

LCQ11: Ancillary tourist facilities at Victoria Harbour

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 15):

Question:

As a famous landmark and a natural treasure of Hong Kong, the Victoria Harbour attracts a lot of sightseeing tourists. However, there are views that the ancillary tourist facilities along the Victoria Harbour are inadequate, and some sightseeing vessels touting custom at the Kowloon Public Pier have caused chaos and nuisance while some are even involved in illegal carriage of passengers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of complaints and reports received by the government departments concerned (including the Marine Department and the Police) in each of the past two years about issues revolving around touting custom and management of sightseeing vessels on both sides of the Victoria Harbour (in particular the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront area); the number of inspections conducted and enforcement actions taken by the departments concerned in respect of such situation, as well as the number of prosecuted and convicted cases;

(2) whether improvements will be made promptly by the authorities to address the issues revolving around the management of waterborne sightseeing activities, inadequate ancillary tourist facilities, etc. at the Kowloon Public Pier; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the number of passenger trips and occupancy rate of the various water taxi routes in the past two years; whether regular reviews of such service have been conducted by the authorities in terms of publicity, routes, ancillary facilities for disembarkation, etc., with a view to turning such service into a major waterborne sightseeing attraction and tourism project in Hong Kong;

(4) following the commissioning of the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) and the increase in waterfront facilities on both sides of the Victoria Harbour, whether the authorities will explore increasing the calling points for water taxis commuting between the two sides of the Victoria Harbour, so that they can serve as temporary transport support to facilitate crowd dispersal during large-scale events held in KTSP or waterfront areas along the Victoria Harbour; and

(5) whether the authorities will, from the tourism perspective, conduct comprehensive review and planning for the potential of aquatic tourism at the Victoria Harbour and the ancillary facilities there, including, among others, upgrading the tourist facilities at piers and disembarkation points, stepping

up the dissemination of real-time information on aquatic tourism itineraries to tourists, as well as offering packages and promotions incorporating aquatic tourism alongside tourism activities held at the waterfront of the Victoria Harbour, thereby enriching the characteristics of Hong Kong's tourism; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), Development Bureau (DEVB), Marine Department (MD) and Transport Department (TD), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Leung is as follows:

(1) According to the records of the past two years, the MD received a total of six complaints related to the non-compliance of sightseeing vessels in the vicinity of the Kowloon Public Pier (KPP), whereas the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) received none. During this period, the MD conducted a total of 77 patrols and law enforcement actions in the waters near both sides of the Victoria Harbour, including 11 joint operations with the HKPF. At the operations, the MD instituted 12 prosecutions relating to violation of marine legislations. Among them, 11 cases were convicted, and the legal proceedings of the remaining case are still underway. The HKPF also conducts regular patrols in the area and will take appropriate follow-up actions if relevant complaints are received.

(2) The Government and the tourism trade attach great importance to offering pleasant travel experience to visitors so as to attract more visitors to Hong Kong. In this regard, the Tourism Commission (TC) has launched various tourist-friendly and facilitation initiatives, including installing signage in different places in Hong Kong to facilitate visitors' journeys to major tourist attractions and tourism routes. The Government is also dedicated to improving the public toilet facilities at major tourist attractions. Among others, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), after taking into account the TC's view and the utilisation rates of public toilets, completed the refurbishment works of the Tsim Sha Tsui Ferry Concourse Public Toilet (the toilet) in February 2019. The FEHD has also provided attendant service at the toilet as well as deep cleansing team to enhance the cleansing services and maintain the toilet's cleanliness. Besides, the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) has also been closely monitoring the situation of inbound tour groups' participation in Victoria Harbour tours, including deploying manpower to monitor their embarkation and disembarkation at the Tsim Sha Tsui Landing No.1.

At present, the daily operation and management of public piers (including the KPP) is handled by different government departments in accordance with their respective scope of work. Regarding the KPP, the TD is responsible for monitoring its usage, and will arrange regular on-site surveys to review its usage and maintenance status; while the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) is responsible for the structural maintenance and repair work of the public piers.

In addition, to safeguard navigational safety, apart from daily patrols and law enforcement actions in various parts of Hong Kong waters (including the area around the KPP), the MD has also been working closely with the HKPF to combat illegal carriage of passengers, overloading, violation of marine legislations, etc.

The Government will improve the design and use of landing facilities based on the conditions of public piers and the opinions of stakeholders.

(3) and (4) The water taxi is mainly of a sightseeing and tourism nature, providing recreational services for the public and tourists travelling across the Victoria Harbour. Since the commissioning of the water taxi in July 2021, the Government has been in close contact with the service operator to review and strengthen water taxi services.

Regarding the routes, the water taxi only offered a route plying between Hung Hom and Central (via Tsim Sha Tsui East (TSTE)) at the early stage of its operation. Since November 12, 2021, to tie in with the opening of the M+ at the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), the water taxi added a short-working route plying between Central and TSTE (via West Kowloon). From January 14, 2023, this route had been adjusted to operate between TSTE and West Kowloon (via Wan Chai and Central). To attract more tourists to use water taxi services, the operator has enhanced its services starting from October 6, 2023 by merging the two original routes into the "TSTE – Central (via Wan Chai/West Kowloon)" route, and increased the frequency from only one or two sailings on Saturdays and/or Sundays and public holidays to seven sailings per day.

