

LCQ18: 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 15):

Question:

Before the berthing for the first time of two cruise vessels at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) on the same day, i.e. the 29th of last month, the media had once again reported on the inadequacy of the ancillary transport facilities in KTCT. The media were afraid that the situation of passengers overcrowding the taxi stands inside KTCT might recur. Taxi associations, dissatisfied with the arrangement adopted by KTCT operator and for fear that taxis might "enter and leave KTCT without passengers on board" due to insufficient passengers, have threatened to call on its members to take boycott actions by refusing to enter KTCT. It has also been reported that both tourists and members of the public are dissatisfied with the signage inside KTCT, the routes to eateries and shops and the attractiveness of the shops, etc. Some tourists have even described KTCT as "very boring," pointing out that its supporting facilities are much inferior to those in the cruise terminals in places such as Japan, Korea and Australia, etc. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has reviewed the situation in which the taxis that enter KTCT to carry passengers would "enter and leave KTCT without passengers on board" as claimed by the taxi associations, and the reasons why taxi drivers refuse to enter KTCT to carry passengers; given that the second berth of KTCT was commissioned at the end of last month and the number of tourists entering the territory through KTCT will increase instead of decreasing, of the means to be adopted to prevent the recurrence of the scenario in which public transport operators refuse to enter KTCT to carry passengers in future;

(2) given the comments that, at present, the vehicles entering and leaving KTCT must route through Kowloon Bay, and the route is rather indirect, time-consuming and inefficient, whether the Government will consider adopting the proposals recommended by a think tank of linking Kwun Tong and KTCT by constructing a floating bridge or a movable air-bridge, using kaito ferry service (i.e., water taxis), or adding a cruise terminal interchange under the current Kwun Tong to Sai Wan Ho ferry service, or even implement the proposal put forth by the Kwun Tong District Council to

the Government on many occasions for building a transportation link to KTCT to improve KTCT's transport arrangements;

(3) given that some reporters, tourists and members of the public have pointed out the problems of the shops inside KTCT being not attractive, unclear signage, small number of eateries, tourists patronising retail shops being inconvenienced by the way lifts are operated, tourists having no idea about the location of shuttle bus stops, and few visitors visiting KTCT on weekdays other than weekends at which relatively more local tour groups and members of the public visit KTCT, etc., of the way by which the Government will improve the situation; and

(4) given that in the past, the Ocean Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui relied on discos, bars and restaurants to boost the visitor flow of its nighttime business, whether the Government has assessed the visitor flow that can be brought to KTCT by establishing a street of bars there; as I have learnt that a bar business group has submitted an application to KTCT operator for running an open street of bars on the podium of KTCT, whether it knows the latest progress of the vetting and approval of such application; whether the authorities can further study if the visitor flow to be brought by the street of bars can motivate public transport modes such as taxis and light buses to carry passengers to and from KTCT?

Reply:

President,

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

(1) To prepare for the new round of ship calls starting from September, the operator of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (the KTCT operator) met with representatives of taxi trade organisations in mid-August and end-September to brief them on the schedule and transportation arrangements for the ship calls. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development also met with representatives of taxi trade organisations on September 26 to listen to the views of the trade on the KTCT. The atmosphere of the meeting was candid and cordial. The taxi trade representatives indicated that they were willing to continue the liaison with the KTCT operator and would endeavour to support the operation of the terminal, particularly on September 29 when it would be the first time for the KTCT to handle two ships simultaneously.

The KTCT operator will continue with the practice of disseminating information (such as disembarkation time and passenger volume) to taxi call centres one day before ship calls. New measures are also adopted where in the morning of ship calls, special publicity message will be broadcast on radio, and staff will be deployed to various spots around the terminal (such as the LPG station) to encourage taxi drivers to pick up cruise passengers at the terminal.

