

Special traffic arrangements for Tuen Ng Festival

Police will implement special traffic arrangements in various districts on June 7 (Friday) to facilitate the public to watch dragon boat races and to ensure smooth vehicular traffic movement and pedestrian safety.

Southern District

A. Road closure

In Aberdeen, Kwun Hoi Path near Ocean Court will be closed between 7am and 6pm, except for vehicles of local residents.

In Stanley, Stanley Link Road and Hoi Fung Path will be closed between 6am and 7pm, except for vehicles of local residents.

Stanley New Street and Stanley Market Road will be closed between 7am and 6pm, except for vehicles of local residents and vehicles with permit.

Stanley Main Street will be closed between 7am and 11pm and designated as pedestrian precinct.

B. Suspension of parking spaces

The public car park near the refuse collection point on Stanley Beach Road and all parking spaces on Stanley Link Road will be suspended from 6am on June 6 to 7pm the following day.

All metered parking spaces and motorcycle parking spaces on Island Road, except for disabled parking spaces, will be suspended from 6am to 7pm.

Tuen Mun

The following roads will be closed from 7am to 3pm, except for permitted vehicles:

- A section of the unnamed access road connecting Wu Shan Road (near Wu Hong Street) between its cul-de-sac and the entrance of the open-air car park; and
- The unnamed access road connecting Wu Shan Road (opposite to Wu Shan Bowling Green).

Tai Po

A. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from 6pm on June 6 to 2pm the

following day, except for taxis and permitted vehicles:

- Dai King Street;
- Dai Hei Street; and
- Dai Kwai Street between Dai Cheong Street and Tai Po Waterfront Park.

B. Closure of cycling track

The cycling track inside Tai Po Waterfront Park near Tai Po Industrial Estate will be closed from 7am to 2pm.

C. Suspension of parking spaces

The metered car park on Dai Shing Street and the metered parking spaces on Dai Hei Street and Dai King Street will be suspended from 6pm on June 6 to 2pm the following day, except for permitted vehicles.

Sha Tin

—

A. Road closure

Sand Martin Bridge (Sha Tin Rural Committee Road between Yuen Wo Road and Tai Chung Kiu Road) will be closed from 7.30am to 2.30pm. Vehicles crossing Shing Mun River must travel via Lion Bridge (Lion Rock Tunnel Road) or Banyan Bridge (Fo Tan Road between Yuen Wo Road and Tai Chung Kiu Road).

B. Closure of cycling track

The cycling track along the northern riverside of Shing Mun River Channel between Sand Martin Bridge and Banyan Bridge will be closed from 7.30am to 2.30pm.

All vehicles parked illegally may be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of the traffic arrangements will be made depending on traffic and crowd conditions in the areas. Motorists are advised to exercise tolerance and patience and take heed of instructions of the Police on site.

LCQ21: Disposal of waste medicine from households

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

Under the existing legislation, the storage, collection, transport and disposal of chemical waste must comply with the relevant regulations. As only waste medicine and injections generated by healthcare institutions such as hospitals and clinics are classified as chemical waste, the disposal of waste medicine from households is not regulated. It is learnt that at present, members of the public generally throw their leftover medicine into toilet bowls or discard them together with domestic waste, which is then transported to landfills. It has been reported that according to the findings of a study conducted last year, the samples of leachate taken from three landfills generally contained human antibiotics, at levels exceeding the limits by five to 53 times. The researcher concerned has pointed out that leachate, after treatment, still contains antibiotic residues which, upon discharge into the sea, will affect the marine ecosystem and enter the human food chain, resulting in the development of antibiotics-resistant microorganisms. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, in the light of the findings of the aforesaid study, review and tighten the existing regulation on the disposal of waste medicine from households; if it will tighten the regulation, of the specific measures; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will, by drawing reference from the experience of overseas countries, explore the implementation of a trial scheme on collection of waste medicine from households (e.g. setting up collection boxes for drugs); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will conduct an in-depth study on the amounts of pharmaceutical residues in the environment and their impacts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Responses of the Environment Bureau to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien are as follows:

