

For discussion on 17 July 2001

LegCo Panel on Economic Services Helicopter Services in Hong Kong

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the current operation of helicopter services in Hong Kong and on the measures taken by the Government and the Airport Authority to facilitate their development.

Current Helicopter Services

2. At present, there are two commercial helicopter service providers based in Hong Kong, namely “Heliservices (Hong Kong) Limited” (Heliservices) and “Helicopters Hong Kong Limited” (HHKL). The former operates domestic chartered flights¹ for customers for a variety of uses such as sight-seeing, aerial survey, filming/photography, maintenance/construction support work, etc. In addition to domestic flights, HHKL also operates cross-boundary chartered helicopter flights between Hong Kong and Macau in conjunction with Macau-based East Asia Airlines.

3. In 2000, Heliservices and HHKL together operated a total of 3,379 domestic flights, an average of about 9 per day. As regards helicopter services between Hong Kong and Macau, there were 17,436 flights and 94,228 passengers were recorded, representing an increase of 6.5% and 29.8% respectively over 1999. Statistics on helicopter services from 1996 to 2000 are at Attachment 1.

Facilities for Helicopter Services

4. Hong Kong is a small place. Having regard to the relevant safety and environmental protection requirements, there are constraints in finding suitable sites for helicopter landing, maintenance and supporting facilities. Notwithstanding these constraints, the Government has made available several

¹ In general, air services can be classified as scheduled and non-scheduled services. Scheduled services usually refer to flights operated by airlines in accordance with the capacity and routing provisions in the relevant air services agreements or arrangements. Non-scheduled services usually refer to air services other than scheduled services, i.e. chartered flights.

sites for these purposes in the urban area. These include the Central Heliport at Lung Wui Road and the Hong Kong Macau Ferry Terminal (HKMFT) (with customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) facilities) for helicopter landing purposes, as well as a site at Kwun Yam Shan and the ex-Government Flying Service base at Kai Tak for maintenance and support purposes.

5. The Airport Authority has also provided three helipads at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) for the operation of business aviation, cross-boundary and domestic helicopter services. The Authority will monitor the use of these landing facilities and examine the need to develop a heliport on the airport island in due course.

Further Development of Helicopter Services

6. The operation of helicopter services is a commercial decision. The Government's long standing policy is to facilitate the development of such services. Specific measures taken include the provision of land in the urban area and on the airport island as helicopter landing, maintenance and support facilities, provision of technical advice to helicopter service operators (e.g. advice on the relevant safety requirements regarding the introduction of new helicopter types or the expanding of ground facilities), and regular review of air traffic control procedures to enhance the efficiency of helicopter operations. Besides, in conjunction with the Airport Authority, a set of operating procedures for handling helicopter services at the HKIA has been worked out.

7. In view of the interest recently expressed by some helicopter service providers to start scheduled helicopter services between Hong Kong and other parts of the Pearl River Delta Region, we have already started initial discussions with the relevant Mainland authorities regarding a number of issues. These include the need to expand the current air services arrangement between the Mainland and Hong Kong, draw up helicopter flights routes in the Pearl River Delta and provide other supporting facilities, such as CIQ arrangements.

8. Hong Kong's expanding economic ties with the Pearl River Delta Region will call for enhanced transport links. In this regard, helicopter services will play a role and further development of helicopter services may require additional helicopter facilities in the urban area. CAD has therefore started a consultancy study in April 2001. The study will -

- (a) assess the short-term and long-term demand for helicopter services between Hong Kong, the Mainland and Macau, as well as for domestic helicopter services;

- (b) establish the demand for a new heliport(s) in the urban area and the corresponding economic costs and benefits;
 - (c) evaluate two potential heliport sites identified by the Planning Department in a site search in 2000, i.e. the outer pier of HKMFT and the former Kai Tak Airport (which is covered by the South East Kowloon Development Study); and
 - (d) propose a comprehensive plan for the development, funding and future management of any new heliport.
9. The study will be completed by the end of 2001. Its findings will assist us in considering how to facilitate further the development of helicopter services.

**Economic Services Bureau / Civil Aviation Department
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Attachment 1

Table 1 – Domestic Helicopter Flights Operated by Heliservices and HHKL
(1996-2000)

Year	No. of Movements	Growth	Passengers carried	Growth
1996	2,012	0.5%	6,322	6.5%
1997	2,260	12.3%	6,413	1.4%
1998	2,494	10.4%	6,368	-0.7%
1999	3,062	22.8%	7,196	13.0%
2000	3,379	10.4%	9,280	29.0%
Average Annual Growth		11.0%	Average Annual Growth	9.3%

Table 2 – Helicopter Flights Operated between Hong Kong and Macau
(1996-2000)

Year	No. of Movements	Growth	Passengers carried	Growth
1996	11,964	32.2%	40,732	8.7%
1997	14,570	21.8%	47,864	17.5%
1998	14,394	-1.2%	52,190	9.0%
1999	16,370	13.7%	72,577	39.1%
2000	17,436	6.5%	94,228	29.8%
Average Annual Growth		14.0%	Average Annual Growth	20.3%