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Head: (100) Marine Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (2) Port Services
Controlling Officer: Director of Marine (Maisie CHENG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:
The quantity of floating refuse collected in Rambler Channel has consistently reached new heights. What were the various measures implemented by the Government for preventing the generation of and handling the floating refuse in Rambler Channel and the expenditure involved for the past 5 years? Has the Government developed any new programmes or allocated additional resources for addressing the problem in view of the increasing quantity of floating refuse?

Answer:
1. The Marine Department (MD) signed the existing contract for marine refuse cleansing services with the contractor for a term of 5 years commencing from 1 October 2017 and ending 30 September 2022, involving a contract expenditure of about $447 million. This represents an increase of about $258 million, or 136% in the contract expenditure when compared with the previous five-year contract. Under the new contract, the contractor provides a fleet of about 80 vessels for marine refuse cleansing, representing an increase of 10 vessels, or 14%, when compared with the previous contract. Among which, 8 are new vessels, including 6 fast response boats, 1 catamaran equipped with mechanical refuse cage and 1 vessel fitted with motor scooper. These vessels help enhance the efficiency and effectiveness in cleaning up marine refuse.

2. Currently, the contractor is providing a fleet of vessels of various types to clean up marine refuse in Hong Kong waters on a daily basis (including Sundays and public holidays), which includes offering domestic refuse collection service to vessels berthed in typhoon shelters, anchorages and small boat anchorage areas. The contract for the marine refuse cleansing services includes cleaning up floating refuse, collecting domestic refuse from vessels, managing refuse collection points and transporting refuse to landfills for disposal, etc. Since the expenditure for collecting the floating refuse in Rambler Channel forms part of the overall contract cost for the marine refuse cleansing services, there is no separate breakdown for such item.
3. The MD has increased a total of 5 Marine Inspector IIs and 2 patrol launches since 2017-18 to expand the staff establishment and equipment for conducting sea patrols to 10 Marine Inspector IIs and 4 patrol launches, with a view to stepping up inspection of cleanliness at sea across the territory and monitoring of the work performance of the contractor, as well as allocating resources in accordance with the actual needs to address the floating refuse problems in various districts. Moreover, the MD is planning to commence a trial run of floating booms in this year, which tackle the issue of marine refuse by intercepting floating refuse, in waters causing no obstruction to vessel traffic.

4. On the whole, the Government will continue to implement a series of measures to tackle the marine refuse problem, which include expanding cleanup actions for marine refuse, stepping up inspection, monitoring and cleaning up of marine refuse blackspots, providing additional facilities to prevent refuse from entering the marine environment, as well as strengthening cooperation with neighbouring cities, under the coordination of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Marine Environmental Management. The Government will also promote clean shorelines and waste reduction at source by means of publicity and educational campaigns, various Clean Shorelines Liaison Platform and the Environment and Conservation Fund. As for the resources required for such initiatives, the Government has already earmarked an additional provision of about $40 million in 2019-20 for the departments concerned (including the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Environmental Protection Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) to enhance the equipment and to provide additional facilities and staffing in order to take forward the various improvement measures mentioned above.

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