

LCQ19: Enhancement of Kowloon Park's facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

According to a paper submitted by the Government to the Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports of this Council on October 14 last year, the Government was planning to convert the former barracks in Kowloon Park into a Chinese Culture Experience Centre. There are views that the authorities should also explore enhancing the play equipment and leisure facilities in Kowloon Park to attract visitors, and as the Park is surrounded by a cluster of museums and the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), the Government may develop it into one of the core areas of the "cultural belt" in South Kowloon. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have conducted surveys or analyses on the utilisations rates or popularity of the play equipment and leisure facilities in Kowloon Park (including the Children's Playground, Discovery Playground, Maze Garden and Hong Kong Avenue of Comic Stars); if so, of the details; if not, whether they have plans to conduct the relevant surveys or analyses;

(2) whether the authorities will consider updating the under-utilised play equipment and leisure facilities in Kowloon Park, and drawing reference from the practice of the parks serving as "green lungs" on the Mainland and in other places to provide additional facilities and organise more attractive cultural or recreational activities in the Park, such as setting up youth culture bazaars, providing commercially-run recreational facilities (e.g. radio-controlled model cars) and organising e-sports activities, as well as allowing more public-private partnership activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that while it has been reported that the authorities have suspended the underground space development of Kowloon Park, there are views that the air-raid shelter there may be opened up partially, whether the Government will consider revitalising the air-raid shelter concerned and allowing it to function as a cultural and tourism spot or a showcase of history, etc; if so, of the details;

(4) given that there are views pointing out that the Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre (the Centre), which is located near one of the commonly-used entrances/exits of Kowloon Park, is incompatible with the functions of the Park, of the utilisation rate of the Centre in the past three years; as the Centre is housed in a building listed as Grade I historic building, whether the authorities will consider reprovioning the Centre, so

as to revitalise the historic building into a venue associated with culture, tourism, arts or showcase of history; if so, of the details; and

(5) whether the authorities will consider setting up dedicated bus and minibus routes and improving pedestrian connectivity, so as to enhance the accessibility between Kowloon Park and the surrounding cluster of museums and the WKCD; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with relevant policy bureaux and government departments, my reply to the questions raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is committed to offering diversified recreation, sports and leisure facilities in the parks under its management and beautifying the park environment, with a view to meeting the needs of people for leisure and recreation activities, advocating healthy lifestyle and promoting sports to the community.

Occupying an area of 13 hectares, Kowloon Park is a major park managed by the LCSD in the urban area. The densely planted trees within the park attract a great variety of species to inhabit and breed, which forms a unique small ecosystem. The park features both active and passive facilities as well as numerous historic buildings, which is well-received by members of the public. At present, over a thousand visitors come to enjoy the popular facilities of Kowloon Park, such as the Sculpture Walk, Children's Playground, the Loggia, the Maze Garden and the Chinese Garden, on weekends and holidays.

To enhance its services effectively, the LCSD has all along been collecting park users' feedback through various channels, including suggestion boxes and QR codes linking to the department's webpage, and making reference to development trends of park facilities. Suitable plans for repair, maintenance, renewal and improvement will then be formulated to address users' demand. In the improvement plan for 2024-2025, the LCSD has, taking into account the feedback received, adopted Kung Fu as the design theme for its outdoor toilets renovation project and carried out projects for the refurbishment of Chinese Garden and enhancement of fitness facilities. The LCSD also plans to install specially designed and styled panda displays around the fountain to add thematic elements in the park.

In addition to implementing the improvement plan for 2024-25, the LCSD also organises bird watching activities in the park on a regular basis. The Arts Fun Fair at the Loggia is also held regularly, where handicrafts such as floral artworks and accessories are showcased and available for sale, as well as arts services such as painting and calligraphy are provided. Moreover, there are Sculpture Walk for displaying arts sculptures of different styles and Kung Fu Corner for organising traditional Chinese Kung Fu performances as well as dragon and lion dances activities.

In addition, the LCSD welcomes applications for non-designated use of park facilities from public and private groups and organisations (including voluntary organisations, youth groups, as well as district and community organisations). The arcade and piazza within Kowloon Park are popular locations for hosting activities of varying scales and types (such as festive and cultural events, carnivals and exhibitions for public enjoyment). These activities offer diversified park experiences for the public and visitors, while providing different organisations with quality event venues.

The LCSD will continue to keep a close watch on the usage of the park and conduct opinion surveys in an ongoing manner. The department looks forward to hearing from park users about renewal of the facilities in Kowloon Park and the holding of diversified activities thereat with a view to providing leisure facilities of enhanced quality.

(3) Before consideration can be given to the adaptive re-use of any Air Raid Precaution (ARP) Tunnels, it is necessary to conduct thorough investigations and assessments to their internal structures. In general, the narrow internal spaces of underground ARP Tunnels will pose substantial constraints on the feasibility of adaptive re-use. With regard to the underground ARP Tunnel at Kowloon Park, part of the internal space is only wide enough for the passage of two to three people simultaneously. Its height is just about 1.7 metres, not to mention its inadequate lighting, ventilation and drainage facilities. Any attempt at revitalising the tunnel will necessitate the addition of facilities for water supply, drainage, power supply and ventilation which, altogether, will take up considerable space and further narrow the internal space. All these will affect the feasibility of the proposed adaptive re-use and its cost-effectiveness. Therefore, the Government currently has no plan for the adaptive re-use of the underground ARP Tunnel at Kowloon Park.

(4) Housed in Block S4 of Kowloon Park near Exit A1 of the MTR Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) Station, the Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre (the Centre) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is equipped with various facilities including an exhibition hall, a mini-theatre, a lecture room and an outdoor health education garden. Being an important channel of the FEHD for publicity, promotion and community engagement, the Centre disseminates important messages of personal and environmental hygiene as well as food safety to the general public through exhibitions, seminars, as well as educational and outreach programmes, etc. It also publicises the department's key areas of work to the public, including pest control, public toilet facilities, healthy living, kitchen hygiene, cleanliness of public markets, Clean Hong Kong campaign, and the promotion of green burial. Moreover, the FEHD hosts activity week at the Centre annually to further enhance public awareness on Clean Hong Kong. Located in the popular Kowloon Park, the Centre facilitates the Government's promotion of personal and environmental hygiene as well as food safety to the general public.

From 2022 to 2024 (as at November 30, 2024), the Centre attracted about 27 900, 46 100 and 51 700 visitors respectively, showing a gradually

increasing trend year by year. The Government has no plans for reprovisioning the Centre for the time being.

(5) The pedestrian and transport network of TST district is highly accessible. Various museums and cultural facilities (including the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), the Hong Kong Museum of Art, the Hong Kong Space Museum, the Hong Kong Science Museum and the Hong Kong Museum of History) are within walking distance of just around 10 to 15 minutes from Kowloon Park. There are also multiple green minibus and franchised bus routing through different museums in TST district and the WKCD, such as the newly introduced bus route nos. HK1, H1 and H2K that run through these locations (such as the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and the Hong Kong Palace Museum). To facilitate the planning of itineraries for members of the public and visitors, the LCSD has recently included transport routes and related information of other cultural facilities in TST district in the websites of its museums. The LCSD and the WKCD Authority will closely monitor the traffic demand of the public and visitors with the Transport Department.