The landfills in operation in Hong Kong are installed with multi-layer composite liner system covering the entire base area. All leachate (i.e. the sources of wastewater samples taken for the study mentioned in the question) arising from decomposition of landfilled waste is collected, treated and discharged into public sewers according to statutory standards, and released via sewage treatment works managed by the Drainage Services Department (DSD). According to the research conducted by the DSD, the sewage treatment works in Hong Kong can effectively remove some of the pharmaceutical residues in the sewage, including antibiotics, as similarly concluded in related overseas research findings. Therefore, the amount of the pollutants, including antibiotics that may be present in the effluent will have been greatly reduced after the aforementioned treatment procedures.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization published a research report on the issue of residual pharmaceuticals in the environment in 2012, pointing out that the level of pharmaceuticals remaining in the environment is normally low, and the amounts in drinking water sources generally do not pose any risk to human health. According to the studies published by local academics in 2016 and 2018, the concentrations of antibiotics detected in river waters of Hong Kong were generally low, and were lower than that in various rivers of Europe, North America, Australia, and the Pearl River of China. It is believed that the trace amounts of antibiotics that have been discharged into the sea via Hong Kong's rivers present a very low impact on the marine environment and are unlikely to have any effect on public health.

Making reference to the current scientific findings on environmental waters, and the treatment, discharge arrangement and standards for landfill leachate in Hong Kong, as well as the fact that since antibiotics prescribed by doctors generally need to be finished in total by the patients and the actual amount of unconsumed pharmaceuticals containing antibiotics that are mixed with household waste or in domestic sewage is very small, the associated environmental pollution or the impact on human health would be very mild. The Government therefore considers that currently there is no need to regulate the disposal of waste medicine from households or implement a trial scheme on its collection. Nevertheless, together with the Food and Health Bureau, the Environment Bureau will continue to keep in view international research and advancement in antibiotic issues, and the Environment Bureau will also review the need for a more in-depth study on residual pharmaceuticals in the environment according to the developments.

LCQ14: Policies and measures concerning foreign domestic helpers

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question :

Last year, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare pointed out that there were nearly 380 000 foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) working in Hong Kong, that such number represented a growth by more than one-fold as compared to that of 20 years ago and accounted for nearly 10 per cent of the labour force, and that the number of FDHs might increase to 600 000 within the coming 30 years, accounting for more than 15 per cent of the labour force. On the policies and measures concerning FDHs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that FDHs must leave Hong Kong within two weeks after the termination of their employment contracts, unless they have been granted exceptional approvals for extension of their stay, of the circumstances under which FDHs will be granted exceptional approvals;

(2) as some FDH employer groups have pointed out that some FDHs resign shortly after arriving in Hong Kong, how the Government ensures that FDHs will leave Hong Kong within two weeks after the termination of their employment contracts;

(3) whether it has sufficient manpower to investigate if there are cases of FDHs extending their stay without exceptional approvals; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as it has been reported that the Government is considering the importation of carers from other places for subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs),

(i) whether measures are in place to ensure that the employment opportunities of local workers will not be affected; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(ii) whether it has assessed if the situation that the remuneration for RCHE carers is more attractive than that for FDHs will affect the supply of FDHs; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether the Government will introduce measures to encourage more people to come to Hong Kong to work as FDHs; if the assessment outcome is in the negative, of the reasons for that;

(5) given that people who intend to hire a FDH must have a monthly household income of no less than \$15,000, but households whose income barely reaches this level can hardly afford the expenses associated with hiring FDHs (including salary and employees' compensation insurance policies), whether the Government will consider reviewing such income threshold; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) notwithstanding that it has been stated in the Standard Employment Contract (SEC) that a FDH must reside in the residence of his/her employer as named on his/her visa and perform domestic duties, of the measures put in place to ensure that FDHs will not engage in other work during holidays or outside working hours, which will affect the employment opportunities of local workers; and

(7) given that according to the requirements in SEC, FDHs are required, before they come to Hong Kong, to undergo medical examinations and to produce the reports to the employers for inspection, but some FDH employer groups have pointed out that ordinary employers (especially the elderly) do not have sufficient knowledge to comprehend such reports, and some employers have even been persuaded by the intermediaries into signing the employment contracts before receiving such reports, whether the Government will consider stepping up the monitoring of medical check-ups for FDHs so as to prevent FDHs with severe health problems from coming to work in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

A consolidated reply in consultation with the bureaux and departments concerned to the sub-questions raised by the Member is set out as follows:

(1) & (2) Under the prevailing arrangement, foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) have to undertake in the visa application form for employment in Hong Kong that he/she will depart Hong Kong upon the completion of employment contract or within two weeks after the termination of employment contract, whichever is the earlier. This is one of the conditions of stay imposed on the FDHs by the Immigration Department (ImmD). An FDH who has overstayed is in breach of his/her condition of stay. According to the Immigration Ordinance, offenders are liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for two years.

