

200,000 in rush through checkpoint

By Wilson Wan

AT least 200,000 people have left Hong Kong for China through the Lo Wu checkpoint in the Lunar New Year rush.

The figure represents almost half the holiday-makers who have left the territory.

The Immigration Department said on Saturday that 489,449 people had gone abroad since Thursday through various checkpoints.

Among them, 211,927 went to China through the Lo Wu crossing but that was only a small fraction of the number of people expected to pass the checkpoint for the holidays. A record 2.5 million are expected to cross this year.

Government statistics showed the airport as the second major exit point for Lunar New Year holiday-makers.

A total of 139,557 people have left the territory through Kai Tak since Friday while 278,069 have arrived.

Police have received no reports of injuries or chaos at Lo Wu.

"Police will deploy sufficient officers for crowd management throughout the period but we need passengers to co-operate with us and listen to our advice," a police spokesman said.

Traffic through Lo Wu is expected to peak today, the last day of the Year of the Dog.

Parents have been urged to keep a special eye on children while the public should make allowances for elderly travellers.

"Passengers should queue patiently and not to try to jump the queue while waiting for clearance by the Immigration Department and trains," the police spokesman said.

He warned Hong Kong residents against trespassing on the special border zone of Lo Wu.