

Legislative Council Brief

Adding Fireworks Display to Hong Kong Tourism Board's New Year Countdown Pyrotechnics Show

Introduction

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 23 July 2013, the Council ADVISED and the Chief Executive ORDERED that -

- (a) marine-based fireworks display should be added to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)'s annual New Year Countdown pyrotechnics show in the Victoria Harbour on New Year's Eves; and
- (b) future applications to add marine-based fireworks displays to the show as mentioned in paragraph 1(a) above should be approved by the Director of Marine on the advice of the Fireworks Vetting Committee (FVC), without seeking further approval from the Chief Executive in Council.

Justifications

2. The HKTB has launched the New Year Countdown pyrotechnics show ^{Note 1} since 2007 to welcome the advent of the new year with both tourists and the general public. Over the years, the HKTB has accumulated a wealth of experience in organising this annual show and received numerous accolades from overseas media and travel magazines. In December 2012, the show was selected by CNN as one of the world's ten most spectacular countdown events.

3. From 2007 to 2011, the pyrotechnics show was land-based only. Pyrotechnics were discharged from the facade and rooftop of Two International Finance Centre in Central, as the anchor building, as well as

^{Note 1} The special effects materials used by the HKTB in its past New Year Countdown pyrotechnics shows were registered under the "Pyrotechnic Special Effects Materials Register". The discharge of pyrotechnic special effects materials is governed by the Entertainment Special Effects Ordinance (Cap. 560) which covers movie and TV programme making, arts and theatrical performance or pyrotechnics display, etc. The Film Services Office of the Create Hong Kong under the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is responsible for enforcing the Ordinance.

some other buildings on the Hong Kong Island. The show lasted from two to five minutes. The HKTB revamped the pyrotechnics show for the New Year's Eve of 2012 with a brand new design. With the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) as the new anchor building, the show featured both marine-based and land-based shows for the first time. Against the backdrop of the panoramic Victoria Harbour, pyrotechnics were displayed in succession over the waters outside Wanchai as well as the rooftops of HKCEC and a number of buildings in Wanchai. The show lasted for eight minutes and was the largest ever in the history of the event.

4. The 2012 New Year Countdown pyrotechnics show drew about 320,000 spectators along both sides of the Victoria Harbour. Its live television broadcast was watched by 1.4 million home viewers. It was also broadcast in real time on a number of major local and overseas channels (including CNN, BBC, NHK of Japan, TVBS of Taiwan as well as CCTV and Phoenix of the Mainland). The event recorded the highest ever telecasts of over 1,000 and received very positive media coverage.

5. Although the introduction of marine-based pyrotechnics to the originally land-based pyrotechnics show was a significant enhancement which was well received by overseas visitors and local residents, some spectators considered that the discharge of the marine-based pyrotechnics was not high enough (not more than 100 metres) and was too clustered at the waters outside Wanchai, as a result of which the numeric LED sign of "2013" on the HKCEC's facade did not stand out as prominently as expected.

6. Having reviewed the 2012 show and the spectators' feedback, the HKTB proposes to add marine-based fireworks^{Note 2} to the future New Year Countdown pyrotechnics show and to expand the launch area in the Victoria Harbour. The HKTB expects that with the combination of fireworks (with a permissible discharge height up to 300 metres) and pyrotechnics to be discharged at various levels and featuring different patterns, novelty and appeal of the show will be enhanced, thereby further showcasing the dynamism and vibrancy of Hong Kong as Asia's World

^{Note 2} Fireworks displays are regulated pursuant to the Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations (Cap. 295B, sub leg.) under the jurisdiction of the Secretary for Home Affairs for discharge on land or the Director of Marine for discharge at sea. As the assembly of the pyrotechnics/fireworks device is different, in general the discharge of pyrotechnics displays will not burst in the sky, while the discharge of fireworks will burst in the sky, up to a vertical height of 300 meters.

City. The HKTB expects the fireworks part to last for about one to two minutes, i.e. one-fifth of the duration of the eight-minute countdown show.

7. After the collision incident off Lamma Island last October, there have been public sentiments over fireworks discharge on the coming National Day. The Chief Executive announced in April that the National Day fireworks display in 2013 would be suspended. Notwithstanding the above, the New Year Countdown is a global celebration in which international cities herald the advent of a new year with their local communities and tourists alike with a view to raising their international profile. Over the years, the HKTB's countdown shows have successfully generated extensive coverage from both the local and overseas media, putting Hong Kong on par with major international cities such as London, New York, Paris and Sydney, all of which stage world-class New Year countdown celebrations every year. The event is very important in attracting inbound tourists and in raising the profile of Hong Kong. We consider that the New Year Countdown show should continue this year.

8. Similar to previous years, the HKTB will seek commercial sponsorship to fund the pyrotechnics and fireworks displays, while the ancillary production costs for stage performances, live broadcasts, etc. will be borne by the HKTB and other sponsors. The proposal entails no financial implications for the Government.

Other Options

9. We have examined the option of launching only pyrotechnics in the future New Year countdown shows. However, it is not preferred as the restricted discharge height of pyrotechnics and a confined launch area will undermine the layering effect of the show. To enhance the visual impact of future countdown shows, adding marine-based fireworks discharge is considered the best option available.

Implications of the Proposal

10. The economic, financial and civil service, environmental and traffic implications of the proposal are summarised at Annex. The proposal is in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights, and has no legislative, productivity sustainability or family implications.

Annex

Public Consultation

11. The FVC has considered and supports the proposal.

Publicity

12. To hype up the publicity of the event, the HKTB will launch a large-scale promotion campaign, including a press conference, story pitching, press releases, press invitations and satellite live feed of the show to international TV stations. Moreover, the relevant departments like Marine Department, Transport Department and the Police will announce the crowd control, traffic and harbour safety arrangements nearer the time.

Enquiries

13. Any enquiries on this brief should be addressed to Mrs Miranda YIM, Assistant Commissioner for Tourism, at Tel: 2810 2087 or Fax: 2121 1468.

**Tourism Commission
Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
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Implications of the Proposal

Economic Implications

It is anticipated that the HKTB's proposal will help enrich visitors' experience during their stay and strengthen the position of Hong Kong as an international tourist destination.

Financial and Civil Service Implications

2. The proposal entails no financial implications for the Government as the HKTB will seek commercial sponsorship to fund the pyrotechnics and fireworks displays, while the ancillary production costs for stage performances, live broadcasts, etc. will be borne by the HKTB and other sponsors. The manpower costs for event coordination and supervision will be absorbed by various departments from within their existing resources and will not incur additional expenses.

Environmental Implications

3. The pyrotechnics cum fireworks display for the New Year Countdown show will only cause minimal impact on air quality, as it is held once a year and for a very short duration (of about 8 minutes) only. Notwithstanding this, the HKTB will require the contractor to procure or use pyrotechnics and fireworks that, as far as practicable, do not contain harmful substances, such as mercury, chromium, lead, zinc, nickel, manganese, arsenic, etc. to minimise the environmental impact. The contractor will also be encouraged to use environmental-friendly pyrotechnics/fireworks products and launching technology as far as possible.

Traffic Implications

4. To facilitate the smooth conduct of this important promotional event for Hong Kong, relevant departments, such as Marine Department, Transport Department and the Police will put in place special land and sea traffic arrangements, including temporary closure of the Victoria Harbour and the relevant roads, e.g. Expo Drive on the Hong Kong Island and Salisbury Road in Kowloon. Such special arrangements will last for a few hours, so the impact on transportation will be minimal.