

LCQ5: Development of the border zone

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (December 2):

Question:

The Central Authorities have expressed full support for the integration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region into the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) and the overall development of the country. On the other hand, the development of the border zone of Hong Kong has lagged behind for years, striking a stark contrast with Shenzhen, which is located just a river apart and packed with high-rise buildings. Moreover, the presence of obnoxious facilities such as landfills, cemeteries and food waste treatment plants in the border zone, coupled with the lack of transport links, has constrained the development of the zone. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will change its policy by ceasing the construction or expansion of obnoxious facilities in the border zone and downsizing the existing facilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has studied how the development potential of the border zone can be fully realised so as to achieve "complementarity of advantages" with Shenzhen, such as by establishing a core business district; if so, of the details; and

(3) whether it has explored with the Central Authorities and the relevant ministries how Hong Kong may utilise the land in the border zone in its participation in the development of the Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

As the Chief Executive has stressed repeatedly in the past, Hong Kong needs to continue in the future to capitalise on its unique advantage under the "One Country, Two Systems" to integrate itself into the national development and connect itself to the world. In this connection, Hong Kong and Shenzhen, two cities adjacent to each other, have a particularly close relationship. Under the development strategy of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), the Central Government strongly supports the cooperation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in developing an international innovation and technology hub. In planning the spatial layout of Hong Kong, we will endeavour to fully incorporate these development directions. In fact, in the study of territorial development strategy under Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030 (Hong Kong 2030+ study), a "northern economic belt" is proposed in the border areas. The

proposed economic belt extends from Lok Ma Chau in the west to Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai and is suitable for research and development, modern logistics, warehousing and other emerging industries. A considerable portion of the land within the belt is those released from the frontier closed area (FCA) after the Government's review in earlier years. The abovementioned "northern economic belt" covers seven existing boundary crossings, while the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop, as well as the strategic growth area in the New Territories North (NTN) proposed in Hong Kong 2030+ study also fall on this development axis. These two developments involve approximately 190 hectares of the original FCA land. I will further elaborate on this later.

After consulting the relevant policy bureaux and departments, my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In identifying sites for waste and sewage treatment or funeral facilities, the Government will adopt a set of professional and comprehensive criteria for identifying the most suitable locations and conducting the relevant environmental, ecological, planning, traffic, etc. assessments. Necessary mitigation measures will be recommended to ensure that the identified sites will not cause unacceptable impacts to the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the sites have to undergo relevant statutory planning or environmental assessment processes. The Government has no established policy to intentionally group these facilities in the border areas. It is only due to suitability of the locations that individual facilities are established in areas close to the border areas.

Such large-scale treatment facilities situated in the NTN near the border include the North East New Territories (NENT) landfill and the food waste treatment facilities under construction. These facilities are mainly used for processing municipal solid waste and food waste originating from the NENT. Waste and sewage treatment facilities are not unique to the NTN, as there are various kinds of facilities in other major areas to meet the demands of the districts. The modern food waste treatment will adopt fully enclosed design and be equipped with air filtering and purifying facilities; and therefore will not impact on the surrounding environment. The Government is progressively implementing a series of waste-to-energy, waste reduction and waste disposal measures in order to reduce the need for disposing waste by landfill. The commissioning of the Integrated Waste Management Facilities near Shek Kwu Chau in 2025 will also help reducing the bulk of waste to be delivered to landfills.

As for funeral facilities, after several rounds of local consultations, the Government will construct the proposed columbarium, crematorium and funeral facilities only within the existing Sandy Ridge Cemetery. The project is being implemented in phases, of which the columbarium development will be completed in 2021, involving a project cost of over \$1.8 billion.

(2) and (3) In the course of land planning, we will fully consider ways of leveraging the geographical advantages of border areas or locations near cross-boundary infrastructures in order to seize the economic opportunities

brought by regional development such as the development of the Greater Bay Area. As far as commercial district is concerned, we will develop the Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area (NDA) in the western New Territories into a commercial hub of the western New Territories because of its easy access to the western part of Shenzhen such as Qianhai via the Shenzhen Bay Port and the proposed Hung Shui Kiu Railway Station. This NDA will provide more than 2 million square metres of commercial floor area and about 75 000 job opportunities. The first batch of works for the NDA have already commenced and the works for the entire NDA is targeted for completion by 2038.

The Governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen jointly plan and develop the Shenzhen/Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Co-operation Zone, which comprises the Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park (the Park) at the Lok Ma Chau Loop, with a view to establishing "one zone, two parks" at "one river, two banks" under the auspices of "One Country, Two Systems". The Park, located in the Lok Ma Chau Loop and covering 87 hectares of land, will provide a maximum gross floor area of 1.2 million square metres (three times that of the current Hong Kong Science Park) and become Hong Kong's largest-ever innovation and technology platform. With the geographical advantage of the Park, enterprises therein can leverage on Shenzhen's strong production facilities for mass production and tap into the huge Mainland market, thereby expanding their development scale and enhancing their economic benefits. Funding approval is being sought from the Legislative Council for the relevant building and infrastructure works with the aim of completing the first batch of buildings in 2024. Besides, the Government will explore with the Shenzhen Municipal Government on the implementation of co-location arrangements at the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen, so as to release over 20 hectares of land in Hong Kong's Lok Ma Chau Control Point, which is now part of the frontier closed area, for other uses.

Three Potential Development Areas (PDAs) in the vicinity of the boundary crossings, namely the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, Man Kam To Logistics Corridor, and the NTN New Town (covering Heung Yuen Wai, Ping Che, Ta Kwu Ling, Hung Lung Hang and Queen's Hill), have been identified within the NTN strategic growth area to fully leverage on their strengths of convenient access to Shenzhen and eastern Guangdong. Based on preliminary estimation, the three PDAs can bring about a total of 215 000 job opportunities and accommodate a population of around 255 000 to 350 000 involving around 720 hectares of development area. The Government has commenced the feasibility study of San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node and will endeavour to carry out the detailed design for the Development Node as well as conducting the planning and engineering studies for the other two PDAs next year.

In the course of land planning for the border areas, we will not lose sight of the development of the neighbouring Shenzhen. In fact, the two Governments have put in place various channels for interchange on such issues as cross-boundary transport and environmental protection. For example, the Planning Department of Hong Kong and the Planning and Natural Resources

Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality will meet regularly on a yearly basis to exchange views on each other's planning work.

Thank you, President.