

Motion Debate on
“Promoting the Development of Fishing Activities”
at the Legislative Council Meeting on 3 February 2010

Progress Report

Purpose

The motion on “Promoting the Development of Fishing Activities” passed by the Legislative Council at the meeting on 3 February 2010 urges the Government to formulate effective measures to promote the development of fishing activities in Hong Kong on various fronts. This paper follows up on the motion debate and reports to Members on the work of the Government in this respect.

Considering Relaxing Restrictions on Operation of Various Types of Recreational Fishing Activities

2. We understand that the trade hopes that the Government will relax the existing restrictions on operating recreational fishing business on fish rafts, at fish ponds and by fishing vessels, as well as streamline the application procedures to facilitate the industry and cater for the needs of the public. To facilitate the development of the industry, the Government will remove the barriers as far as circumstances permit.

3. On improving the application procedure of recreational fishing business, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has

streamlined the approval procedures and criteria for issuing the consent letter for recreational fishing on fish rafts. AFCD would also provide appropriate advisory services and technical support to fish farmers who are interested in applying to operate recreational fishing business on fish rafts. Such support would expedite the approval process as the assessments of the impact of recreational fishing business' applications on nearby fish rafts and the mitigation plans could be completed more effectively and accurately. Since the measures to streamline the procedures and criteria was implemented in September 2009, a total of 16 applications have been received (including 11 renewal cases and three new cases which have been approved, one withdrew and one being processed).

4. We also note that some fish farmers would like to provide services such as barbecuing and cooking on fish rafts. In this regard, we need to address the issues of food safety, environmental hygiene, waste and sewage disposal, fire safety and the impact on fish culture operation and fish culture environment in the fish culture zones. In any event, any person engaged in business relating to the sale of food is required to apply for the relevant licence or permit under the *Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance* (Cap. 132) and the *Food Business Regulation* (Cap. 132X). The AFCD will continue to communicate with fish farmers and listen to their views on the development of recreational fishing on fish rafts.

5. The motion urges the Government to relax the existing restrictions on passenger capacity of fishing vessels and, provided that safety standards are met, allow fishermen to operate an additional business of carrying passengers for angling at sea. In this regard, our primary consideration is passenger safety. As fishing vessels are not designed for carrying passengers, marine legislation therefore provides that fishing vessels shall not carry passengers. In this connection, the Marine Department (MD) has, in collaboration with the

AFCD, examined the proposal to convert fishing vessels to meet the passenger safety standards so that they can operate in the mode of “one licence for two trades” during the fishing moratorium (i.e. fishing vessels could engage in both commercial fishing and the business of carrying passengers for recreational fishing activities at sea). As fishing vessels are not originally designed for carrying passengers, if they are converted to meet safety standards, considerable expenses may be involved. The MD has explained in detail the relevant safety standards and conversion options to the fishermen and fishermen’s organisations concerned, and no further enquiries have been received. Fishermen who plan to operate recreational fishing activities on a long-term basis should consider procuring pleasure vessels or passenger carrying vessels specifically designed for recreational fishery purposes, which should be operated by qualified persons. If necessary, the departments concerned will provide advice on the relevant technical support.

Enhanced Promotion of Fishing Activities and Various Complementary Measures

6. Fishing is an increasingly popular outdoor activity which is beneficial to the body and mind. There are currently quite a number of recreational fishing organisations and online discussion forums organised by fishing enthusiasts in Hong Kong, which provide platforms for information and experience exchanges among anglers. Many community organisations also offer fishing courses and seminars on different fishing skills. Besides, in 2009/10, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has organised two fishing fun days for the public. The demand for this kind of activity is, however, not great as there are already similar and established activities in the community. Moreover, there is currently no authorised fishing sports association in Hong Kong to provide suitable coaching support or develop

safety standards and teaching materials on fishing. Therefore, the LCSD has no further plan to organise fishing training courses.

7. With respect to providing additional facilities and safety equipment which are conducive to fishing activities, we note that from time to time there are people angling at waterfront promenades managed by the LCSD. In view of this, the LCSD has provided fences and life buoys as appropriate at waterfront promenades under its management and coastal recreational facilities under construction, in order to ensure safety. Moreover, for the safety of other users of the promenades, the LCSD will also erect notices reminding anglers to use their fishing tackle with care to avoid causing any inconvenience or injury to others. On the other hand, reservoirs are also popular fishing spots. To facilitate fishing for the public, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) is preparing to build additional facilities at Plover Cove Reservoir and Shek Pik Reservoir. The facilities are expected to be completed in September this year before the onset of the fishing season. From August this year, the WSD will also attach an inset in its water bills to promote reservoir angling.

8. Various types of fishing competitions can provide a platform to enhance skills sharing and facilitate exchanges among fishing enthusiasts. We note that fishing competitions of various scales which are organised by local fishing associations take place in Hong Kong every now and then. The motion also mentions the organisation of international fishing competitions to promote fishing activities and the beautiful coastal environment of Hong Kong to other places. International sporting events held in Hong Kong are normally organised by the sports associations concerned while appropriate assistance will be rendered by the LCSD having regard to individual circumstances. On the other hand, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) welcomes the staging of international competitions in Hong Kong by any organisation and is willing

to give advice and appropriate assistance on promoting the events. Nevertheless, there is yet no sports association in Hong Kong which is qualified to organise international fishing activities.

9. The motion urges the Government to promote the beautiful coastal environment of Hong Kong to other places. Through various channels, the HKTB has been promoting green tourism and introducing tourists to the scenic coastal beauty of Hong Kong, such as breathtaking views of the blue sky and sea water at South Lantau, Gold Coast, Sai Kung, Repulse Bay and Shek O. Starting from 2006, the HKTB has been organising guided tours under the Nature Kaleidoscope Programme. One of these is the Northeast New Territories Islands Hopping Tour developed jointly with the industry which allows tourists to appreciate the natural ecology and characteristics of the fishing villages at such places as Lai Chi Wo, Crooked Island and Tap Mun in Northeast New Territories as well as offers a number of hiking tours to Tai Long Wan in Sai Kung, etc. In step with the opening of the Hong Kong National Geopark in November 2009, the HKTB and the industry have included additional features of the Geopark in these guided tours to enable tourists to enjoy the beautiful natural landscapes of Hong Kong, which include the geological wonders in various parts of the territory.

Conservation of Marine Resources and Sustainable Development of Fishing Activities

10. The Government will continue its work on the conservation of marine resources, including monitoring the marine resources in marine parks, exploring the feasibility of designating more marine parks for conservation of marine resources and on-going implementation of reef deployment project, etc.

11. Besides, we will also actively examine co-operation with the Pearl River Delta region to achieve better development and conservation of the entire waters. The Hong Kong Guangdong Marine Resources and Conservation Special Panel, which is a standing mechanism, provides a forum for Hong Kong and Guangdong to exchange information and experience on fisheries management, marine conservation and law enforcement on a regular basis in order to enhance the protection of marine resources jointly possessed by both places. We will continue to actively promote marine conservation in the region through the existing time-tested mechanism.

Food and Health Bureau

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