ImmD has all along been processing employment visa applications of FDHs in a rigorous manner. If an applicant has any adverse records or breaches, ImmD may refuse his/her application.

If an FDH has been criminally intimidated or abused and is required to remain in Hong Kong for assisting in investigation or acting as a witness etc. after the termination or expiry of his/her contract; or he/she is awaiting the hearing of the Labour Tribunal or Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board owing to a labour dispute; or if there are other compassionate grounds, ImmD may, based on individual merits, exercise discretion to allow him/her to extend his/her stay in Hong Kong as a visitor.

(3) In investigating cases on FDH overstayers, ImmD follows established procedures, including gathering intelligence and taking referrals from different channels, and flexibly deploying manpower for follow up and investigation. After investigation, apart from prosecuting FDHs who have overstayed and contravened the conditions of stay, ImmD will also carry out enforcement operations against intermediaries or agents which aid and abet them. ImmD has also been enhancing publicity, to promulgate the messages that hiring illegal workers is a criminal offence and that employers must inspect travel documents of non-Hong Kong permanent resident job-seekers before hiring them; and to encourage the public to report suspected cases of illegal employment.

(4) As regards the manpower supply for elderly service sector, as stated in "The Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address", individual sectors have long been encountering human resources shortage and recruitment difficulties. With the tight labour force and ageing population, the elderly care service sector experiences a particularly acute situation. In this connection, the Government has, through a number of measures, been helping the subsidised elderly care service sector in employing additional manpower. For instance, to assist the sector in employing and retaining frontline care staff, the Government has since 2018 allocated additional resources to subsidised welfare service units, including elderly service units, to enhance the remuneration of frontline care staff. Meanwhile, the Government has also

indicated that, on the premise that local workers' priority for employment should be safeguarded, consideration may be given to allowing greater flexibility for subsidised elderly service and rehabilitation service units to import carers.

Under the prevailing policy of importing FDHs, an FDH shall only perform domestic duties for the employer specified in the contract, and shall not take up any other employment with any other person, including not taking up employment with residential care home for the elderly.

(5) Under the prevailing policy, employers who wish to employ FDHs must be financially capable of employing an FDH after his/her household expenditure has been deducted. In general, for every FDH to be employed, the employer must have a household income of no less than \$15,000 per month or assets of comparable amount to support the employment of an FDH for the whole contract period. This requirement is intended to protect FDHs by ensuring that employers are financially capable of paying the wages of FDHs during the contract period.

The Government would review the aforementioned income and asset thresholds as appropriate. In considering the necessity of adjusting the income and asset thresholds, the Government would carefully consider the relevant socio-economic factors, including whether there is an actual need for adjustment, protection for FDHs, the financial capability of employers, and the impact on families in need of FDHs' services, etc. At present, the Government has no plan to adjust the prevailing income and asset thresholds.

(6) According to clause 4(a) of the Standard Employment Contract (SEC) for employing FDHs, an FDH shall only perform domestic duties for the employer as per the Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties annexed to the contract. Clause 4(b) states that the FDH shall not take up, and shall not be required by the employer to take up, any other employment with any other person. Clause 4(c) of SEC makes it clear that clause 4(a) and (b) will form part of the conditions of stay to be imposed on an FDH by the ImmD upon the FDH's admission to work in Hong Kong under the contract. It is also clearly stipulated that a breach of the said conditions of stay will render the FDH and/or any aider and abettor liable to criminal persecution. In addition, FDHs and their employers are required to give an undertaking to the Government on the said conditions of stay. If employers or FDHs breach the undertaking, such conduct will be taken into consideration in the FDHs' future applications for employment visa or extension of stay, or the employers' future applications for employing FDHs. The applications may be refused.

