

LCQ12: Mitigation measures to tackle impact by visitors to Hong Kong on local community

Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (May 15):

Question:

It has been reported that inbound Mainland tour groups (IMTGs) carrying out activities like shopping and dining in the Kowloon City district have caused serious nuisances to local residents, and that a pedestrian was knocked down and killed in an accident that occurred in To Kwa Wan last month. Regarding IMTGs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of traffic accidents involving tourist coaches that occurred in the Kowloon City district in each of the past five years, and the resultant casualties;

(2) of the number of law enforcement operations carried out by the Police in the Kowloon City district, in (a) each year and (b) each month of the past five years, against tourist coach drivers who contravened traffic regulations, together with a breakdown by the type of (i) contraventions and (ii) actions taken (e.g. ordering to leave and issuance of fixed penalty notices); the respective locations of the 10 major black spots of the various contraventions;

(3) of (i) the number of IMTGs and, among them, (ii) the number of those conducting activities in the Kowloon City district, on average each day in each month of the past five years; whether it has assessed the impacts of such activities on residents in the Kowloon City district;

(4) whether it will, targeting at issues concerning contraventions of traffic regulations by tourist coach drivers, raise the relevant penalties and study new measures for traffic improvements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) given that the Government is urging the trade to divert IMTGs joining Victoria Harbour cruises to embark and disembark at piers other than the Kowloon City Ferry Pier, of the progress of the work and the feedback of travel agents, as well as the expected completion time; of the progress so far of the discussions among the Government, operator of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) and members of the tourism industry on making use of KTCT for diverting tour groups; and

(6) whether it will set limits on (i) the number of same-day Mainland

visitors, (ii) the number of IMTGs, and (iii) the area of activities of IMTGs, in order to mitigate the impacts of the relevant tourism activities on residents of various districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry. Whilst ensuring that the industry brings about benefits to society, we also continuously seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community. The Government has been in close liaison with the travel trade, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), district personalities and Legislative Council Members in driving the implementation of various targeted mitigation measures to tackle the impact by visitors to Hong Kong on the local community.

In response to the question raised by the Hon Claudia Mo, with relevant bureaux and departments consulted, my reply is as follows:

(1) The traffic accident statistics kept by the Transport Department (TD) do not have a breakdown by tourist coaches, so only relevant figures on non-franchised single-deck buses (including tourist coaches) can be provided. During the past five years, the numbers of traffic accidents involving non-franchised single-deck buses that occurred within the area under the Kowloon City District Council's purview and the resultant casualties are set out in Annex 1.

(2) The tourist hotspots in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom (including areas in the vicinity of To Kwa Wan Road, San Ma Tau Street and Mei King Street, areas around Chi Kiang Street, Sung On Street and Bailey Street, as well as areas near Sze Chuen Street) have been listed by the Police as priority locations for actions against illegal parking. Appropriate enforcement actions are taken in respect of the illegal parking situation of tourist coaches. The Kowloon City Police District deploys staff to carry out crowd management and traffic enforcement actions in such tourist hotspots on a daily basis.

Between May 2017 and April 2019, the Police issued a total of 4 192 fixed penalty notices to tourist coaches relating to traffic contraventions in the Kowloon City Police District (including To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom districts). The relevant monthly and yearly figures are set out in Annex 2. The Police have not kept any breakdown of the types of contraventions and enforcement actions, as well as information about black spots of the various contraventions and figures of fixed penalty notices before May 2017.

(3) At present, TIC is responsible for trade regulation and has issued clear guidelines requiring that travel agents in Hong Kong must, prior to receiving any Mainland inbound tour group, register with TIC and provide information about the tour group in advance. In this regard, TIC reports to the

Government on the situation of Mainland inbound tour groups visiting Hong Kong from time to time. It also participates in the inter-departmental meetings convened by the Government before peak periods of visitor arrivals, such that relevant Government departments and attraction operators can better grasp the estimated number of tour groups visiting Hong Kong during the holidays and make corresponding arrangements. The daily average of Mainland inbound tour groups that travel agents registered with TIC in each month during the past five years is set out in Annex 3.

