

LCQ10: Traffic arrangements for access to Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery

Following is a question by the Hon James Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (May 3):

Question:

Every year, during the Ching Ming, Easter and Chung Yeung holidays as well as on several preceding and following weekends, the Transport Department closes to all vehicular traffic the access road leading to the Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery. As a result, grave-sweepers have to walk about 1.3 kilometres uphill to the cemetery. It has been reported that on the day of the Ching Ming Festival this year, thousands of old and young people went to the cemetery to pay respects to their ancestors, but more than ten of them fell on the way or felt sick in the heat of the day. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the average number of visitors to the cemetery for grave-sweeping on each of the road closure days this year; and
- (b) how it will improve the traffic arrangements for access to the Cemetery, and whether it will consider the suggestions of the local community, such as providing an uphill escalator, a pedestrian link to Tiu Keng Leng MTR Station, or another vehicle access road; if it will consider, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

- (a) To ensure public safety and facilitate vehicular and pedestrian traffic at the Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery (the cemetery) and the nearby area, special traffic arrangements are implemented every year during Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals (the festivals). These include closure of the access road to the Cemetery to all vehicular traffic on the days of the Festivals and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays in the weeks preceding and after the festivals. The dates of road closure during the Ching Ming Festival in 2006 and the number of visitors to the cemetery on each of those dates are set out in the Annex.

(b) The road closure arrangements are part of the package of measures implemented since the Chung Yeung Festival in 2001 to improve access to the cemetery during the festivals in the light of the serious traffic congestion at the cemetery and the nearby area during the Ching Ming Festival in 2001 (note). Other measures to facilitate grave sweepers' access to the cemetery include -

(i) Widening of the existing access road: the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries (BMCPC) widened the access road from the entrance at Yau Tong to the Cemetery Office to dual lanes in March 2002 at a construction cost of \$26.8 million;

(ii) Special bus service: except on Ching Ming Festival and Chung Yeung Festival and the Sundays preceding and after the festivals, the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited operates a special bus service (Route No 14S) from Yau Tong via Lei Yue Mun Road to the cemetery on the road closure days; and

(iii) Spreading out the flow of visitors to the cemetery: the BMCPC advances the opening hours of the cemetery to 7am on road closure days and encourage the public to sweep graves on weekdays through the media.

As a long-term measure to further improve access to the cemetery during the festivals, the BMCPC is looking into the feasibility of constructing a footpath linking the cemetery to the Tiu Keng Leng area and will consult the Kwun Tong and Sai Kung District Councils again on the latest proposal shortly.

As regards the suggestions of constructing an escalator connecting the cemetery with Yau Tong area and the provision of a vehicular access connecting the cemetery with the proposed road network in Tiu Keng Leng area, the BMCPC and the departments concerned have concluded that both suggestions are not viable -

* Escalator: this will not help resolve the existing bottleneck problem at Yau Tong area as both the proposed escalator and the existing access road start at Ko Chiu Road, Yau Tong. In addition, since high usage of the escalator will mainly be confined to the few weeks preceding and after the two festivals, it is not cost effective having regard to the high construction and maintenance costs of the escalator.

* Vehicular access: given the huge vertical level difference between the cemetery and the proposed road network in Tiu Keng Leng area, an access road connecting the two involves sophisticated technical issues including substantial environmental

impacts and any additional reclamation which are not justified having regard to the usage of the road being confined to the Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals. Moreover, the works programme for the road network in the area is also not definite and a long lead time is required for its completion. Given the above, this proposal will not meet the imminent need to improve access to the cemetery to relieve the overcrowdedness during the festival periods.

(Note: Previously, road closure was implemented on the few days preceding and after the Festival Days. Since the Chung Yeung Festival in 2001, such measures have been extended to all Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays in the weeks preceding and after the Festival Days.)

Ends/Wednesday, May 3, 2006

Annex

Number of Visitors to the Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery on Road Closure Days during the Ching Ming Festival in 2006

Road Closure Date	Number of Visitors
12.3.2006 (Sun)	21 008
18.3.2006 (Sat)	10 090
19.3.2006 (Sun)	22 160
25.3.2006 (Sat)	11 962
26.3.2006 (Sun)	17 424
1.4.2006 (Sat)	15 970
2.4.2006 (Sun)	23 372
5.4.2006 (Wed) (Festival Day)	67 076
8.4.2006 (Sat)	12 362
9.4.2006 (Sun)	16 740
14.4.2006 (Fri) (PH)*	14 086
15.4.2006 (Sat) (PH)	10 374
16.4.2006 (Sun) (PH)	20 439
17.4.2006 (Mon) (PH)	11 643
22.4.2006 (Sat)	9 885
23.4.2006 (Sun)	11 173
29.4.2006 (Sat)	4 611
30.4.2006 (Sun)	16 952
1.5.2006 (Mon) (PH)	6 747
5.5.2006 (Fri) (PH)	not available

(PH)*: Public Holiday