

LCQ15: Developing Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that the emergence of various problems in a number of major infrastructure projects in recent years has greatly undermined their confidence in the Government's proper implementation of infrastructure projects. For instances, the proposals for the Redevelopment of Hong Kong Stadium as well as the construction of the Kai Tak Sports Park and the Hong Kong Palace Museum had been the subjects of incessant controversies before final decisions were made; the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Shatin to Central Link projects experienced situations of serious cost overruns, delays or poor workmanship during the construction stage; the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal has remained practically deserted since its commissioning and failed to bring about the expected benefits; it is doubtful if the recently commissioned Central-Wan Chai Bypass, which cost \$36 billion and took nine years to construct, is effective in alleviating the traffic congestion on the northern part of Hong Kong Island. Some members of the public have queried that the projects introduced by the Government are "good for nothing" and they are even worried that the same mistakes will be made to the projects under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. As such, they have made it clear that they will object to the implementation of any new major infrastructure project. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) when it will make public (i) the findings of the detailed feasibility study on and (ii) the way forward for the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS);

(2) whether the Government, when studying EFLS in the past years, concurrently conducted studies on reclamation at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter, with a view to increasing land supply in Kowloon East and resolving the problem of insufficient ancillary transport facilities for the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal;

(3) given that the first batch of residential flats built under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision will not be completed for intake until 2032 the earliest, but some studies have pointed out that by conducting reclamation along the waters between the Kai Tak Approach Channel located on the north-eastern part of the Kai Tak runway and Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter, more than 85 hectares of land can be provided from 2024 to 2027, which will be sufficient for the construction of 70 000 residential flats, whether, before taking forward the reclamation plans relating to the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, the Government will "take the short cut" by proceeding with the reclamation works at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter which are smaller in scale, faster to complete and less

costly, so as to demonstrate the Government's ability to implement highly efficient and cost-effective infrastructure projects, thereby restoring the confidence of the public in the Government's proper implementation of infrastructure projects; and

(4) whether it has assessed if conducting reclamation works at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter will breach the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531); if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, and given some experts' criticisms that the Ordinance was enacted without prior detailed analysis and public consultation, comprises unclear provisions and has gravely hindered the development of Hong Kong, whether the Government will consider amending the Ordinance with a view to commencing the works concerned as soon as possible to provide more residential sites?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been implementing major infrastructure and public works projects in an appropriate and orderly manner with a view to improving people's quality of living, enhancing the long-term competitiveness and promoting the economic development of Hong Kong. Notwithstanding that there have been instances of cost overruns and delays in the delivering of certain mega projects in recent years due to unforeseeable circumstances that arose in the course of project implementation, we have maintained consistently good performance in cost estimation for projects under the Capital Works Programme as a whole (Note).

In view of the rising aspirations from the general public for better performance of public works projects in recent years, we established in June 2016 the Project Cost Management Office (PCMO) under the Works Branch of the Development Bureau to take forward various cost management initiatives for public works projects and promote cost management in the private construction sector. Subsequently, the Chief Executive announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the Government will upgrade the PCMO and expand its establishment and functions. We will therefore establish the Project Strategy and Governance Office for implementing strategic initiatives and enhancing capabilities in cost surveillance and project governance, so as to enhance the cost-effectiveness of major infrastructure and public works projects (including those public works projects under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision), minimise risks of cost overrun and delays with a view to coping with Hong Kong's long-term development and meeting our people's needs.

With respect to the Kai Tak Development (KTD), the Government has been taking forward the implementation of various infrastructure projects in phases to cope with the new population intake and various development needs in the district with a view to realizing the planning theme of transforming the KTD into a heritage, green, sports and tourism hub.

Our responses to the four parts of the question raised by Hon Paul Tse, having taken into account the inputs of relevant departments, are as follows:

(1) The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) is conducting the second stage of the detailed feasibility study for the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS), which is to explore the EFLS scheme, including its network coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. and conduct associated technical and financial assessments to ascertain its feasibility. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will consider the way forward for the EFLS project.

