

LCQ16: Measures to enhance utilisation of and economic benefits brought by Kai Tak Cruise Terminal

Following is a written 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 (October 30):

Question:

The first berth of Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (Cruise Terminal) was commissioned in June this year. However, the Government has indicated that the proposal to construct the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (Linkage System) to connect the Kai Tak Development Area and Kowloon East, even if it is confirmed now, will not be commissioned before 2023. It is learnt that some members of the public have criticised that the Cruise Terminal does not have enough ancillary facilities, thus constraining its utilisation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it will consider conducting studies on other means (such as constructing a transportation link between Kwun Tong and the Cruise Terminal for passengers and vehicles, as well as constructing additional pedestrian facilities connecting Cha Kwo Ling, Yau Tong waterfront and Lei Yue Mun) before the confirmation and completion of the Linkage System to facilitate cruise passengers going ashore to visit the tourist attractions and shopping spots in Kwun Tong and Lei Yue Mun, so as to enhance the overall economic benefits brought about by the Cruise Terminal and promote the synergy between the commercial and tourism sectors in Kowloon East;

(b) of the estimated number of days with no cruise vessels berthing at the Cruise Terminal in each of the coming three years;

(c) whether it has studied if the venues and facilities of the Cruise Terminal can also be used, apart from holding exhibitions, for concerts, community activities or other performances during the periods when no vessels are berthing at the Terminal; if the study outcome is in the affirmative, of the expected audience capacity, venue application procedures, rental fees and types of performances to be held, as well as the economic benefits to be brought about by such activities to the Cruise Terminal; if the study outcome is in the negative, of the reasons for that; and

(d) whether it has, as indicated by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic

Development in reply to an oral question raised at the meeting of this Council on October 24 last year, studied the feasibility of providing water taxi services or other waterborne transport services to connect the Cruise Terminal, based on Hong Kong's actual needs and unique environment and with regard to aspects of technology, operation, safety and legislation, etc.; if it has, of the outcome of the study; if not, the reasons for that, and whether a study can be conducted immediately?

Reply:

President,

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

(a) The proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) will be the connectivity backbone that enhances the inter-district and intra-district connectivity of Kowloon East, which comprises Kai Tak Development Area, Kowloon Bay and Kwun Tong business areas. The Kwun Tong Transportation Link under the EFLS serves mainly to carry a monorail across the entrance of Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter. Currently, there is no plan to provide another link bridge to connect the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (Cruise Terminal) and Kwun Tong under the Kai Tak Development (KTD). In the long term, the Government will develop roads and elevated walkways to connect the Cruise Terminal and the areas around Kowloon Bay, subject to the development programmes of other works at KTD.

When cruise tourists arrive in Hong Kong, their itineraries (including transportation arrangements) are mostly arranged by shore excursion operators. These operators are encouraged to develop more attractive excursion itineraries that include, for instance, unique scenic spots in Kowloon East and Lei Yue Mun. The Terminal operator also organises shuttle bus services running between the Cruise Terminal and nearby shopping malls and liaises with the taxi trade to arrange taxis to pick up cruise tourists at the Cruise Terminal. These arrangements make it convenient for cruise tourists to go sightseeing and shopping in different areas. This ensures that various areas will benefit from the growing number of cruise tourists and also enhances the appeal of Hong Kong to cruise passengers.

As regards public transport, a Kowloon green minibus route (No. 86) operates between the Cruise Terminal and Kowloon Bay every day. There is also a recreational route (No. 5R), operated by Kowloon Motor Bus, that runs between the Cruise

Terminal and Ngau Tau Kok/Kwun Tong MTR station during Sundays and public holidays. The Transport Department will closely monitor the provision of public transport services and make appropriate adjustments as and when necessary to cope with the passenger demand.

When large scale events are held at the Cruise Terminal, the organisers will arrange special feeder services to cope with the additional transport demand.

(b) The Terminal operator has received 59 applications from cruise vessels to berth for about 103 days between October this year and the end of 2016. Since the commissioning of the Cruise Terminal in the middle of this year, many cruise companies have expressed interest in berthing at the Cruise Terminal when they develop their schedules for the coming years. Indeed, there has been a steady increase in the number of days of berthing reservations. We expect that the rising trend will continue.

(c) In designing the Cruise Terminal, we have adopted a wide span layout with fewer structural columns for the Cruise Terminal building in order to maximise the flexibility in the utilisation of the Cruise Terminal. The design enables some areas in the Cruise Terminal to be used for other functions during the periods when no vessels are berthing at the Cruise Terminal.

Two car shows and a Cruise Holiday Expo were held at the Cruise Terminal in August and September which received positive feedback. We understand that various organisations are discussing with the Terminal operator the feasibility of holding various kinds of functions in the Cruise Terminal building in future.

The Terminal operator will consider applications for holding various functions, including concerts, community activities or other performances. The specific requirements and application procedures (including capacity and rental fees) for holding such functions in the Cruise Terminal will be subject to the nature of and actual arrangements for the functions and the requirements of relevant legislation and licences.

We expect that hosting functions in the Cruise Terminal building will help the Cruise Terminal maintain a closer tie with the neighbouring districts. It will also boost economic activities (e.g. retail and catering) and enhance the economic benefits brought by the Cruise Terminal to the nearby areas.

(d) At an earlier meeting of the Legislative Council, the Government responded 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, and so on, 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." At that time, the Government set out the types of issues that need to be considered and pointed out the complexity of the matter. It did not indicate that a feasibility study for introducing water taxis was needed.

Regarding the provision of additional waterborne transport service, the Government will closely monitor the ferry trade's assessment on service demand. We will examine the feasibility of detailed proposals submitted by the ferry operators in the market, if any. To date, no operator has approached the Transport Department about its intention to introduce ferry services between the Cruise Terminal and other areas.

Ends/Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Issued at HKT 12:13