The patronage of each water taxi route in 2023 and 2024 is tabulated as follows:

Route	Operation Date	Frequency	Patronage	
			2023	2024
Hung Hom – Central (via TSTE)	From July 1, 2021 to September 30, 2023	One sailing on Saturdays	2 904	N/A
TSTE–West Kowloon (via Wan Chai and Central)	From January 14, 2023 to September 30, 2023	Two sailings on Saturdays	1 101	N/A
TSTE – Central (via Wan Chai/West Kowloon)	From October 6, 2023 to present	Seven daily sailings (The first two sailings on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, berth at the West Kowloon berthing point)	17 958	113 552

As for publicity, the TD has been actively assisting the water taxi service operator in cooperating with the WKCD Authority, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and other government departments to promote water taxi services, including promoting the water taxi at the HKTB's Visitor Centres and website, strengthening signage and providing relevant service information in tourist areas such as Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui. In addition, regarding the facilities, the water taxi service operator has set up a ticketing counter near the TSTE water taxi berthing point (near K11 shopping mall) to facilitate the handling of tourist enquiries and ticket purchases and promote water taxi services. The TD would work with the service operator to closely monitor the operations of water taxi and changes in passenger/visitor demand, so as to review and enhance water taxi services based on actual situation.

Compared with ferries (including water taxis), using other road transportation, such as railways and buses, enables more effective dispersal of large crowds in a short period of time. The Government will review the crowd dispersal arrangements for individual large-scale events in detail, and consider factors such as pedestrian accessibility at the pier, the condition of the pier berthing facilities, ferry service frequency and passenger demand, so as to assess the actual need for using ferry.

(5) Victoria Harbour and the harbourfront, as Hong Kong's treasure, have always been popular leisure spots for residents and visitors. Currently, in-harbour sightseeing tours are offered by some travel agents for visitors, allowing them to enjoy the views of Victoria Harbour and a different travel experience. Some sightseeing vessels also offer catering service, enabling visitors to enjoy delicious food and the stunning harbour view at the same time and experience the exceptional charm of Hong Kong.

The HKTB has been promoting aquatic tourism through different promotional activities and channels, including consolidating a series of itinerary guides and information on aquatic sightseeing tours on DiscoverHongKong.com website to facilitate visitors' planning of their visits.

In addition, the Government will continue to make better use of the harbourfront promenades and water bodies to create more events and tourism experiences. To add vibrancy and dynamism to the night sky of Victoria Harbour, the HKTB will continue to organise pyrotechnic and drone shows featuring different festivals and cultural contents.

The CSTB, together with the HKTB, will launch a new edition of "A Symphony of Lights" (SoL) light and sound show to showcase the spectacular views of Victoria Harbour through novel audio-visual effects. At the same time, with the support of the MD, the CSTB launched a two-year trial scheme in March 2024 to allow cruise ships berthing at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal to choose to transit through the central part of Victoria Harbour from 7pm to 10pm every day. The arrangement aims to boost cruise tourism development by leveraging the iconic scenery of Victoria Harbour and SoL show. The general public and tourists are able to appreciate on the two sides of Victoria Harbour the sailing through of international cruise ships, thereby appreciating Hong Kong's position as an international cruise hub. After

reviewing the trial arrangement, the MD adjusted the transit window to 6pm to 6am the next day in November 2024 with an aim to attract more cruise ships to visit Hong Kong. We will keep under review the scheme's arrangement, and will consider regularising the arrangement subject to its smooth implementation.

On top of that, the Government has also been enhancing public pier and landing facilities, including the construction of a public landing facility and a waterfront promenade at Lei Yue Mun to enhance the connectivity of Lei Yue Mun waterfront area, with a view to further enhancing the attractiveness of Lei Yue Mun as a popular tourist attraction. The works are expected to be completed by end January 2025. Besides, the Government is constructing the Southern Landing Facility outside M+ of the WKCD to enhance the area's ancillary transport facilities. The construction works is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025. The landing facility will be open for use by public vessels and water taxis, offering residents and visitors an additional transportation option when visiting the WKCD.

In collaboration with the TC, the Harbour Office of the DEVB is prepared to explore with the providers of aquatic tourism services and the operators of harbourfront event venues in the Victoria Harbour to strengthen co-operation in the promotion of tourism activities held at the relevant harbourfront venues, with a view to maximising the synergy effect. In respect of hardware facilities, as mentioned in the reply to part 2 above, the CEDD will carry out works to improve existing public piers if necessary. Additionally, if the bill introduced by the DEVB into the Legislative Council last month to amend the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (the Ordinance) is passed, small scale reclamation in the Victoria Harbour supporting the construction of harbour enhancement works, such as piers and landing steps, may be exempted from the "presumption against reclamation" in the Ordinance according to the streamlined mechanism, which will help facilitate implementation of the relevant works.