ImmD is also committed to combatting the employment of illegal workers, including FDHs who are involved in illegal employment in Hong Kong, in order to protect the employment opportunities of local workers. To further tackle the problem of illegal employment, ImmD conducts inspections in black spots of illegal employment from time to time and launches frequent inter-departmental joint operations with departments such as the Hong Kong Police Force and Labour Department (LD). Actions are taken against illegal workers

as well as their employers who have contravened the Immigration Ordinance. At the same time, more efforts will be spent on collecting intelligence to enhance the effectiveness of the operations combatting illegal employment.

(7) Generally speaking, there is no stipulation by the Government on pre-employment medical examination of employees (whether local workers or overseas workers coming to Hong Kong for employment). Nevertheless, according to clause 17 of SEC, employers and FDHs shall declare that the FDH has been medically examined as to his/her fitness for employment as a domestic helper and his/her medical certificate has been produced for inspection by the employer. We recommend prospective employers to, before signing the contract, know about the physical conditions of the FDHs by inspecting the medical certificates in determining whether they are able to fulfill the relevant work requirements.

According to the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies (EAs) (the Code), EAs (including those providing FDH placement services) should ensure that the information provided to employers (including the aforementioned medical certificate) is consistent with the facts made known to them. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the information provided by the job-seeker is inaccurate or the information is incomplete, the EA should seek clarification and further information from the party concerned (e.g. the local or overseas business partners who referred the job-seeker). If an EA has contravened the requirements of the Code, LD may consider revoking or refusing to renew its licence.

If an EA has deployed unfair trade practices, such as false trade descriptions or misleading omissions, it may have breached the Trade Descriptions Ordinance. If an employer suspects that an EA has deployed unfair trade practices, he/she may complain to the Customs and Excise Department or seek assistance from the Consumer Council.

LCQ6: Tolls of road tunnels and control areas

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed to me that as the existing tolls of the various road tunnels and bridges vary, residents in some districts need to bear higher transport fares. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the considerations based on which the Government determines whether and at what levels road tunnels and bridges should be tolled; whether construction cost is one of the considerations;

(2) of the operating revenues and expenditures respectively of the government tolled tunnels and the Lantau Link in each of the past five years; and

(3) whether it will comprehensively review the toll levels of the government tolled tunnels and the Lantau Link, and consider adjusting downward or dispensing with the tolls; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

(Acting) President,

Currently, there are a total of 16 road tunnels and two Control Areas (namely the Tsing Ma Control Area (TMCA) and Tsing Sha Control Area (TSCA) in Hong Kong. Of the road tunnels, 13 are government tunnels, two are "Build, Operate and Transfer" tunnels, namely the Western Harbour Crossing and Tai Lam Tunnel, and one is a private tunnel, namely the Discovery Bay Tunnel.

Among the government tunnels, seven of them are tolled tunnels, including the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, Eastern Harbour Crossing, Aberdeen Tunnel, Lion Rock Tunnel, Shing Mun Tunnels, Tseung Kwan O Tunnel and Tate's Cairn Tunnel. Tolls are also collected at certain road sections within the two Control Areas, namely the Lantau Link in TMCA and the Eagle's Nest Tunnel, Sha Tin Heights Tunnel and Tai Wai Tunnel in TSCA. All the above-mentioned tolls were effected through legislation.

As for toll-free government tunnels, there are a total of six, including the Kai Tak Tunnel which was commissioned back in 1982 and five recently commissioned, namely the Scenic Hill Tunnel and Airport Tunnel leading to the Hong Kong Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge which were commissioned in October 2018; the Central-Wan Chai Bypass Tunnel commissioned in January 2019; as well as the Lung Shan Tunnel and Cheung Shan Tunnel leading to the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point which were commissioned last month.

Our consolidated reply to the various parts of the Hon Chan Hak-kan's question is as follows:

Tolls collected account for the majority of the operating revenues of the government tolled tunnels and the tolled sections within the two Control Areas. The Government also explores and implements feasible measures to generate additional revenues, such as erecting advertisement panels at suitable locations of the tunnels and Control Areas so as to bring about advertising income, without compromising road safety.

