

LCQ14: Services of marriage registries

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

It is learnt that the marriage hall of Tseung Kwan O Marriage Registry, which has recently come into operation, is popular among wedding couples as it is equipped with lighting effects. Regarding the services of marriage registries, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of registered marriages in each year since 2022, together with a breakdown by venue of marriage registration (i.e. marriage registries, leisure venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, other venues where marriage are solemnised by Civil Celebrants of Marriages and licensed places of worship);

(2) of the respective capacity and average usage rate of the various marriage registries for marriage ceremonies in each year since 2022;

(3) as there are views pointing out that some marriage registries in urban areas have a relatively long history, and the outdated equipment and ancillary facilities of the halls may affect the usage of such registries, of the respective time when the authorities last carried out major renovation works on the various marriage registries; whether the authorities will consider renovating the older marriage registries with the addition of design features and ancillary facilities, so as to attract public use;

(4) as many wedding couples have relayed that they would not consider celebrating their marriages in marriage registries because the time limit for using marriage halls of marriage registries is too short, whether the authorities will consider extending the time limit for wedding couples to use the marriage halls during off-peak hours and days; if not, of the reasons for that;

(5) whether it will consider enriching the services of marriage registries, such as setting up additional counters to promote premarital check-ups and premarital counselling, and encouraging business operators in the vicinity to offer concessions for wedding couples who celebrate their marriage in marriage registries;

(6) given that cross-boundary marriages have become increasingly common in recent years, whether the authorities will consider setting up marriage registries in the Northern Metropolis or at locations near land boundary control points in the future, so as to facilitate members of the public to register their marriages and make arrangements for marriage services; and

(7) as there are views that unique wedding experiences, such as cruise weddings, destination weddings and mass weddings held on special days, have

been gaining popularity, whether the authorities will review and enhance the services of marriage registries, such as increasing the flexibility of booking marriage registration appointments, so as to provide services for people who intend to get married in Hong Kong, thereby boosting wedding-related consumption activities?

Reply:

President,

Solemnisation of marriages in Hong Kong is governed by the Marriage Ordinance (Ordinance) (Cap. 181). According to the Ordinance, a Notice of Intended Marriage (Notice) must be given by a person intending to register marriage in Hong Kong either in person or through a civil celebrant of marriages (Civil Celebrant) in advance to the Registrar of Marriages (Registrar) regardless of how and where the marriage is going to be celebrated. A marriage must take place, within three months from the date of giving the Notice, at any one of the six marriage registries (Registries) in Hong Kong, licensed places of worship (e.g. churches or other religious venues) or in other places before a Civil Celebrant.

In response to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Leung, my reply is as follows:

(1) The figures of marriage registrations celebrated in Registries, licensed places of worship, and other places before Civil Celebrants from 2022 to 2024 (January to June) are tabulated below:

Year	Marriage Registries	Licensed Places of Worship	Other places before Civil Celebrants*	Total
2022	13 796	1 241	14 946	29 983
2023	21 555	1 129	24 834	47 518
2024 (January to June)	10 639	472	11 480	22 591

*Including venues provided by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and other venues, of which the Immigration Department (ImmD) does not maintain figures on the related breakdown.

(2) The number of marriage ceremony quota available per year at each Registry and the average utilisation rates from 2022 to 2024 (January to June) are tabulated below:

	Number of Marriage Ceremony Quota Available at Each Registry		
	2022	2023	2024 (January to June)
City Hall Marriage Registry	8 008	8 006	3 933
Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry	7 358	7 369	3 621
Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry	13 232	13 262	6 183
Sha Tin Marriage Registry	10 280	10 310	5 066
Tuen Mun Marriage Registry	3 698	3 691	1 814
Tseung Kwan O Marriage Registry*	–	–	45
Average Utilisation Rate	32%	51%	51%

*The marriage hall of Tseung Kwan O Marriage Registry commenced operation on 26 June 2024.

