

LCQ2: Developing cruise tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (October 23):

Question:

It has been reported that the number of cruise ships arriving in Hong Kong this year is far lower than that in Singapore, and a related association has also withdrawn from Hong Kong. On the other hand, the Government mentioned in the Policy Address delivered last year that it would review the development of cruise tourism economy and announce an action plan in the first half of 2024. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of ship calls in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, as well as the numbers of inbound and outbound cruise passenger trips, and the age distribution and per capita spending of passengers;

(2) whether further plans in the short, medium and long terms are in place to attract cruise ships to visit Hong Kong and consider Hong Kong as homeport; and

(3) of the positioning of and division of functions between the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) and the Ocean Terminal, and how the occupancy rates of the commercial floor space of the two terminals compare with each other; as there are views that when compared with the Ocean Terminal, there is much room for improvement in respect of transport connectivity between the KTCT and the shopping malls nearby as well as the luxury goods and commercial contents of such shopping malls, how the Government will enhance the transport connectivity between the KTCT and the surrounding scenic spots and key shopping malls in the short term?

Reply:

President,

After the pandemic, the Government has been making all-out efforts in promoting the recovery of the tourism industry, amongst which Hong Kong's cruise tourism is actually one of the work priorities. With the concerted efforts of the industry and the Government, a total of 30 cruise lines are scheduled to visit Hong Kong in 2024, representing an increase of 12 over 2023 and comparable to pre-pandemic levels. It is estimated that the non-local cruise passenger throughput this year will increase to about 330 000, representing an increase of 50 per cent compared with 220 000 the year before. Moreover, attributable to the efforts we have made, several new cruise lines will have their first ship calls in Hong Kong in the coming year, and new itineraries will also be launched by cruise lines to attract a

more diverse sources of customers.

We sought views extensively from relevant local and international stakeholders of the cruise industry earlier on the development of cruise tourism in Hong Kong, and formulated an action plan for further promoting cruise visits to Hong Kong. It will be published together with the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 by the end of this year.

Having consulted the Development Bureau and the Transport and Logistics Bureau, below is the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming:

(1) The total numbers of ship calls and cruise passenger throughputs in Hong Kong in the past five years are at Annex. Separately, according to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) in 2023, the onshore per capita spending of inbound cruise passengers embarking or disembarking in Hong Kong was about \$3,000. Nevertheless, the contribution of cruise tourism to Hong Kong's economy is not restricted to the spending by passengers, but also includes the expenses incurred in Hong Kong by the cruises (such as the expenses of arranging shore excursions or transport for passengers, provisioning for the cruises, berthing at terminals and hiring of ground crew members), as well as the onshore spending of crew members on leave. We do not maintain statistics on the age distribution of cruise passengers.

(2) The Tourism Commission (TC) and HKTB will continue to promote the development of Hong Kong's cruise tourism through various measures, attracting cruises to visit Hong Kong, and leveraging Hong Kong as the homeport for passengers to start or complete their cruise voyages. Those measures include:

(a) developing new cruise itineraries and visitor source markets. For instance, introducing cruise itineraries departing from the Mainland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand to Hong Kong in the coming months; and stepping up the promotion and publicity of fly-cruise and rail-cruise packages;

(b) facilitating cruise lines in making proper planning for cruises visiting Hong Kong, and providing them with various support and concessions, with a view to encouraging cruise lines to increase the number of ship calls, make overnight calls and leverage Hong Kong as the homeport;

(c) supporting the tourism trade in fully leveraging Hong Kong's unique tourism elements to design different featured shore excursions. Cruise passengers visiting Hong Kong this week will be arranged to join the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, thereby creating synergy between cruise tourism and mega events. In addition, a night time itinerary of Hong Kong classic tram tour has recently been selected by a cruise line as one of its top 10 shore excursions in the world;

(d) providing facilitation for inbound passengers who start their cruise voyage in Hong Kong, such as baggage delivery services for debarking cruise

passengers to enable them to explore the city hassle-free. TC also coordinates ship calls with a large number of Mainland visitors, streamlining the boundary crossing arrangements, and arranging coaches for them to travel direct to the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) in just 40 minutes;

(e) seizing the new opportunities brought about by cruise-related policies in the Mainland, such as the policy of allowing visa-free entry of foreign tourist groups aboard cruise ships at provinces along the country's coastline, and the measures allowing Mainland visitors to travel to Hong Kong in transit to join international cruise itineraries involving port-of-call in Mainland cruise ports, thereby attracting international cruise lines to develop more cruise itineraries covering Hong Kong and Mainland ports; and

(f) proactively participating in major industry events in the Mainland and overseas, and collaborating with ports in the Mainland and the Asian region to jointly promote Asia's cruise tourism in these events.

(3) Though complementing each other, the development and functions of the KTCT and the Ocean Terminal (OT) in Tsim Sha Tsui are not entirely the same and a direct comparison cannot be made between them. The OT was completed in 1966. Due to limitations in respect of water depth and clearance facilities etc, it can only accommodate small to medium-sized cruise ships with a gross tonnage of fewer than 90 000 tons and a smaller passenger capacity. Its floor area is primarily used for commercial purposes. As Tsim Sha Tsui has developed into one of Hong Kong's premier shopping and sightseeing hot spots, passengers joining cruise voyages there can also be benefited. As for the KTCT, it is an infrastructure specifically built for the berthing of mega-size cruise ships and is able to accommodate simultaneously two mega-size cruise ships with a gross tonnage of up to 220 000. The terminal provides sufficient space and facilities for handling a large number of inbound and outbound passengers as well as their embarkation and disembarkation within a short period of time, but only has a small ancillary commercial area. The KTCT commenced operation in phases from mid-2013, and since 2015 and 2017 respectively, it has already surpassed the OT in terms of annual passenger throughput and the number of ship calls.

Upon getting onshore, cruise passengers may either join shore excursions with connecting transport arrangements provided by cruise lines or local travel agents, or travel to destinations by public transport. The KTCT is being part of the Kai Tak Development (KTD). With the gradual completion of the traffic network and commercial facilities within the KTD, cruise passengers will be provided with greater convenience and more options for shopping and sightseeing. Those options include the major retail facility adjacent to Kai Tak MTR Station opened in September last year and another commercial project comprising a large department store scheduled for opening in November this year. In addition, the Kai Tak Sports Park, to be opened in the first quarter of next year, will not only provide over 700 thousand square feet of retail and catering facilities, but also venues for hosting various types of mega sports, cultural and recreational events, thereby creating synergy effects with the KTCT.

There are currently four regular franchised bus routes serving the KTCT, with three of them connecting Kai Tak Station. Subject to demand, an additional special bus route directly connecting the station will also be provided by public transport operator during the berthing of cruise ships. The Transport Department has also planned to provide two additional franchised bus routes, one of them providing connecting services to Kai Tak Station via Sung Wong Toi Station, while another providing express services to Hung Hom and Tsim Sha Tsui direct.

Thank you, President.