

LCQ2: Water sports accidents

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Yung-kan and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

Given that a number of water sports accidents which involved casualties occurred in Hong Kong last year, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the number of water sports accidents which occurred in the waters of Hong Kong in the past three years, the causes of such accidents and the casualties involved;
- (b) what measures are in place to prevent such accidents; and
- (c) whether legislation will be enacted to require water recreation facilities (including speedboats, banana boats and jet-skis) to comply with prescribed safety standards; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

For the three parts question, my reply is as follows:

- (a) According to reports made by vessel owners or users to the Marine Department, there were 19 marine accidents involving vessels used for water sports over the past three years, causing one death and 21 injuries. The main causes of these accidents included careless behaviour when water skiing, people falling overboard and collisions between vessels.
- (b) When taking part in water sports or recreational activities on the water, members of the public need to be aware of the risks involved and pay due regard to their own safety and that of others. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Hong Kong Police Force and the Marine Department jointly organise an annual Water Sports Safety Seminar to raise public awareness of how to enjoy water sports safely.
- (c) Under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance, any person in possession

of a speed-boat or jet-ski must hold both a certificate of ownership and an operating licence for navigation at sea. The provisions of the ordinance do not apply to vessels used exclusively for recreational purposes and that are not fitted with an engine, such as canoes, hired beach pleasure boats, windsurfing boards and dinghies.

Government's policy on water sports (such as canoeing, sailing and windsurfing) is the same as with other sports, that is, to promote sport, raise levels of performance, improve public health and physical fitness, and identify and nurture talented athletes.

Specialised sports programmes held in Hong Kong should comply with the codes that are formulated or recognised by the respective international federations. Such codes generally include the rules and measures on safety, as well as other guidelines on specific sports events. In promoting their sports in the local community, Hong Kong's national sports associations (NSAs) are required to monitor and regulate their sports in accordance with the codes formulated or recognised by the international federations to which they are affiliated, so as to ensure that the sports concerned can develop in a safe and organised way.

Furthermore, boating activities that involve speed-boats, banana boats and jet-skis take place in open waters, and not at water sports centres or beaches under the management of the LCSD. The Government does not at present intend to introduce legislation specifically in relation to such activities. However, we will continue both to enforce the current legislation governing such vessels and to promote education on water sports safety.

Ends/Wednesday, May 12, 2010

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