

## LCQ7: Landing facilities and berthing spaces for local vessels

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 23):

Question:

Some fishermen have relayed that at present, some small fishing vessels cannot berth at typhoon shelters due to reasons such as licence restrictions or susceptibility to collision with other vessels. These fishermen have no choice but to berth their fishing vessels at places such as the outer area of typhoon shelters and breakwaters. Since such berthing locations lack embarking and disembarking facilities, fishermen can only embark on or disembark from their vessels by quite dangerous means such as climbing the boulders along the shore, striding over other small fishing vessels and making use of hand-pulled ferries and rafts. There have been cases in which some fishermen fell into the sea or sustained injuries while embarking on or disembarking from a vessel. I have proposed to the Marine Department (MD) that reference be made to the relevant practices of local pleasure boat clubs and those around the world to provide floating bridges at typhoon shelters for berthing of small fishing vessels, but MD has rejected the proposal on the ground that it falls under the purview of a number of departments and there is currently no policy support. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed if it is common for fishermen to embark on and disembark from fishing vessels berthed in the outer area of typhoon shelters and breakwaters by adopting the aforesaid quite dangerous means, and if the personal safety of them and other people is thus seriously endangered; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, why the authorities have failed to take measures to solve the problem; if it has not assessed, of the reasons for that;

(2) of the government department currently responsible for considering the proposal to provide the aforesaid floating bridges at typhoon shelters; whether it will set up an inter-departmental working group to be led by the relevant policy bureau to study the proposal and coordinate the relevant work;

(3) as quite a number of fishermen of small fishing vessels have relayed that there is an acute shortage of berthing spaces in typhoon shelters in various districts, how the authorities will improve the relevant situation;

(4) of the respective numbers of locally licensed vessels in the past three years that were less than 10 metres and between 10 and 15 metres in length; the number of embarking/disembarking points in various typhoon shelters in

the territory in the past three years; whether it has assessed the capacity of the landing facilities, in terms of the number of vessel trips per month, in various typhoon shelters in the territory; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as the Government said in reply to my question raised on July 13, 2016 that survey results indicated that the three landing facilities in Tuen Mun still had capacity to cope with more vessels and meet existing and projected demands, of the details of the survey concerned (including the criteria adopted); and

(6) given that some fishing vessels are currently not allowed to enter typhoon shelters under the law, but certain wholesale fish markets and important fisheries facilities are accessible only through typhoon shelters, how the authorities assist those fishermen in selling their catch and getting replenishment?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the Hon Steven Ho's question is as follows:

(1) Except for certain areas of waters where anchoring is prohibited, owners and masters of local vessels are allowed under existing legislation to anchor their vessels in the waters of Hong Kong according to the vessels' operational needs and the availability of different areas of waters, including safe and suitable waters in the outer area of typhoon shelters and breakwaters. Where necessary, seafarers should use shuttle vessels to travel between vessels anchored at sea and facilities such as public piers and landing steps for safe embarkation or disembarkation. The Government is committed to ensuring that there are enough landing facilities for use by vessels in the Hong Kong waters so as to enable seafarers to travel to and from vessels anchored at sea in a smooth and safe manner.

(2) In general, private yacht clubs provide floating bridges as landing facilities while the Government provides mainly public piers and landing steps as landing facilities. Public landing facilities are built for use by all local vessels for the main purposes of passenger embarkation and disembarkation but not berthing. From time to time, the Government reviews the utilisation of public landing facilities and gauges views from stakeholders to improve the design of landing facilities and facilitate their use by various stakeholders, including fishermen. Relevant government departments including the Marine Department (MD), the Home Affairs Department, the Transport Department and the Civil Engineering and Development Department have recently liaised with fishermen representatives and listened to their suggestions on improving the landing facilities. Considerations will also be given as to how the design and quality of such facilities can be further enhanced.

