

LCQ8: Berthing of vessels at Tuen Mun River

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

It is learnt that the berthing facilities at the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter have long been in short supply. Recently, some members of the public and marine stakeholders have relayed that many vessels have illegally berthed within Tuen Mun River, giving rise to hygiene problems there which not only lead to environmental pollution but also affect the daily lives of the residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the Ordinances according to which enforcement actions were taken against the illegal acts of vessels berthing at Tuen Mun River over the past five years, and the number of cases where prosecutions were instituted in this connection in each of the years, with a tabulated breakdown by Ordinance;

(2) whether the authorities will consider providing berthing spaces for vessels at other locations in Tuen Mun, so as to reduce the number of vessels berthing at Tuen Mun River; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the authorities will adopt other measures, including taking some form of interception proportionately, to divert the large number of vessels currently berthing at Tuen Mun River; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the measures taken by the authorities over the past five years, including law enforcement and prosecution, to improve the overall hygiene of Tuen Mun River?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to ensuring that sufficient sheltered spaces are provided within Hong Kong waters for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather, so as to safeguard the safety of the vessels and their crew members. There are currently 14 typhoon shelters (including Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter adjacent to Tuen Mun River) located in different parts of Hong Kong waters, providing 423 hectares of berthing space for vessels. Apart from typhoon shelters, local vessels can also choose to berth at 18 sheltered anchorages.

It is the established policy of the Government to provide sheltered

spaces in Hong Kong on a territory-wide basis. The Marine Department (MD) carries out regular assessments of the territory-wide supply and demand situation of sheltered spaces provided, and the latest round of the "Assessment of Typhoon Shelter Space Requirements 2022-2035" was completed at the end of 2022. The results revealed that the overall territory-wide supply of sheltered space could meet the berthing needs of local vessels throughout the period up to 2035. In general, the MD conducts assessments about every five years, and the next round of assessment is expected to commence in 2025.

In addition, according to current marine legislation, local vessels may be anchored at any safe and suitable locations within Hong Kong waters according to their daily operational needs, except for restricted waters where anchorage is prohibited. As Tuen Mun River is not a restricted water area, local vessels can enter or berth at safe and suitable locations within the river area.

In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Development Bureau and the MD, the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) The MD carries out patrols in Tuen Mun River and deals with vessels and facilities violating the marine legislation in accordance with the law. Statistics on enforcement and prosecution actions conducted by the MD in the Tuen Mun River area in the past five years are set out at Annex.

(2) As mentioned above, given that Tuen Mun River is not a restricted water area, local vessels can enter or berth at safe and suitable locations within the river area. It has been observed that there is no congestion of vessels berthed in Tuen Mun River which has obstructed the navigable area. During its daily patrols, the MD continues to strive to keep Tuen Mun River unobstructed and conduct inspections on any safety issues related to vessels. Apart from assisting and instructing the vessels concerned to rectify the situation, the MD also carries out relevant investigations and follow-up actions when necessary.

(3) The installation of any object at sea may impose impacts to the marine traffic, navigational safety or vessels' safety. Therefore, the MD will not take any rash interception measures against vessels entering or berthing in the area of Tuen Mun River.

(4) The overall hygiene of Tuen Mun River fall under a number of government departments. Each department deals with related matters according to the established division of duties, including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s responsibility for removing floating refuse on river channel, the Drainage Services Department (DSD)'s responsibility for providing sewage and stormwater drainage services, the Environmental Protection Department regulating illegal sewage discharge, and the MD's responsibility for handling oil pollution.

Cleansing service contractors engaged by the FEHD conduct inspection and remove floating refuse at Tuen Mun River regularly. In the past five years (2019-2023), about 2 400 kilograms (kg), 2 900 kg, 3 400 kg, 5 200 kg and 4

000 kg of floating refuse was removed respectively. Officers of the FEHD would take enforcement actions against people found littering at the riverside, including issuing fixed penalty notices or summons.

The DSD continues to carry out regular desilting work for the section of Tuen Mun River from Siu Hong Station to Tuen Mun Station on Tuen Ma Line to maintain its drainage capacity. On average, the DSD conducts inspections of Tuen Mun River about two to three times every month and arranges desilting and river embankment cleaning when necessary.

In the past five years, the MD received a total of 19 reports of suspected oil pollution in Tuen Mun River, of which three cases were confirmed as oil pollution incidents by MD officers on site, and clean-up operations were arranged immediately. In addition, if relevant government departments intend to set up floating booms in Tuen Mun River to intercept floating refuse from entering the sea, the MD will provide advice from the perspective of marine traffic and navigational safety.