encourage people engaging in different industries to learn to make use of AI to comprehensively upgrade their skills through subsidy schemes such as the Continuing Education Fund, with a view to promoting the empowerment of industries and business with AI; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will further strengthen the coordination with the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in respect of promoting AI development, particularly when the Mainland has successively introduced policy initiatives such as the Implementation Opinions of the People's Government of Guangdong Province on expediting the creation of a hub for innovation in general AI in the province and Measures of the Shenzhen Municipality for building an AI pioneer city, whether Hong Kong will explore with the Mainland ways to strengthen the relevant cooperation and positive

interaction; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok, having consolidated the information provided by the Education Bureau and the Labour and Welfare Bureau, my reply is as follows:

(1) Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the core of developing new quality productive forces. It is a key industry that Hong Kong is committed to developing, and it lends support to the upgrading and transformation of traditional industries. The Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) published by the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB) at the end of 2022 has proposed to focus on the development of AI industry, setting out clear strategic directions and detailed action plan for promoting the development of AI in Hong Kong. On this basis, the Government has been implementing a series of initiatives to support the development of AI in recent years, thereby realising the AI development strategy. Key initiatives include:

- (i) Continuously nurture local talents and gather top-notch researchers from all around the world, as well as foster global research collaboration, through the AIR@InnoHK research cluster and its research and development laboratories focusing on AI and robotic technologies, including the Hong Kong Generative Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Center (HKGAI) set up in 2023 with the support of the AIR@InnoHK platform;
- (ii) Cyberport set up the Artificial Intelligence Supercomputing Centre (AISC) to enhance the local supply of high-performance computing power;
- (iii) Put in place a \$3 billion AI Subsidy Scheme to subsidise local universities, research institutes and enterprises, etc. in leveraging the computing power of AISC to achieve scientific breakthrough;
- (iv) Continue to promote data centre development, including commencement of the rezoning procedures to convert the Sandy Ridge innovation & technology (I&T) site in the North District for data centre and related development, so as to support the development of digital industry including AI; and
- (v) Prepare to set up a \$10 billion I&T Industry-Oriented Fund, and include AI and robotics as one of its thematic areas of emerging and future industries of strategic importance, with a view to channelling more market capital to promote the development of AI and robotics industries.

In addition, to further promote the research and development (R&D) and applications of AI in Hong Kong, the 2025-26 Budget announced that \$1 billion has been earmarked for the establishment of the Hong Kong Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Institute to spearhead and support Hong Kong's innovative R&D and industrial application of AI, as well as to facilitate upstream R&D, midstream and downstream transformation of R&D outcomes, and application scenarios.

(2) The Government has introduced a series of measures to step up efforts in nurturing local talents and attracting those from the Mainland and overseas,

as well as to promote AI applications including that for public services.

In terms of training local talents, apart from encouraging the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities to offer programmes which cater for Hong Kong's development needs and expand the talent pool of important areas such as I&T, the Government also subsidises students to pursue designated self-financing undergraduate and sub-degree programmes through the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors, with a view to nurturing talent in support of specific industries with keen demand for human resources, including the Computer Science discipline which is related to AI. The UGC also launched the Fund for Innovative Technology-in-Education in 2023, with a funding allocation of \$100 million, to provide an impetus for the eight UGC-funded universities to harness innovative and breakthrough technologies in transforming pedagogies and enriching student learning experiences, as well as fostering academia-industry collaboration, thereby nurturing their students to become a digitally competent and technologically responsible generation in the digital economy.

In addition, in response to the manpower demand of the industries, the Vocational Training Council with the Government's support established the Hong Kong Institute of Information Technology (HKIIT) in November 2023, which specialises in the provision of information and technology and other technology-related programmes covering a wide range of disciplines including AI. The HKIIT admitted its first cohort of students in the 2024/25 academic year.

The New Industrialisation and Technology Training Programme under the Innovation and Technology Fund also subsidises local enterprises for their staff to receive training in advanced technologies, which includes AI-related training.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above are eligible to enrol in more than 20 AI-related courses under the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) and claim for CEF subsidy upon successful completion of the courses.