Operating expenditures involve mainly the contract fees paid by the

Transport Department (TD) to operators responsible for the management, operation and maintenance of the tunnels and Control Areas. For government-built tunnels and tolled sections in the Control Areas, their respective operating expenditures also include the depreciation charges of the construction costs and the depreciation costs of major system replacement works. In addition to the tunnel operators' systematic check-ups and routine upkeep for the tunnels, TD also replaces major systems of the tunnels and tolled sections of the Control Areas in a timely manner after consulting the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, in order to ensure the safe, reliable and effective operation of the tunnels and Control Areas.

The operating revenues and expenditures of the government tolled tunnels and the tolled sections within the two Control Areas from 2013-14 to 2017-18 are at Annex. Since the revenue and expenditure figures for 2018-19 are being compiled, we are unable to provide the relevant information for the time being.

In determining whether and at what levels the above-mentioned road tunnels and Control Areas should be tolled, the Government has mainly adopted the "cost-recovery" and "user-pays" principles and has taken into account a host of factors, including traffic management, costs (including the capital ones) of provision of the relevant tunnels and roads, the toll levels of alternative routes, public affordability and acceptability, etc.

To encourage more efficient use of road space so as to alleviate road traffic congestion, the Government is planning to re-examine the directions and guiding principles applicable to the determination of the toll levels of all government tolled tunnels and Control Areas. As stated in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address, we propose to adopt the concept of "Congestion Charging" and the principle of "Efficiency First" in determining the levels of tolls for different types of vehicles using tolled tunnels as well as the TMCA and TSCA so as to utilise more effectively the limited road space.

The concept of "Congestion Charging" refers to the charging of different tolls according to the degree of traffic congestion of the tolled tunnels, TMCA and TSCA during different time periods, with a view to changing the travel patterns of users of the tunnels and Control Areas by rendering some private car drivers to switch to public transport modes or refrain from using the tunnels and road sections concerned during peak periods. As regards the principle of "Efficiency First", it refers to enabling efficient people carriers such as franchised buses, and vehicles that support economic activities such as goods vehicles, to enjoy concessionary tolls, while imposing higher tolls on vehicle types with low carrying capacity, such as private cars.

In this connection, TD will commence the Study on "Congestion Charging" in mid-2019 to examine the hierarchy and levels of tolls of all government tolled tunnels, the TMCA, the TSCA, as well as the Western Harbour Crossing and Tai Lam Tunnel which will be taken over by the Government upon franchise expiry in August 2023 and May 2025 respectively. To put the concept of

"Congestion Charging" and the principle of "Efficiency First" into practice, the Study will also examine the scope for charging different tolls during different time periods. The Government's current thinking is to set the toll levels of the tolled tunnels, TMCA and TSCA primarily having regard to traffic management consideration, while also taking into account a host of other relevant factors such as the operating costs of the tunnels, public affordability and acceptability, etc. TD plans to consult relevant stakeholders, including the Legislative Council Panel on Transport, the Transport Advisory Committee and the transport trades, on the toll plans and toll adjustment mechanism recommended by the Study in 2021.

LCQ8: Transient increase in demand for Primary One places

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) advised in 2013 that the overall demand for Primary One (P1) places was expected to increase temporarily and substantially and to peak in the 2018-2019 school year. To cope with a transient increase in demand for P1 places, the EDB has, in recent years, adopted a number of measures under the Primary One Admission System, including borrowing P1 places among school nets, making use of vacant classrooms, constructing temporary classrooms, deploying vacant school premises, temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class and operating time-limited primary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective justifications and criteria for adopting the aforesaid measures, and the priorities accorded to the adoption of the various measures;

(2) of the following details of each of the three school nets in the Sha Tin district in each of the past three school years:

(i) the population of school-aged P1 children, the numbers of P1 places and P1 students in schools of each funding mode, as well as the number of places borrowed from/lent to other school nets (set out by school net number);

(ii) in respect of the standard classrooms in primary school premises, the total number that were vacant, and the overall usage rate;

(iii) the number of primary schools which completed works to extend or

convert standard classrooms on the EDB's requests; the costs incurred by each school for the relevant works; the time generally taken for the relevant works to complete; the number and the average usage rate of the new classrooms, as well as the number of places that could be/were actually provided; the number of new classrooms which were used, on average daily, for less than half of the lesson time in a day; the number of new classrooms that had/had not been used as additional P1 classrooms; and

