

LCQ7: Development of Kowloon East into a tourism and core commercial district

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Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin in the Legislative Council today (May 14):

Question:

Some members of the public have pointed out that with the commissioning of the first berth of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (Terminal) in the middle of last year, the number of tourists moving around in Kowloon East (KE) will be increasing continuously. The Government is committed to developing KE into a tourism and core commercial district, with a number of sites in KE having been converted for hotel use. Yet, as the existing ancillary transport and shopping facilities in KE mainly serve the general public, the development of the district may be constrained and it may affect the original life style of the local residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed the numbers, and their rates of increase, of passenger arrivals and departures through the Terminal upon the commissioning of the second berth of the Terminal this year; if it has, of the assessment results;

(2) whether the authorities will organise mega events targeting mainly at Hong Kong people at the Cruise Terminal Building or its rooftop garden so as to increase the visitor flow of the Terminal; if they will, of the details of such events;

(3) of the respective numbers of hotels in Wong Tai Sin (WTS) and Kwun Tong (KT) which are currently (i) in operation, (ii) under construction and (iii) at the planning stage with planning applications submitted to the Town Planning Board, as well as the respective total numbers of hotel rooms being provided/to be provided in these hotels;

(4) whether it has assessed the impacts of the tourists brought about by the Terminal on the traffic-bearing capacity, coach parking spaces, shop rentals and livelihood-related consumption activities, etc. in WTS and KT; if it has, of the assessment results; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as it has been reported that WTS and KT are districts with relatively high concentration of the poor and the elderly, of the measures put in place by the authorities

to ensure that the development of KE into a tourism and core commercial district will not affect the consumption activities and daily lives of local residents as well as the community services rendered to them?

Reply:

President,

The Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) is an important tourism infrastructure of Hong Kong and has gradually won positive comments from cruise companies since the commissioning of the terminal in June last year. After disembarking at the KTCT, passengers will either join local tours arranged by shore excursion operators or plan their own itineraries to various tourist attractions on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and on the outlying islands for sightseeing. Some passengers may also stay overnight in Hong Kong before or after their cruise journeys, bringing benefits to the tourism, hotel, retail as well as food and beverages industries across different districts. The Tourism Commission keeps in close communication with the trades and relevant departments to ensure that the overall economy of Hong Kong benefits from the development of cruise industry, and a balance is struck between the needs of both visitors and local residents.

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

(1) As at mid-April this year, there were a total of 21 ship calls at the KTCT since its commissioning in June last year. The total passenger throughput at the KTCT is 47 000 arrivals and 46 000 departures.

According to the latest information from the terminal operator, there will be a total of 27 ship calls at the KTCT in 2014. To date, the terminal operator has received 26 cruise ship bookings for berthing slots in 2015. As for the figures and growth rate of passenger throughput upon the commissioning of the KTCT's second berth, it is difficult to project accurately as they will depend on the actual loading of the cruise ships. Yet, as many international cruise companies are actively considering increasing the number of ship calls at the KTCT in the coming years, we are confident that both the utilisation rate and passenger throughput of the KTCT will continue to rise in the future.

(2) The terminal operator is actively developing non-cruise businesses by attracting different sectors of the community to organise events at the KTCT. Apart from brand

promotional activities, the KTCT has hosted activities that were open to the general public. Examples include the "Cruise Holiday Expo" organised by the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong at the KTCT last September, which was the first ever exposition in Hong Kong that targeted at cruise passengers and attracted about 30 000 attendants; on December 1 last year, we organised the "Community Planting Day" at the rooftop park of the terminal, which was attended by District Council members and primary school students; on March 23 this year, the area of the KTCT served as the official starting and finishing point for the 10-kilometre marathon race; and from April 18 to 23 this year, the world's largest floating book fair, Logos Hope, berthed at the KTCT and about 24 000 members of the public boarded the ship. The rooftop park of the terminal also hosted various events organised by schools and local organisations, such as drawing competitions for school students and school picnics.

Looking ahead, many organisations have expressed interest in holding a variety of events at the KTCT and are currently in discussion with the terminal operator. For instance, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department plans to organise the "Dance cum Recreation and Sport Carnival" at the KTCT Park on September 27 this year, featuring game stalls, dancing performances and play-in.

(3) According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, as at end 2013, Wong Tai Sin (WTS) has one hotel with 695 rooms while Kwun Tong (KT) has three hotels that provide a total of 1 155 rooms. Over the next four years (2014-2017), one new hotel with 334 rooms will be completed in WTS while five new hotels providing a total of 1 018 rooms will be completed in KT. The Government is identifying feasible ways so as to gradually release the six sites within the "hotel belt" at the former Kai Tak runway to the market from end of next year (i.e. end of 2015) onwards in order to increase hotel room supply.

(4) When a cruise ship berths in Hong Kong, passengers may join various on-shore excursion tours arranged by the cruise company or plan their own itineraries. According to our observation, cruise passengers generally disperse to Hong Kong Island, Kowloon or the outlying islands to visit different tourist attractions and will not overly concentrate in a particular district. In respect of transport, the KTCT has not caused adverse impact on the traffic of the WTS and KT districts so far. Generally speaking, the local traffic conditions and utilisation rate of coach parking spaces in these districts remain normal.

The Transport Department (TD) has been keeping in view on and regularly

reviewing the supply and demand of coach parking spaces in the two districts and will take appropriate measures when necessary to cope with the demand. It also listens to the views of the relevant sectors and coach operators from time to time for taking follow-up actions as appropriate. In general, the Government will implement the following measures to increase parking spaces in individual districts where supply is tight:

(i) provide additional on-street parking spaces, subject to no adverse effect on road safety and no disturbance to road users;

(ii) allocate land which is not planned for immediate development for use as temporary carparks;

(iii) where the demand for designated parking spaces for non-franchised buses is particularly keen (e.g. at popular tourist attractions), the Government will consider designating certain existing temporary carparks exclusively for non-franchised buses when renewing the tenancies of the sites; and

(iv) require an appropriate number of parking spaces to be designated for use by non-franchised buses in suitable development projects.

In addition, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong issues notices to travel agents from time to time reminding them to ensure that their coaches would comply with the traffic regulations when parking at tourist attractions, to adjust their itineraries according to traffic conditions to avoid causing congestion in the vicinity of tourist attractions, and to minimise inconvenience to other road users.

(5) The Development Bureau is actively taking forward the policy of "Energizing Kowloon East", with the objective of transforming Kowloon East into a core business district that will provide a continual supply of premium offices and business service facilities to support the economic growth of Hong Kong in the long term. The Energizing Kowloon East Office has implemented various initiatives in respect of enhancing connectivity, improving the environment and releasing the development potential of the area. It has also conducted studies on the integration and interaction of Kowloon East with its peripheral areas. We are confident that the economic and environmental benefits brought by the transformation of the area will extend beyond the surrounding areas to the adjoining districts, such as KT and WTS. The Government

will also monitor the development closely to ensure that local residents will continue to enjoy appropriate community services.

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