(2) to (4) The Government started planning for the future development of the former Kai Tak Airport site in the early 1990s. In 2001, the Government completed the Comprehensive Feasibility Study for the Revised Scheme of South East Kowloon Development, which proposed a total development area of 460 ha with about 133 ha from reclamation including the northern part of the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter (KTTS). In light of the judgment handed down by the Court of Final Appeal regarding the interpretation of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) in January 2004, the Government launched the Kai Tak Planning Review in mid-2004 with a view to examining the planning and engineering works of the former Kai Tak Airport site and preparing a new development proposal based on the 'zero reclamation' principle. Three stages of public engagement were conducted between 2004 and 2006. Subsequently, recommendations of the Kai Tak Planning Review were incorporated into the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) in November 2006, which were approved by the Chief Executive in Council in November 2007. The approved Kai Tak OZP No. S/K22/6 currently in force is mainly based on the OZP exhibited in 2006 which does not involve any reclamation proposal and has gone through several rounds of public participation. Neither is there proposal of reclaiming the KTTS for the purpose of increasing land supply in Hong Kong under the studies for the EFLS.

In fact, the KTTS is part of a busy working harbour, as well as a good place for water recreation. The Government is now promoting the development of the typhoon shelter in accordance with such a direction and on the basis of the existing Kai Tak OZP. For instance, the Government is undertaking the "Planning and Engineering Study on Kwun Tong Action Area – Feasibility Study". The study area comprises the Kwun Tong Action Area, the KTTS and part of the Kai Tak Approach Channel. The study proposes water body co-use initiatives to provide venues in the typhoon shelter for secondary contact water-based recreational activities (e.g. rowing) during non-typhoon days. The concerned reclamation proposal will affect the direction of promoting water body co-use. Besides, the KTTS is the second largest typhoon shelter within the Victoria Harbour. If the KTTS is to be released for other development purposes, the overall supply of sheltered berthing spaces in Hong Kong would decrease, which will render the overall supply of sheltered berthing spaces insufficient to address the demand of local vessels in future. Hence, if reclamation is to be conducted at the KTTS, site(s) must be identified in advance for planning of new typhoon shelters or sheltered anchorages, so as to ensure that there will be sufficient safe berthing spaces for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather.

As mentioned above, the Government is taking steps to implement the KTD

in accordance with the approved Kai Tak OZP, and there is currently no plan to carry out major reclamation works in any part of the KTTS, which forms part of the Victoria Harbour. There is also no intention to make amendment to the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) in the meantime.

Regarding the public transport for the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT), the Transport Department (TD) has been closely monitoring the relevant passenger demand and reviewed the public transport service level from time to time. At present, there are daily franchised bus, green minibus and ferry services plying between the terminal and other areas. The TD will continue to carry out such work with a view to enhancing the public transport service level of the KTCT as and when necessary.

Besides, CEDD is at present carrying out improvement works to a number of vehicular accesses (via Cheung Yip Street at its junction with Hoi Bun Road through a route of single two-lane roads comprising Shing Cheong Road at the former south apron, Kai Tak Bridge and Shing Fung Road at the former runway) to the KTCT. The said road improvement works involve the realignment and widening of the existing traffic route to a dual two-lane distributor road for completion in 2019. CEDD has also planned to commence construction of the Road D3 (Metro Park Section) in the first half of 2019 that will provide a direct traffic route within KTD linking the developments at the former south apron and former runway (including KTCT) with the former north apron (including the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link). The capacity of the road network serving the terminal will be substantially increased upon the progressive completion of the said road works.

Note: The Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council approved a total of about 580 Category A works projects with a total provision of \$890 billion in the past 10 years. Among them, about 70 projects required application to the FC for additional funding, which totalled around \$64.5 billion. In other words, additional funding was required in approximately 10 per cent of the projects and the amount represented some seven per cent of the total provision.