(Question Serial No. 4403)

Head: (100) Marine Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (3) Local Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Marine (Maisie CHENG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

(a) In view of the rapid increase in the demand for berthing spaces from Class IV vessels including pleasure vessels, the illegal berthing of pleasure vessels in various waters was rampant in late 2018. It has been reported that certain groups even place a number of giant floating pontoons in the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter to occupy the berthing spaces for profits. Has the Government strengthened control over the berthing issue other than taking follow-up actions on the vessels suspected to have contravened the shipping ordinances? If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

(b) Does the Government have any specific statistical method to measure the occupancy rate of berthing spaces? According to government statistics, currently there are a total of 14 typhoon shelters, of which many of them are small in area that make them difficult for berthing, and are situated far away from the urban areas, such as the Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter and the Hei Ling Chau Typhoon Shelter. While most of the pleasure vessels berth temporarily at the anchorage areas, the occupancy rate of some public berthing spaces is called into question. Does the Government have any measures to address the issue in view of the uneven distribution of berthing spaces?

Asked by: Hon LAU Kwok-fan (LegCo internal reference no.: 48)

Reply:

(a) Under existing legislation, except for certain areas of waters where anchoring is prohibited, a local vessel may anchor and berth in the waters of Hong Kong according to the vessels’ operational needs.

All local vessels, other than certain exceptions such as vessels carrying dangerous goods and vessels exceeding the permitted length of respective typhoon shelters, may enter and remain in any typhoon shelters at any time. However, the vessels shall not take up any position, or be berthed, moored or secured in a typhoon shelter in such a way that they would obstruct the free access of other vessels to any unoccupied space in the typhoon shelter or in a passage area.
The Marine Department (MD) frequently patrols different areas in the waters of Hong Kong including typhoon shelters to ensure that vessels are berthed safely and orderly and that the passage areas are kept clear at all times, with a view to maintaining marine traffic and navigation safety. MD will closely monitor the use of typhoon shelters and take necessary follow up actions on any irregularities found, such as keeping a close liaison and conducting joint operations with enforcement departments as and when necessary to curb any suspected cases of criminal activities.

(b) The MD does not maintain records of occupancy of typhoon shelters and sheltered anchorages in normal days, but keeps track of the highest occupancy of each typhoon shelter during typhoons to ensure that vessels’ demand for sheltered spaces during inclement weather could be met. According to MD’s records, three of the 14 typhoon shelters (namely Rambler Channel, To Kwa Wan and Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelters) reached their full occupancy when super typhoon Mangkhut struck Hong Kong in 2018. Sufficient sheltered spaces were still available for use by local vessels in the remaining 11 typhoon shelters, including the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter and the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter in the Victoria Harbour which could accommodate vessels up to 50 metres in length.

In order to better utilise the berthing space in typhoon shelters, MD established a private mooring area at the Hei Ling Chau Typhoon Shelter in December 2017. MD is also planning to set up private mooring areas in other areas, e.g. at the Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter, with a view to increasing the overall supply of areas for the laying of private moorings.

- End -