Due to the pandemic, the average utilisation rates of the Registries in 2022 were lower than usual. In 2023 and the first half of 2024, the utilisation rates were similar to that of the pre-pandemic level. Since marriage ceremonies are usually held on weekends, if considering weekend weddings only, the average utilisation rates of each of the six Registries in 2023 and the first half of 2024 ranged from around 50 per cent to nearly 90 per cent.

(3) Currently, there are a total of six Registries in Hong Kong located all over Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. Each Registry and its wedding hall have their distinctive characteristics. The marrying couples can select their wedding venue at their own preferences.

To ensure the provision of quality marriage registration services and venues for marrying couples to celebrate their marriages, ImmD has all along been continuously reviewing the conditions of each Registry and carrying out regular maintenance, repairs and renovation works of various scales as needed.

Among others, the Tuen Mun Marriage Registry, originally located in the Tuen Mun Government Offices, was relocated to the new ImmD Tuen Mun Regional Office in March 2021. The new marriage hall adopts a contemporary design with high headroom and glass window walls to bring in lots of natural daylight. The designated photo corners outside the Registry and at the roof garden provide embellished spots for the newly-weds and their guests to take photos. In September of the same year, the Sha Tin Marriage Registry also underwent refurbishment works. The refurbished marriage hall adopts a novel and stylish design with warm and romantic floral arrangements.

As for the new Tseung Kwan O Marriage Registry opened in June this year by ImmD, its marriage hall adopts a novel design featuring a specially designed wall with starlight effect and multicouloured light installation to

add a touch of romance to the wedding ambience. Various photo-taking spots are set up in the marriage hall and outdoor area, including the heart-shaped garden and veil sculpture, for the newly-weds and guests to pose for photos.

As for the City Hall Marriage Registry and Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry located at the Hong Kong City Hall and Rawlinson House, which have respectively been declared as monument and Grade 1 historic building, are not suitable to undergo major renovation works. To preserve the originality and authenticity of these buildings with outstanding historical values, ImmD will carry out maintenance and repair works based on actual needs and ensure the proper use of these venues.

ImmD will continue to review and monitor the conditions of the Registries and their marriage halls, and suitably enhance their facilities at appropriate times based on actual needs.

(4) At present, the duration of each marriage ceremony held in a Registry is 15 minutes. Any extension in the duration of marriage ceremonies will affect the chance of other marrying couples to use the service, as well as the provision of other services by the Registries. Nonetheless, if the couples need to use the hall for a longer duration during non-peak hours, ImmD would provide flexibility and accommodate their needs as far as practicable having regard to the actual operational situation.

(5) Apart from providing wedding venues, ImmD's Registries, being Government venues, also provide various marriage registration-related public services for members of the public, including for giving of Notices, applications for search of marriage records and/or certified copies of marriage certificates, application for certificates of absence of marriage records, as well as application for post-registration of marriage. ImmD has no plan to introduce commercial activities for the promotion of marriage ceremonies at the aforementioned Government venues.

(6) and (7) To facilitate marrying couples in arranging marriage ceremonies, ImmD provides online and telephone appointment booking service for giving of Notices. Through the GovHK website, the couples can also check the earliest date for giving of Notice and available capacity for marriage ceremony of various Registries, as well as enquire, change or cancel an appointment.

On the other hand, in response to the need for more flexible and diversified marriage ceremony services, the Government introduced the Civil Celebrants of Marriages Scheme in 2006, empowering the Registrar to appoint Civil Celebrants to exercise duties related to marriage registration, including acceptance of Notices and celebration of marriage. A marriage celebrated by a Civil Celebrant can take place at any time and place in Hong Kong (other than the Registries or licensed places of worship). By engaging a Civil Celebrant to celebrate their marriage, marrying couples can have personalised marriage ceremonies with different themes according to their needs and preferences without any time or location constraint.

ImmD will review the service arrangements and operational needs from time to time to explore various service enhancement measures, for example the

extension of the duration of marriage ceremony and establishment of more new Registries at suitable locations with a view to providing more thoughtful and quality marriage registration-related services.