

LCQ6: Ancillary facilities for Kai Tak Cruise Terminal

Following is a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The first berth of the Cruise Terminal at Kai Tak Development Area (the Terminal) was commissioned on the 12th of this month. According to media reports, the ancillary transport facilities of the Terminal were inadequate, causing much inconvenience to cruise visitors when they went sightseeing and shopping. For instance, the waiting time of visitors for taxis was too long. Also, vehicles travelling from the Terminal to the Kwun Tong District, and to Hong Kong Island East via the Eastern Harbour Crossing have to route through the traffic bottlenecks in areas from Kowloon Bay to Kowloon City. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the progress of the relevant study on the plan to construct an Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East connecting the Kai Tak Development Area and the Kwun Tong District; whether the authorities will, in view of the traffic problems which surfaced on the commissioning day of the Terminal, expeditiously implement the construction of EFLS; if they will, of the anticipated implementation time; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) whether the authorities will consider afresh providing water taxi or minor ferry services in the vicinity of the Terminal before the commissioning of the aforesaid EFLS, to facilitate cruise visitors to travel directly between the Terminal and various shopping centres and tourist spots in Kwun Tong District, Lei Yue Mun and on the Hong Kong Island; and

(c) whether it had measured the air quality in the vicinity of the Terminal when for the first time a cruise vessel was berthing there, which may serve as justifications for expediting the installation of onshore power supply facilities at the Terminal, as well as for enacting legislation to require cruise vessels at berth to switch to low-sulphur diesel, so as to ensure the air quality in Kowloon East (in particular the Kwun Tong District) will not deteriorate as a result of the berthing of cruise vessels; if it had measured, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The inaugural berthing of "Mariner of the Seas" at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (the Terminal) took place on June 12, 2013. The arrangements during this ship call were generally smooth. Both the facilities and the exterior design of the Terminal won high acclaim from the cruise company and passengers. As the Terminal comes into operation, it will greatly enhance our capacity in receiving cruise liners and reinforce our position as one of the cruise hubs in Asia. The terminal operator and the relevant parties will draw on their experience with the berthing of "Mariner of the Seas" to make improvements and provide better service in future.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) To facilitate the transformation of Kowloon East into an attractive and alternative Central Business District (CBD2), the Civil Engineering and Development Department has engaged a consultant to conduct a preliminary feasibility study on an Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East. A two-stage public consultation on the proposed EFLS conducted by the Development Bureau is underway.

Stage 1 public consultation was held by the Development Bureau between February and October 2012 to share the findings of the preliminary feasibility study on the EFLS with the public and listen to their views. While there was a general public consensus that enhanced inter-district and intra-district connectivity of Kowloon East was the key to the success of transforming Kowloon East into a CBD2, the public and stakeholders raised concerns on the financial efficacy and proposed alignment of the EFLS.

Having studied and reviewed the major comments and suggestions collected during Stage 1 public consultation, the Development Bureau is prepared to commence Stage 2 public consultation in respect of the amended proposal in the latter half of 2013.

While a decision to take forward the EFLS is to be made, its implementation is largely dependent on the development pace of the major infrastructure/developments in the Kai Tak Development Area, for example, the Shatin-to-Central Link and the landscaped deck on top of the access road running along the centerline of the former runway. Construction of the EFLS could only commence after major infrastructure

projects along the route of the EFLS are completed between 2018 and 2021 and handover the land for the EFLS. We estimate that the tentative commissioning date of the EFLS would not be earlier than 2023 and there is little possibility to advance the commissioning date of the EFLS.

(b) We attach great importance to the transport arrangements for the Terminal. Prior to the inaugural berthing of "Mariner of the Seas", the terminal operator has engaged the cruise company and local shore excursion operator in discussion about the transport arrangements for the cruise passengers. The local shore excursion operator arranged excursion programmes and shuttle buses operating between the Terminal and Tsim Sha Tsui East; while the terminal operator organised shuttle bus services running between the Terminal and nearby shopping malls, and liaised with the taxi trade to arrange taxis to pick up cruise passengers at the Terminal. On the night of June 12, there were some hiccups in communication about taxis entering into the Terminal initially, but they were quickly resolved.

Regarding the suggestion of introducing water taxi services, the Government notes that the nature, operational mode, berthing facilities and regulatory framework of the existing water taxi services around the world are all different. The Government needs to consider a variety of issues including technology, operation, cost effectiveness, safety and legislation, etc. to assess whether water taxis are suitable to be introduced in Hong Kong for the purpose of linking the Terminal with other districts. We also need to examine the complicated issues in the light of the actual needs and unique environment of Hong Kong.

As for the provision of additional ferry services, we will closely monitor the inclinations of the ferry trade. We will consider the feasibility of the proposal upon receipt of the same from ferry operators.

(c) The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) operates a general air quality monitoring station in Kwun Tong to monitor the air quality of the region. According to the data collected by the station, there was no significant change in air quality during the berthing of "Mariner of the Seas" at the Terminal on June 12.

To improve air quality and reduce emissions from marine vessels, the EPD launched in September 2012 a 3-year Incentive Scheme in which ocean-going vessels (including cruise vessels) that switch to low-sulphur fuel while berthing in Hong Kong waters would enjoy 50 per cent reduction in port facilities and light dues. "Mariner of the

Seas" also participated in this Incentive Scheme and switched to low sulphur fuel while berthing at the Terminal on June 12. We will continue to proactively encourage cruise liners to participate in this Incentive Scheme. In addition, the EPD is planning to mandate that all ocean-going vessels switch to low-sulphur fuel while berthing in Hong Kong waters, and will report the progress of this initiative to the Panel on Environmental Affairs of the Legislative Council in July 2013. The EPD has also commissioned the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to undertake a technical feasibility study on the installation of onshore power supply facilities at the Terminal. The study is expected to be completed in 2014.

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