(iv) the details of temporary allocation of more students to primary schools which had/had not implemented small class teaching respectively; the number of primary schools in respect of which the number of P1 classes was cut even after they had been allocated more students temporarily, and set out by name of schools the number of classes cut and the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that there have all along been vacant classrooms in some schools (including those which have completed works to extend or convert standard classrooms) in the three school nets in the Sha Tin district, whether the EDB, in the past three years, accorded priority to using such classrooms to cope with the transient demand for P1 places in the district; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it will consider doing so in future?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) had projected back in 2013 that the overall demand for Primary 1 (P1) places would increase temporarily to the peak in the 2018/19 school year, drop significantly in the 2019/20 school year and then progress to a stable level. To meet the transient increase in demand for P1 places, the EDB and the sector have been maintaining close liaison in the past years and have reached a consensus on the related follow-up measures. In this regard, it was agreed that construction of new schools to meet the transient demand for P1 places should be avoided as far as possible to lessen the impact on the stable development of primary schools when the demand for school places subsides. Premising on the sustainable development of existing schools, flexible arrangements to cope with the transient increase in demand for school places, including borrowing school places from other school nets and making use of vacant classrooms, converting other rooms into temporary classrooms and/or constructing temporary classrooms, deploying vacant school premises and temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class (i.e. "temporarily allocating more students"), etc. will be adopted when necessary.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen is as follows:

(1) and (3) As mentioned above, to meet the transient increase in the demand for P1 places, the EDB has adopted flexible arrangements to increase the provision of P1 places in individual school nets when necessary. In general, the EDB will, as far as possible, first make use of vacant classrooms in the school net and borrow school places from neighbouring school nets to meet the demand of individual school nets with insufficient school places. In

addition, based on the projected demand, the EDB will prudently consider deploying vacant school premises (if any) and explore proactively with individual schools in the respective school nets the feasibility of converting other rooms and/or constructing temporary classrooms in individual schools for operating additional P1 classes. "Temporarily allocating more students" will be implemented as a measure out of absolute necessity (especially when the classrooms in the school nets and neighbouring school nets are nearly fully utilised) and additional resources (Note 1) will be provided to the eligible schools concerned to ensure teaching effectiveness. Stakeholders may have different concerns about the flexible arrangements adopted. On the premise of ensuring the provision of sufficient public sector school places for all eligible applicant children participating in Primary One Admission (POA), the EDB and schools in the districts/school nets concerned will maintain close liaison on the flexible arrangements to be adopted with a view to achieving synergy of different flexible measures and balancing the views and concerns of different stakeholders. From POA 2016 to POA 2018, we followed the afore-mentioned mechanism and arrangements to determine the need to make use of the vacant classrooms in individual districts/school nets (including the three school nets in Sha Tin district) to operate additional P1 classes. However, the actual number of P1 classes approved for and operated by a school is determined according to the actual demand and the number of students.

(2) (i) The POA System is divided into two stages: the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the Central Allocation (CA) stage. The CA stage comprises two parts, namely unrestricted school choices and restricted school choices. For applicant children residing in Hong Kong, their school nets are determined by their residential addresses. The P1 school nets are only applicable to the restricted school choices at the CA stage under POA and provide a basis for the respective allocation of school places. According to the existing arrangements, the provision of public sector primary school places is planned on a district basis. Statistics on the number of school places and students have all along been collected on a district basis and a breakdown of the relevant figures by school net is not readily available. The total number of P1 places and students in Sha Tin district by school type from the 2016/17 to 2018/19 school years is tabulated at Annex 1.

Under POA, the supply and demand of P1 places in individual school nets may vary across years. Borrowing places from school nets that have surplus places in order to provide sufficient school places for parents' selection is a long-established arrangement which proves to be effective. When borrowing school places, the EDB will follow the established mechanism, which includes thoroughly considering the situation of the schools in the school nets concerned, the locations of the schools and the transportation available to facilitate students travelling to and from the schools as far as possible, etc. The provisional number of CA places offered by schools, including those offered by schools in other school nets, is set out in the Choice of Schools List for CA in each POA cycle for parents' reference. The actual number of school places borrowed from the districts/school nets concerned is affected by various factors, including the unrestricted school choices made by parents during the CA stage. Relevant statistics on individual school nets are not

readily available.

