

LCQ2: Cheung Sha Beach

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Hok-ming and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

Regarding the press reports that the situation of marine sand loss at Cheung Sha Beach has been deteriorating since 2002, will the Government inform this Council :

- (a) of the data, with beach length expressed in metres and sand height in centimetres, collected from monitoring the fluctuation in the sand volume of the beach and the situation of sand loss at Cheung Sha Beach in each of the past four years; if monitoring exercises have not been conducted annually, the reasons for that;
- (b) whether it has studied the reasons for the continuous increase in marine sand loss; of the authorities' remedial measures, the timing and estimated costs for implementing such measures; and
- (c) whether the authorities' plan to set up a five-star spa resort on Lantau will be affected by the problem of marine sand loss at Cheung Sha Beach or even shelved as a result?

Reply:

Madam President,

My reply to Hon Cheung Hok-ming's question is as follows:-

(1) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has all along paid attention to the loss of marine sand on the beaches. The Upper Cheung Sha Beach (the Beach) was about 1 500 metres in length and about 25 to 30 metres in width on average and no noticeable change was observed in the past four years. However, with the change of seasons and the ebb and flow of the tides, there may be an increase or decrease of the volume of marine sand at certain locations of the Beach in different months of the

year. Waves and seasonal currents usually wash away the marine sand in summer in the middle of the year, but most of the sand will be brought back to the Beach at the end of the year. The volume of marine sand on the Beach has all along varied with the changes of seasons and tides, but it has not affected the services to swimmers. The LCSD has not discovered anyone stealing marine sand from the Beach.

However, due to the impact of Typhoon Prapiroon in early August 2006, a large volume of marine sand on the Beach was swept away by huge waves. The situation was serious as the concrete foundation of the beach building and the submerged rocks underneath the sand were exposed. Part of the beach facilities such as the passageways of the beach building and the access to the Beach were also damaged by the typhoon. In addition, the width of the Beach was diminished by about three metres while the sand layer was reduced in depth by about 150 centimetres. According to the assessment of the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) after their on-site inspection, the tremendous sand loss of the Beach this time was mainly caused by the Typhoon Prapiroon since no large-scale dredging or reclamation works was found in the vicinity.

In addition to causing massive loss of marine sand to the Beach, Typhoon Prapiroon has also damaged certain facilities of the beach building, such as the tiles of the passageways and the access ramp for the disabled, which needed emergency repairs. Hence, the LCSD has closed the Upper Cheung Sha Beach temporarily from August 4 to 24, 2006 and the public was advised to go swimming at the Lower Cheung Sha Beach and Tong Fuk Beach in the vicinity during that period.

After the swimming season, which is from January to March next year, the CEDD will carry out small-scale restoration works within the beach area. Such works will include an addition of marine sand onto the beach area and the beach access, and removal of stones from the beach area to facilitate the use of beach facilities by the public. The cost of the works will be about \$2 million. In addition, repair works to the affected planters, stairs and ramp will also be carried out by the Architectural Services Department during the non-swimming season this year.

According to past records, tremendous destruction had also been done to particular beaches due to the routes and wind directions of typhoons. In August 1979 and September 1983, the Deep Water Bay Beach and the Castle Peak Beach were hit by typhoons respectively, resulting in massive loss of marine sand and destruction of many trees. It required a long period of time for the marine sand lost to flow back

gradually to the beaches concerned.

(2) Based on the observations by the Department, except for the massive loss of marine sand at the Upper Cheung Sha Beach due to the impact of Typhoon Prapiroon in August 2006, there has not been significant loss of marine sand at the Beach over the past few years. However, with the change of seasons and the ebb and flow of the tides, there may be an increase or decrease in the volume of marine sand at certain locations of the Beach in different months of the year. In order to monitor effectively the movement of marine sand at various beaches, the LCSD has, in conjunction with the CEDD, monitored the situation objectively and in an advanced manner.

(3) In 2004, the Government commissioned a Consultancy Study on the Development of Spa and Resort Facilities to identify the potential of developing world class spa and resort facilities in Hong Kong. The study has conducted three case studies, one of which is on Cheung Sha in Lantau, to identify and demonstrate the general issues involved in the development of spa and resort facilities in Hong Kong. These examples are case studies only. The private sector may explore their own proposals on other sites. The study concludes that market demand will be the most important driving force for such development. It would be up to the private sector whether they wish to pursue the development of a five-star spa resort on Lantau. The Government should only play a facilitating role. In fact, spa and resort facilities can be built at different places, such as countryside, urban areas, etc. Beaches are only supplementary facilities. The plan to develop spa and resort facilities should therefore not be affected by marine sand loss at beaches.

Ends/Wednesday, December 13, 2006