

LCQ5: Developing marine economy

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 14):

Question:

It has been reported that a number of coastal provinces in the Mainland have set up inter-departmental co-ordination groups led by provincial governors to co-ordinate policies on marine economy. However, there are views pointing out that the development of marine economy in Hong Kong is taken forward in a piecemeal fashion without top-level planning. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that development of marine economy involves various portfolios and it is difficult for a single-policy bureau to co-ordinate inter-departmental resources, whether the Government will make reference to the experience of the Mainland and set up a dedicated team led by officials at the decision-making level to co-ordinate the development of marine economy; if so, of the details and the implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as there are views that the existing policy focusing on regulation may hinder the development of marine economy, how the Government will promote the development of maritime industries, e.g. of the breakthroughs in terms of the introduction of the relevant legislative amendments and innovative policies, as well as the enhancement of cross-boundary co-operation and co-ordination; and

(3) apart from the three tourism projects currently being taken forward by the Development Bureau under the large-scale land-disposal approach, whether the Government will consider selecting more islands and coastal areas with potential for tourism development to implement the large-scale land-disposal approach on a trial basis, so as to bring in social capital for participation in infrastructure development and operation, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of marine tourism in Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

International organisations and individual economies have different definitions for "marine economy", and there is no unified global standard on which industries fall under the scope of marine economy. For Hong Kong, having made reference to the breakdown of the industry classification of the Mainland's marine economy and roughly compared the industries covered therein with those in the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification Version 2.0 compiled by the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department and other known

industry classifications, the Government Economist considered that the marine economy-related activities in Hong Kong can be broadly categorised into the following six categories:

1. maritime transport and port industry;
2. marine tourism;
3. marine utilisation, extraction, production and related manufacturing;
4. wholesale and retail of marine products;
5. marine public administration and social services; and
6. marine scientific research, technology and information services.

One of the six categories, "maritime transportation and port industry" includes ports, shipping, and maritime commercial services. In 2022, this sector contributed 4.2 per cent to Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounted for 2.1 per cent of total employment. Besides, "marine utilisation, extraction, production, and related manufacturing", along with "wholesale and retail of marine products", are partially related to capture fisheries and mariculture. According to data from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the local capture fisheries and mariculture production in 2023 was approximately 87 000 tonnes, with a total value of about \$2.4 billion, estimated to contribute less than 0.1 per cent to GDP. As for the remaining three categories, their value-added contributions could not be estimated due to limited data.

Having consulted the Deputy Financial Secretary, the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB), Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB), and the Development Bureau (DEVB), my consolidated reply to the question of the Hon Steven Ho is as follows:

(1) Given the extensive scope of the marine economy, which encompasses a diverse range of industries and development models, multiple policy bureaux and departments within the Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government are responsible for related areas. Relevant bureaux and departments attach importance on these developments and have formulated and implemented strategies, action plans, or blueprints accordingly. Each policy bureau and department, in accordance with their professional functions, introduces targeted measures to advance the development of marine economy-related areas under its purview, which are in line with the overarching policy direction, strategies, and pace of development. This approach fosters synergies between marine economy development strategies and other initiatives within the respective bureaux and departments, thereby more effectively achieving their policy objectives. The Government believes that the current approach suits Hong Kong's circumstances. Bureaux and departments will continue to review the development direction and progress of their respective areas, working collectively to drive the growth of marine economy. The SAR Government will also monitor progress across all fronts and, if necessary, explore ways to optimise the development approach.

(2) The development of marine economy in Hong Kong does not only focus on regulations. For example, the TLB has all along been promoting the

development of Hong Kong as an international maritime centre, and has been collaborating closely with the industry to implement various measures under the Action Plan on Maritime and Port Development Strategy, including strengthening regional collaboration and global connectivity to attract new cargo sources to Hong Kong Port, while driving the port's digitalisation, greening, and adoption of smart technologies; enhancing tax incentives for the maritime industry and introducing a half-tax concession for commodity traders; strengthening the high-quality reputation of Hong Kong ship registration; elevating the prominence of the Hong Kong Maritime Week, and attracting international organisations to host maritime events in Hong Kong.

On maritime services, apart from enforcing the relevant legislation to ensure marine safety, the Marine Department (MD) also endeavours to make maritime services more convenient. For instance, allowing the use of electronic certificates instead of paper-based certificates for ship-related matters. The MD also maintains close liaison and collaboration with Mainland maritime authorities at all levels.

On marine tourism, the CSTB put forward in the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 to make more and better use of Hong Kong's rich island and coastline tourism resources. As such, the CSTB encourages the development of more diverse tourism products with characteristics, and is ready to study and foster areas where removal of statutory and regulatory barriers are required. At the same time, the CSTB actively promotes development of island tourism and large-scale integrated resort projects focusing on eco-tourism, as well as continues to consolidate Hong Kong's position as Asia's hub for international cruise thereby promoting development of cruise tourism.

The ITIB has all along been dedicated to enhancing Hong Kong's innovation and technology ecosystem with a view to supporting the development of different technology industries (including marine technology) in various areas including capital, research and development, supporting tech start-ups and talent. At present, Hong Kong has one State Key Laboratory of Marine Pollution, contributing to the protection and management of the marine environment.

On the fisheries front, the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the AFCD are actively taking forward the various initiatives under the Blueprint for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Fisheries, including designation of four new fish culture zones as well as introduction of modernised facilities to support development of mariculture, explore the streamlining of relevant legislations to promote development of leisure fisheries, and at the same time strengthen co-operation with the Mainland. To further enhance the competitiveness of local agricultural and fisheries products, the AFCD plans to establish a unified new brand for safe, low-carbon and premium local agricultural and fisheries products, and to establish production standards, farming methods as well as a certification and traceability system for these products, etc. The AFCD will continue to actively participated in the promotional activities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to promote quality local products. In addition,

the AFCD has designated three new marine parks in the past five years, and has also formulated new fishery management strategies in marine parks and implemented marine ecological enhancement measures.

(3) The DEVB is actively pursuing the three projects under large-scale land disposal located on islands or coastal destinations, and in April this year invited the market to submit expression of interest for these three development proposals.

Besides, the DEVB recently has also proposed to provide marina and land supporting facilities at two waterside areas, namely the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter expansion area and the harbourfront site in the vicinity of the Hung Hom Station.

As to whether there are other suitable sites for large-scale land disposal in the future, the DEVB is willing to listen to different views, and will consider the experiences gained from taking forward the above three projects.

Thank you, President.