As for attracting AI talents from the Mainland and overseas, the Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS) provides a fast track arrangement for eligible companies to admit Mainland and overseas technology talents to undertake R&D work in Hong Kong. As at end-January 2025, 152 non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS were related to AI. Besides, the Government has included in the Talent List a number of professions in the I&T segment, including Experienced AI Specialists, etc. Outside talents who meet the eligibility criteria for relevant professions can enjoy immigration facilitation when applying under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals.

In respect of AI applications including those enhancement to digital government services, the HKGAI announced its self-developed HKGAI V1 large language model (LLM) in February this year. It aims to launch to the market a chatbot based on its LLM this year for use by the general public. Since mid-2024, the Government has commenced the pilot use of HKGAI's locally

developed generative AI document processing copilot application (HKPilot) to assist government personnel in handling document processing tasks such as drafting, translation and summarisation of documents. The Digital Policy Office (DPO) has invited all bureaus and departments (B/Ds) to arrange government personnel of different grades to participate in the pilot. On top of these, B/Ds will roll out over a hundred of digital government and smart city initiatives progressively from 2024 to 2025, of which nearly half involve the application of big data analytics and AI technology. The above-mentioned and other initiatives related to the application of AI technology are mainly supported by the Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 Computerisation Subhead A007GX (Block Allocation) managed by the DPO, and other government I&T-related resources.

(3) Given the distinctive advantages under "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong is poised to converge both Mainland and international data, creating a favourable environment for strengthening our AI-related collaboration with the Mainland (particularly cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA)). Through the Hong Kong/Guangdong Expert Group on Co-operation in Informatisation, the Government has been co-ordinating and promoting the development and application of information and communications technology (including AI) between Guangdong and Hong Kong, and implementing co-operation measures to complement the development of the GBA into an international I&T centre. In addition, the ITIB signed the "Co-operation Agreement on Technology and Innovation Exchange between Guangdong and Hong Kong" with the Department of Science and Technology of the Guangdong Province in March 2023 to further deepen technology and innovation exchanges as well as bolster collaborative innovation of industries, academia and research between the two places. The Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme jointly implemented by the Guangdong and Hong Kong governments has also been encouraging co-operation between universities, research institutions and technology enterprises from both places in various technology areas (including AI), and promoting work on high technology and the transformation of scientific and technological achievements, with a view to enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in both places.

The Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Co-operation Zone is one of the major co-operation platforms in the GBA. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government promulgated the Development Outline for the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone (the Development Outline) in November 2024, setting out the vision and mission, planning, development directions, strategies and targets of the Hong Kong Park. As set out in the Development Outline, the Hong Kong Park will focus on the development of core frontier technological fields including AI, etc.; strengthen the supporting infrastructure required for the development of AI technologies; and establish a cross-boundary data flow management mechanism, so as to attract Mainland and overseas enterprises engaging in AI to Loop to set up and expand their businesses therein.

WSD-registered consumer convicted of failing to give receipts for charges for water

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced that a WSD-registered consumer of a subdivided flat in Tai Kok Tsui, Kowloon, was convicted today (March 19) of failing to give receipts for charges for water to a subdivided unit (SDU) tenant and overcharging the tenant for water, in contravention of regulations 47C and 47 of the Waterworks Regulations (WWR). The consumer pleaded guilty to a total of eight counts of offences at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts.

This case is the first conviction pursuant to the new regulation of the 47C of the WWR (duties to give receipts for charges for water), whereas the effective date of the regulation is July 19, 2024. Also, this is the 28th similar conviction of overcharging SDU tenants for water since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$22,000.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) has strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement, receipt or payment record for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of up to \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for the installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for the installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.

WSD-registered consumer convicted of failing to provide relevant information or documents for suspected case of overcharging for water

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced that a WSD-registered consumer of a subdivided flat in Hung Hom, Kowloon, was convicted today (March 19) of failing to comply with the Water Authority's request to provide relevant information or documents for a suspected case of overcharging for water, in contravention of regulation 47A of the Waterworks Regulations. The consumer pleaded guilty to the offence at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) has strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement, receipt or payment record for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence, and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of up to \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

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