On September 29, two cruise ships, Sapphire Princess and Voyager of the Seas, berthed simultaneously at the KTCT. Though a total of around 5 600 cruise passengers disembarked that day, the overall transportation arrangements were smooth. Apart from shore excursions and transfer services arranged by cruise companies for their passengers, the KTCT operator arranged free shuttle buses to ply between the terminal and nearby MTR stations, as well as feeder bus services to take cruise passengers to hotel clusters in Tsim Sha Tsui and on the Hong Kong Island. The KTCT operator also introduced a new feeder bus route to Hung Hom to offer more choices to passengers. Moreover, special measure was implemented in the morning of September 29 where each taxi driver who picked up passengers at the KTCT was given \$20 tunnel coupons. With the support of the taxi trade, more taxis went to the KTCT that day as compared with the number for previous ship calls. Generally, the cruise passengers could board the transport modes of their choice and depart from the KTCT with a reasonable period.

The KTCT operator and related departments will continue to liaise closely with the taxi trade to explore further improvement to the arrangements in order to facilitate more taxi drivers to go to the KTCT to pick up passengers.

(2) The departments concerned have conducted a comprehensive transport impact assessment for the Kai Tak Development Area (KTD) and are implementing various road and infrastructure projects by phases to serve the various development projects at KTD. To support the development projects at the southern part of the former runway, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) plans to replace the existing single two-lane carriageway with a dual two-lane carriageway, as stipulated under the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan, to link the KTCT with Cheung Yip Street in Kowloon Bay and the area around San Po Kong, so as to cope with the increasing traffic flow.

Furthermore, CEDD has conducted preliminary feasibility study on the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for East Kowloon, the scope of the study includes the proposed Kwun Tong Transportation Link (KTTL), which would

accommodate a monorail, a walkway and a cycle track, to connect the Kwun Tong Ferry Pier with the former runway tip in KTD. CEDD plans to commence a detailed feasibility study for the EFLS at the beginning of 2015, subject to funding approval by the Finance Committee. The scope of the study will cover an in-depth analysis of the feasibility and implementation schedule of the KTTL.

For ferry services, the KTCT operator is studying the option of installing a pontoon, to be moored temporarily to the terminal for providing special ferry services on days of ship calls or events. Yet, in ascertaining the feasibility of providing ferry services or constructing other facilities, various factors have to be taken into account, such as passenger safety, technical issues (including considerations relating to works and nearby water currents), supporting transport services, expected passenger demand as well as the business viability of the proposal. Relevant departments will continue to discuss the proposal with the KTCT operator, with focus on the feasibility of using pontoon as a temporary landing step.

(3) The KTCT operator has kept in close communication with the tenants of the commercial areas to understand and address their operational needs. As far as transport connectivity is concerned, relevant departments have coordinated with the public transport operators to step up service frequencies and extend operating hours having regard to visitors flow to the KTCT. An additional drop-off point for minibus on the ground floor at the southern end of the KTCT has been installed to facilitate the public visiting the shops and caf .

A new batch of directional signages has been installed inside and outside the KTCT building as well as at the KTCT Park to provide the general public and cruise passengers with clear directions to the commercial areas. The tenants of the commercial areas have also developed their own marketing strategies, such as offering special concessions or holding functions, to attract patronage by the general public and cruise passengers.

The shops, the eateries, the KTCT Park and the newly commissioned Runway Park adjoining the KTCT have gradually gained popularity among the public, particularly for family outings. With the increasing number of ship calls at the KTCT, promotions by tenants of the commercial areas and increasing level of public transport, it is expected that the number of visitors to the KTCT on weekdays and holidays will grow gradually.

(4) Regarding the Hong Kong Bar & Club Association's proposal to develop a "bar street" at the KTCT, the proposed site would occupy part of the KTCT Park managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Currently, the KTCT Park and the Runway Park adjoining the KTCT are primarily public leisure and recreational grounds. Converting part of the park into a "bar street" would reduce the available recreational space, interfering the recreational activities or enjoyment of the view of the Victoria Harbour by the public. In this connection, any change in the use of the park is subject to the agreement of the local community, including the District Council concerned. Other considerations include whether the proposal could integrate with the KTCT and other local facilities, impact on the environment and public order, and the planning restrictions for developments within the KTCT. The Administration will continue to study the proposal.

Ends/Wednesday, October 15, 2014

Issued at HKT 11:58