Incheon expands SmartPass biometric departures

The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT) is expanding the number of SmartPass-dedicated departure areas at Incheon Airport from five to eight departure hall entrances. The expansion will occur in phases, from May 28 until the end of the year.

SmartPass enables travelers to pass through departure halls and boarding gates using only facial recognition, if they first register their passport, facial information and boarding pass on a mobile app.

Passengers can receive identity verification services from all airlines operating at Incheon Airport at the departure hall entrance. Additionally, for five airlines – Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, T'way Air and Air Premia – boarding passes are automatically linked to the SmartPass app, eliminating the need for passengers to manually enter their boarding passes.

MOLIT said that although SmartPass has high user satisfaction for the departure steps (identity verification, security screening and immigration) during the identity verification stage, Incheon Airport has faced criticism that even SmartPass users find it difficult to experience the benefits of reduced waiting times due to SmartPass travelers being mixed with general passengers at the checkpoint.

Consequently, Incheon International Airport Corporation plans to reorganize 31% of all departure halls (two in Terminal 1, three in Terminal 2) starting May 28, and up to 50% of all departure halls into SmartPass-exclusive departure halls by October.

Passengers arriving at Incheon Airport can locate the SmartPass-dedicated departure gates via large electronic

display boards and yellow floor markings in the terminal, and receive guidance on how to register and use the SmartPass from dedicated staff.