(4) In view of the traffic situation in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom, TD has been endeavouring to identify suitable locations in the two districts for providing additional on-street pick-up/set-down points and parking spaces for use by tourist coaches where road safety is not compromised and traffic conditions permit, as well as granting short-term tenancy (STT) car parks for parking of tourist coaches. Currently, there are a total of 96 on-street metered parking spaces and 110 lay-bys for pick-up or set-down purposes provided by TD in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom, as well as 73 parking spaces in STT car parks, for use by tourist coaches. TD has also designated "No-stopping Restriction Zones" in suitable road sections in the districts, which limit the pick-up and set-down activities of coaches in restricted hours, so as to maintain smooth traffic flow. Moreover, the Government has offered a discounted fee of \$6 per half an hour between 9 am and 8 pm in the temporary car park at the junction of Bailey Street and Sung Ping Street in a bid to encourage parking of tourist coaches at the car park.

As regards traffic enforcement, the Police have been closely monitoring the situation of illegal parking or picking up/setting down passengers by tourist coaches in the above-mentioned districts, taking stern enforcement actions against those which have caused serious obstruction to traffic and posed a safety risk. Starting from January 2019, the Kowloon City Police District has been implementing special traffic control measures around Chi Kiang Street, Sung On Street and Bailey Street, as well as around To Kwa Wan Road, San Ma Tau Street and Mei King Street during daily peak periods of tourist coach movements. Under the control measures, tourist coach drivers have to follow the instructions of the police officers on the spot and drive to designated locations for pick-up and set-down.

To further strengthen the control of the flow of tourist coaches and enhance road safety, the Government plans to establish additional designated passenger pick-up/set-down areas for tourist coaches in the districts. Consideration is being given to using the temporary car park at the junction of Bailey Street and Sung Ping Street as a pick-up/set-down area; providing ten additional on-street metered tourist coach parking spaces at the junction of Hung Hom Road and Bailey Street; and providing four additional lay-bys at appropriate sections of Chi Kiang Street. To dovetail with these measures, the Government plans to expand the "No-stopping Restriction Zone" for coaches at appropriate road sections on the periphery of tourist hotspots within the districts so as to restrict the pick-up/set-down areas for tourist coaches on public roads, thereby encouraging tourist coaches to use the designated pick-up/set-down areas mentioned above.

Besides, the Police have started to take enforcement actions by means of mobile video recording at tourist hotspots in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom. They use hand-held video cameras to record instances of traffic contravention on an irregular basis in order to combat obstruction to traffic flow and strengthen the deterrent effect. The Police also plan to launch a pilot scheme on Electronic Fixed Penalty Notices within 2019-20. The frontline law enforcement officers will then be able to access data on vehicles parked illegally via their mobile smart devices and print out fixed penalty notices without delay, with enhanced efficiency in enforcement.

As regards the recent traffic accident involving a tourist coach, the Police are still investigating the case. Subject to the results of the Police's investigation, TD will review the conditions of the road section concerned and take appropriate follow-up measures.

(5) The Government has been liaising with the trade on the feasibility of channelling some harbour cruises to the public landing steps near the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) (namely the Runway Park Pier at Kai Tak), and conducted several site visits to the pier. The trade has indicated that they would consider using the pier and made some suggestions about the enhancement of ancillary facilities. The Government welcomes the trade's positive attitude and looks forward to their early confirmation of the detailed arrangements. The Tourism Commission is actively co-ordinating with the relevant departments with a view to completing the follow-up on pertinent suggestions about the enhancement of ancillary facilities as soon as possible.

Insofar as KTCT is concerned, the cruise terminal is managed by a terminal operator under commercial principles. The ancillary commercial area of KTCT is equipped with catering and other supporting facilities, and all shops have currently been leased out. The Government is open to the proposal of channelling some inbound tour groups to KTCT and has been co-ordinating with different stakeholders, including arranging for the trade several visits to KTCT and meeting with the terminal operator and shop owners. Nonetheless, the proposal is contingent upon the willingness of the trade and shop owners, and boils down to their commercial decision. Should the trade be interested in using the facilities in KTCT, they are welcome to approach the terminal operator and shop owners for further discussion.

(6) The tourist receiving capability of a tourism destination depends on many different factors, including the travel modes of visitors from various source markets, the attractions and facilities of the travel destination, the types of tourism products available in the market, etc. Furthermore, there is no universally accepted way to set a cap on tourist receiving capability (including numbers of tourists and areas of their activities). The Government will continue to be proactive in enhancing Hong Kong's various ancillary tourism facilities so as to balance the impact of the tourism industry on the economy and people's livelihood.