

LCQ1: Transport facilities of Kai Tak Cruise Terminal

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Tam Yiu-chung in the Legislative Council today (April 30):

Question:

It has been reported that since the commissioning of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (Cruise Terminal) in June last year, its ancillary transport facilities have all along been subject to criticisms. On the second of this month, upon berthing of the RMS Queen Mary 2 at the Cruise Terminal, the world's largest ocean liner, over 1 000 visitors queued up for taxis. As taxis entering the Terminal to pick up passengers were few and far between, the visitors had to wait for nearly two hours on average before boarding a taxi and quite a number of them were very dissatisfied with the situation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cruise vessels berthing at the Cruise Terminal since its commissioning; whether it knows the average time taken, after berthing of a cruise vessel, to disperse all disembarking visitors to head towards their destinations, the respective percentages of such visitors taking various means of public transport to their destinations, and the number of occasions where disembarking visitors had to wait for more than an hour on average before boarding a taxi; if it has not compiled such statistics, of the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has found out from the operator of the Cruise Terminal why there is always a long queue of disembarking visitors waiting for taxis; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the authorities and the operator of the Cruise Terminal will introduce new measures to attract more taxis to enter the Cruise Terminal to pick up visitors on berthing days and step up publicity work to encourage visitors to go to their destinations by public transport such as feeder buses; if they will; of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (Terminal) is an important tourism infrastructure in Hong Kong. We attach great importance to improving the transport connection of the Terminal. The Tourism Commission (TC) has been maintaining close liaison with the terminal operator and relevant departments and give them advice from time to time, with a view to ensuring safe and smooth operation of the Terminal and its transport arrangements.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) As at mid-April this year, there were a total of 21 ship calls at the Terminal since its commissioning in June last year. Except for the longer waiting time for taxis by passengers of Queen Mary 2 (QM2) on April 2, 2014, the operation and transport arrangements for cruise passengers of the Terminal were generally smooth.

Cruise companies usually arrange passengers to disembark in groups in an orderly manner within two to three hours after berthing of the cruise vessels. Generally speaking, cruise passengers may choose the following transport options in departing the Terminal:

(i) coaches arranged by the terminal operator bringing passengers to Tsim Sha Tsui (the MTR Kowloon Station and hotel areas), Hong Kong Island (hotel areas in Wan Chai, Causeway

Bay and North Point) and the airport;

(ii) free shuttle buses arranged by the terminal operator and operated by the nearby shopping malls for bringing passengers to the three nearby MTR Stations (Kowloon Bay, Kwun Tong and Diamond Hill);

(iii) transfer services (limousines or coaches) bringing passengers to the airport and major hotels arranged by the cruise companies;

(iv) shore excursion coaches arranged by the cruise companies;
and

(v) taxis.

Passengers going for sightseeing mostly opt for shore excursion tour coaches or coaches operated by the nearby shopping malls (i.e. the aforementioned service items (ii) and (iv)). Those who have finished their cruise journeys in Hong Kong will opt for the transfer services to downtown (i.e. the aforementioned service items (i) and (iii)) or taxis.

Coaches and shuttle buses will wait at the coach loading bays of the Terminal before cruise passengers disembark. After departing the terminal building and walking to the coach loading bays, most passengers can readily board the coaches or shuttle buses and leave the Terminal within a short period of time.

On the other hand, the supply of taxis is subject to various factors, such as weather conditions and demand for taxis in the vicinity during the period concerned, and the supply is therefore relatively difficult to manage. At times, there could be more passengers waiting for taxis; at other times, taxis may have to wait for passengers. Generally speaking, the waiting time for taxis averages about 15 to 30 minutes. The only occasion when the average waiting time

exceeded an hour occurred during the ship call of QM2 at the Terminal on April 2.

The terminal operator had notified the taxi trade of the ship call schedule of QM2 one day before her arrival and had continually called for taxis to come into the Terminal through taxi centres in the morning of QM2's berthing. However, the passengers' departure time coincided with the morning rush hour, coupled with the inclement weather, taxi service was already in great demand in the downtown areas. Even though the terminal operator had taken contingency measures in deploying staff to flag taxis in the main roads of Kwun Tong and Kowloon Bay to go to the Terminal to pick up passengers, taxi supply at the Terminal was very limited. The terminal operator also deployed Ambassadors at the taxi stand to advise passengers of other available transport services so as to reduce the number of passengers queuing up for taxis. Notwithstanding this, most passengers at the taxi stand maintained their choice to take taxis.

(3) The TC and the terminal operator are very concerned about the long waiting time for taxis by passengers of QM2. In this connection, the TC has urged the terminal operator to learn from experience and improve the transport arrangements along the following directions:

(i) to step up communication with the cruise companies to facilitate dissemination of information on all the available transport services to passengers both on board the cruise vessel and inside the Terminal;

(ii) to display information on the anticipated waiting time for taxis inside the Terminal and at the taxi stand to facilitate passengers' planning of their own transport arrangements;

(iii) to continue the practice of giving advance notification to the taxi trade on the ship call schedule of the cruise

vessels and calling for taxis via taxi centres on the day of berthing; and to meet with the taxi trade again to step up communications and explore ways to induce more taxis to go into the Terminal to pick up passengers; and

(iv) to review from time to time the fares and routes of the transport services provided by the terminal operator in order to enhance the attractiveness of the services.

The terminal operator has pledged to continue to enhance its service quality to better serve the passengers. Subsequent to the ship call of QM2 on April 2, the Terminal received three more cruise vessels with high passenger capacity in mid-April (i.e. Diamond Princess, Celebrity Millennium and Voyager of the Seas). The operation and transport arrangements of these three ship calls were smooth in general. Passengers took different means of transportation according to their needs, and did not have to wait for taxis for too long a period.

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