(3) The Government is committed to ensuring that there is sufficient and

suitable sheltered space within the Hong Kong waters for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather to safeguard the safety of these vessels and their crew members. To monitor the utilisation of such sheltered space, the MD keeps records of the highest occupancy of each typhoon shelter during typhoons. For instance, when a number of typhoons hit Hong Kong in 2017, sheltered spaces remained available for berthing by local vessels (including fishing vessels) in the typhoon shelters frequently visited by fishing vessels, including the Aberdeen, Shau Kei Wan, Cheung Chau, Sam Ka Tsuen and Shuen Wan Typhoon Shelters, with the exception of the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter. The MD is aware that the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter has seen occupancy rates of 100 per cent during typhoon passages in recent years. In view of this, whenever typhoons approach, the MD will closely liaise with local fishermen representatives in Tuen Mun to ensure that fishermen at sea stay alert to the latest typhoon information and return to Hong Kong as early as possible. To the MD's understanding from the representatives of local fishery associations, no Tuen Mun-based fishing vessels have been unable to return to the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter for berthing during typhoons in the past few years. The MD will continue to maintain contact with local fishery associations on arrangements during typhoon passages to ensure fishermen safety in inclement weather. In addition, the MD conducts regular territory-wide assessments on the demand and supply of typhoon shelter spaces to ensure that there is sufficient typhoon shelter space for use by local vessels in the waters of Hong Kong during typhoon passages.

(4) In the past three years, the respective numbers of locally licenced vessels (including fishing vessels) that were less than 10 metres and between 10 and 15 metres in length are as follow:

| Year<br>(As at year<br>end) | Less than 10 metres | Between 10 and 15 metres |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 2015                        | 11 733              | 2 000                    |
| 2016                        | 11 972              | 2 027                    |
| 2017                        | 12 027              | 2 084                    |

In the past three years, the total number of embarking/disembarking points in various typhoon shelters in Hong Kong remained at 52. The Government will from time to time review the usage situation and the structural safety of the various landing facilities to ensure that members of the crew can embark and disembark from a vessel in a smooth and safe manner. When considering the expansion or addition of landing facilities, various factors will be taken into account, including the feasibility of the works involved, the utilisation rate of such facilities, the area to be served, and availability of similar facilities in the waters nearby.

(5) The landing facilities mentioned in the reply to the question raised on July 13, 2016, as quoted in this current question, refer to the Kadoorie Public Pier, as well as the Tuen Mun Area 27 Landing No. 1 and the Tuen Mun Area 27 Landing No. 2 located within the Tuen Mun typhoon shelter near Sam

Shing Estate. The Transport Department arranged for a usage survey of these landing facilities in 2015, and the findings indicated that the three landing facilities still had capacity to cope with more vessels. The usage statistics of the three landing facilities in the duration of the survey are as follow:

| Landing facility                  | Daily vessel usage<br>(Hourly vessel usage on average) |                            |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
|                                   | Weekdays   | Weekends                   |
| Tuen Mun Area 27<br>Landing No. 1 | 75 vessels<br>(6 vessels)                              | 108 vessels<br>(8 vessels) |
| Tuen Mun Area 27<br>Landing No. 2 | 38 vessels<br>(3 vessels)                              | 26 vessels<br>(2 vessels)  |
| Kadoorie Public Pier              | 0 vessels<br>(0 vessels)                               | 2 vessels<br>(0 vessels)   |

Remarks: The survey was conducted between 7 am and 8 pm.

(6) Except for fishing vessels with length overall exceeding the "permitted length overall" of a typhoon shelter and outboard open sampans, currently all fishing vessels are allowed to enter typhoon shelters. The intention of granting licences to outboard fishing sampans, which are fishing sampans of smaller size and fitted with engines of smaller horsepower, was to enable and facilitate fishermen in transporting fish catch, fish fry, feed, replenishment, etc, within mariculture rafts located in remote waters. Owing to safety considerations, we do not advise this type of vessel to navigate in open waters where winds and waves are stronger, or to leave the rafts and head to further destinations. Should there be a need for fishermen to head to the relevant fisheries facilities to sell their catch and get replenishments, it would be more suitable to use other fishing vessels of greater size and sturdier construction. Nevertheless, if needed, open fishing sampans could still use the nearby public piers and landing steps located outside of the typhoon shelters to handle their catch and replenishments.