(ii) There are 11, 11 and 17 public sector primary schools in School Nets 88, 89 and 91 of Sha Tin district respectively in the 2018/19 school year. The number of vacant classrooms in the public sector primary schools in Sha Tin district from the 2016/17 to 2018/19 school years is tabulated below:

Number of vacant classrooms			
School year	School Net 88	School Net 89	School Net 91
2016/17	12	27	7
2017/18	4	6	4
2018/19	2	4	19 (Note 2)

Note 2: The figure includes 15 vacant classrooms of a new school which has started operating in advance in a vacant school premises since the 2018/19 school year.

The overall usage rate of classrooms in the public sector primary schools in Sha Tin district from the 2016/17 to 2018/19 school years is tabulated below:

Overall usage rate of classrooms			
School year	School Net 88	School Net 89	School Net 91
2016/17	95.7%	91.0%	98.3%
2017/18	98.6%	98.0%	99.0%
2018/19	99.3%	98.7%	95.7% (Note 3)

Note 3: The figure includes all classrooms of a new school which has started operating in advance in a vacant school premises since the 2018/19 school year.

(iii) A total of 19 schools in School Nets 88, 89 and 91 of Sha Tin district obtained the EDB's approval for converting/constructing 30 temporary classrooms in total in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years for operating additional P1 classes according to the actual demand in CA. The duration and cost of works varied depending on the scope of the conversion/construction works of individual schools and its complexity. In the two respective POA cycles, seven and 23 temporary classrooms built were deployed respectively to provide P1 places (about 1 000 places in total) to meet the projected demand. In the 2016/17 school year, the EDB had not converted/constructed any temporary classrooms in schools of the above school nets for operating additional P1 classes. Relevant statistics on the average usage rate of the new classrooms in question and the number of these classrooms which were used, on average daily, for less than half of the lesson time in a day are not available.

(iv) In the 2016/17 school year, the arrangements of "temporarily allocating

more students" were not adopted in the schools of Sha Tin district. Adoption of the arrangements in School Nets 88, 89 and 91 of Sha Tin district under POA 2017 and POA 2018 is tabulated in Annex 2. The arrangements of "temporarily allocating more students" are adopted according to the above-mentioned mechanism, i.e. when the demand cannot be fully met after all the available vacant classrooms for operating additional P1 classes have been deployed in the relevant POA cycle, to ensure sufficient provision of public sector school places to all eligible applicant children participating in POA. However, the actual number of P1 classes approved for and operated by a school and whether the relevant vacant classroom(s) will be eventually used is determined according to the actual demand and the number of students.

Every year, after the release of allocation results, some students may apply to other schools due to different reasons. The actual number of P1 classes of all public sector primary schools is determined according to the established criteria and the actual number of students. The EDB will verify the actual number of students studying in schools in September every year to confirm the number of P1 classes operated by the schools. From the 2016/17 to 2018/19 school years, only one of the schools in School Nets 88, 89 and 91 of Sha Tin district was required to reduce one P1 class after the headcount in September in the 2018/19 school year.

Note 1: The additional resources include: when eligible schools are required to be temporarily allocated with more students, up to 30 per P1 class, based on the prevailing arrangements for schools maintaining 30 students allocated to each P1 class, they will be provided with a time-limited additional Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress post. The details are set out in the EDB Circular No. 19/2008. From the 2013/14 school year onward, when the number of students allocated to each P1 class exceeds 30, the EDB will provide the schools concerned with additional funding for each additional student starting from the 31st student in each P1 class according to the headcount in September. The current rate of the additional funding is \$46,124. The EDB has, starting from the 2015/16 school year, provided schools implementing small class teaching (SCT) with the Additional Supplementary Learning Grant (ASLG) when they are temporarily allocated with more students per P1 class, for a period of six school years until the cohort of P1 students has completed the six-year primary education in the school. The ASLG will be provided from the 26th student up to the cap (i.e. the number of students allocated to each class or 30 students, whichever is smaller, in the year concerned (in which "temporarily allocating more students" is adopted)). The current rate of the funding for each additional school place is \$14,322. According to the result of the headcount in September, the EDB will provide the ASLG when the average number of students per P1 classes of the school is 28 or above and capped at the number of students allocated upon "temporarily allocating more students".