

LCQ4: Air-conditioning system of Tai Wai Market

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (August 18):

Question:

Tai Wai Market reopened in October last year upon completion of the works for retrofitting an air-conditioning system. However, quite a number of the tenants of the market have relayed that there has been no improvement in respect of air stuffiness in the market. They have pointed out that the cooling capacity of the air-conditioning system is insufficient and the system breaks down from time to time. In addition, the air curtains at the entrances/exits of the market are often turned off, resulting in cool air flowing away. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number and main causes of the breakdowns of the air-conditioning system of Tai Wai Market since its commissioning, and whether any design problem of the system was involved in such causes; the measures in place to reduce the frequency of the system breaking down;

(2) of the details of the follow-up actions taken in respect of the insufficient cooling capacity of the air-conditioning system, including the government departments and manpower involved, as well as the progress made so far; and

(3) whether measures are in place to improve the functions and reliability of the air-conditioning system; if so, of the details, including the estimated expenditure and implementation timetable; whether it will adopt some tenants' suggestion of retrofitting automatic sliding glass doors at the entrances/exits of the market, with a view to reducing the flowing away of cool air?

Reply:

President,

Thank you the Hon Yung Hoi-yan for the question. My consolidated reply is as follows:

The installation works of the air-conditioning system at the Tai Wai Market (the Market) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) was completed in September 2020. The objective was to improve the operating environment of the Market and provide a more comfortable shopping environment for the public. Apart from installing the air-conditioning system, the Market also underwent a series of improvement works, which

include upgrading of the electricity supply and ventilation system, barrier-free facilities and signage system, as well as refurbishment of toilet facilities etc.

The FEHD has been monitoring the operation of the Market closely since its re-opening in October 2020. According to the record of the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD), since the re-opening of the Market, air-conditioning supply has been temporarily suspended on three occasions. According to the contractor of the ArchSD, two of the occasions were caused by malfunction of individual components, and the contractor followed up immediately and arranged the replacement of the relevant parts. The other occasion took place on the day of fire services system testing of the residential premises located above the Market. The controllers of the fire services systems of the residential premises and the Market were located in the same room. It was believed that the fire services system of the Market was turned off erroneously during the test of the fire services system of the residential premises and hence affecting the air-conditioning system of the Market. The FEHD has added clear labelling at the switch of the Market's fire services system and requested the relevant management company of the residential premises to inform the FEHD such that the FEHD may send staff to the site when testing of their fire services system is carried out. These will help prevent similar occurrence in the future. In the abovementioned incidents, with the relevant parts replaced and the system restarted, the Market's air-conditioning system has resumed operation in full within a few hours. The contractor will carry out regular checking for the air-conditioning system and will follow up immediately if any problems are discovered.

In response to the opinion some tenants reflected to the FEHD that concerned insufficient air-conditioning, the FEHD has requested the contractor to conduct a comprehensive inspection of the system and adjust the air volume. The contractor has carried out repair and maintenance work and cleaned the heat rejection units thoroughly. The level of air-conditioning meets the design requirement. The FEHD will maintain close liaison with the ArchSD and arrange timely repair and maintenance for the air-conditioning system to ensure its smooth operation.

The design of the entrances of the Market is an open-style one. In order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the air-conditioning system, the ArchSD has installed double air curtains and ceiling fans at every entrance of the Market to block hot air from the outside. Nevertheless, the contractor found that some air curtains and fans had been switched off, thus affecting the indoor temperature of the Market. To avoid the air curtains and fans being switched off, the FEHD and the relevant departments are exploring whether security device may be installed for the switches of the air curtains and ceiling fans. Besides, the FEHD has put up a notice in the Market to solicit the public's co-operation. The FEHD has also stepped up inspection and paid extra attention to the relevant situation to ensure the normal operation of the air-conditioning system.

In total, there are five entrances in the Market. On some tenants'

suggestion of installing automatic sliding glass doors at the entrances, the ArchSD's preliminary view is that it might not be suitable for the key entrance near Mei Tin Road as it should be kept open due to fire safety consideration. Where feasible, the Government will proactively explore providing installations at the entrances to reduce the flowing away of cool air, including automatic sliding glass doors and air coolers etc.

The above measures on improving the air-conditioning system of the Market are followed up by the FEHD and the ArchSD with their existing manpower and resources, and there is no further breakdown of the costs of the individual tasks. The FEHD will continue to maintain close liaison with the tenants, take heed of their views, and provide timely response in collaboration with the ArchSD, with a view to creating a favourable shopping and operating environment for the Market.