

LCQ6: Diversion of tourists entering territory through Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

It has been reported that upon the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) opening to traffic on the 24th of last month, a large number of tourists entering the territory via HZMB have flocked to Tung Chung, and the daily lives of the residents there have been greatly affected as a result. For example, daily commodities were snapped up and sold out, restaurants experienced an overflow of customers, and a large number of tourists waiting at Tung Chung Bus Terminus for buses heading for the Hong Kong Port caused obstruction to passageways and noise nuisances. Despite the introduction of a number of tourist diversion measures as announced by the Government on the 9th of this month, the situation has not been significantly improved. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has conducted an investigation into the number of tour groups entering the territory via HZMB, since HZMB opened to traffic, for which reception by a local travel agent had not been arranged; whether it has taken any law enforcement actions; if so, of the details;

(2) of the new measures to further mitigate the current situation of Tung Chung being flooded with tourists; whether it will discuss with the Mainland authorities the following proposals: (i) introducing tour groups or bus routes destined for the HZMB eastern artificial island, which is located within Mainland waters, so that those Mainland residents who merely want to visit HZMB need not enter Hong Kong, and (ii) tightening the arrangement for issuing exit endorsements for Mainland residents to visit Hong Kong; and

(3) given that the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL) is expected to be fully operational in 2020 and by that time, it will take only about 10 minutes per trip for vehicles to commute between the Hong Kong Port and Tuen Mun, whether the authorities will, upon the commissioning of TM-CLKL, put in place appropriate measures to prevent recurrence in Tuen Mun the situation of a place being flooded with tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been monitoring closely the vehicular and visitor flows crossing the border through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the operation of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (BCF) since the commissioning of HZMB. In view of the recent situation in Tung Chung, the Government has rolled out multi-pronged measures within a short time in order to help alleviate the pressure of the BCF and its nearby areas, improving the relevant situation.

Having consulted relevant bureaux and departments, my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Andrew Wan is as follows:

(1) According to present laws and regulations, Mainland inbound tour groups without being received by Hong Kong travel agents might not contravene the laws and regulations. Travel agents outside Hong Kong are free to organise group tours to Hong Kong, but the key is that they are not permitted to conduct travel businesses, such as obtaining for others accommodation, transport and sightseeing services, in Hong Kong.

The Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), which is responsible for regulation of the trade, has clear guidelines and directives requiring that travel agents in Hong Kong should, whenever receiving Mainland inbound tour groups, register with and provide to TIC the relevant information of such tour groups in advance.

Of course, the Government has all along encouraged and facilitated Mainland inbound travel agents to establish collaboration with Hong Kong receiving agents. In the past four weeks, the number of registered tour groups visiting Hong Kong through the HZMB increased from around 70 groups in the first week to over 700 groups in the week just passed. TIC also deployed manpower to conduct spot checks last weekend. Survey results show that, amongst all Mainland inbound tour groups visiting Hong Kong through the HZMB, around 70 per cent were accompanied by Hong Kong tourist guides, indicating a gradual improvement in the arrangement of receiving agents.

As I said during my media stand-up in Shanghai earlier this month, all inbound tour groups must abide by the Hong Kong law. As regards tour groups suspected of violating relevant laws, the Tourism Commission (TC) has already reported the incident to the Guangdong Province Culture and Tourism Unit (the Unit) in early November. The Unit attached great importance to the incident, and has issued notices to various municipal tourism authorities in the province, urging them to strengthen market regulation and request the tourism operators in various cities to strictly abide by the laws and regulations in Hong Kong and Macao. The Travel Agents Registry under TC has also reported suspected illegal cases to the Police and the Immigration Department (ImmD) once the Registry is aware of such. The Police and ImmD are now investigating the incident, and no one has been arrested thus far.

(2) In view of the recent situation in Tung Chung, the Government has called various inter-departmental meetings to tackle the matter.

Based on the experience gained from the past few weekends, around one-

fifth of visitors arriving at Hong Kong through the HZMB BCF did not leave the BCF to visit other districts in Hong Kong by taking local public transportation. This indicates that many of the visitors arriving at Hong Kong through the HZMB BCF mainly intended to visit the HZMB itself and might not be keen to enter Hong Kong. The Government is exploring with relevant Mainland authorities the opening of the HZMB's East Artificial Island to the aforementioned group tourists, so as to allow such tourists to visit the HZMB and return to Zhuhai or Macao from the East Artificial Island without crossing the border of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

In addition, the Government is arranging for the setting up of temporary small-scale shops or booths in the HZMB's BCF to allow travellers to buy souvenirs therein. We are also exploring the introduction of food trucks to serve travellers near the BCF and in Sunny Bay.

On the other hand, the Transport Department (TD) has implemented new measures concerning the operating arrangements of domestic tour coaches at the BCF today (November 21). Under the new measures, registered coach operators could enter the BCF pick-up area to pick up passengers on any day provided that they had submitted an application and completed certain simple procedures via TD's online system by 9pm the prior day. This arrangement will help Hong Kong receiving travel agents and Mainland inbound travel agents establish co-operation, so as to reduce the influx of visitors into Tung Chung through the flexible deployment of tour coaches.

Furthermore, shuttle bus operators are working full steam ahead to prepare and test the online pre-booking system in the hope of implementing it from this Friday (November 23), such that travel agents or organisers of tour groups could, through the online system, purchase shuttle bus tickets (including return tickets in one single operation) for designated dates and time slots from the next day (November 24) onwards. The new arrangement will help manage and regulate visitor flows at all time slots, thereby preventing group visitors from entering and leaving Hong Kong at the same time, as well as reducing the waiting time of visitors. The shuttle bus operator will announce relevant details within this week.

TC has assisted in co-ordinating the local trade to smooth the visitor flow near the BCF, including requesting the local trade to arrange travellers to use other means of transport as far as practicable. TC also encourages the trade, including tourist attractions, to launch travel itineraries and products such as half-day tours, so as to help divert travellers.

In addition, the Police will continue to closely monitor the situation of Mainland tour groups visiting Hong Kong, and deploy additional manpower from time to time to maintain public order and public safety on site.

(3) Upon the commissioning of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL), there will be a new alternative route to divert travellers, alleviating the pressure borne by the Tsing Ma Bridge. TD and relevant public transport operators will devise plans having regard to relevant transport demand and traffic flows, and consult relevant District Councils and stakeholders.

Upon the full commissioning of the TM-CLKL, TD will also, depending on the demand, adjust public transport services in a timely manner to accommodate passengers' need.

LCQ16: Support for non-Chinese speaking students in learning Chinese History

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

Since 2014, the Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework to step up the support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in learning Chinese. In addition, the Chief Executive has announced in this year's Policy Address that from the 2019-2020 school year onwards, additional resources will be provided for public sector secondary schools to support NCS students in using the Chinese language to learn Chinese History. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that Chinese History has become a compulsory subject at junior secondary level since September this year, of the number of cases, received by the EDB since the commencement of the current school year, in which teachers sought assistance as they had encountered difficulties in teaching NCS students Chinese History; the immediate measures put in place to assist those teachers in overcoming the difficulties;

(2) of the outcome of the discussions and the support measures formulated by the Ad Hoc Committee on Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learning Chinese History and Chinese Culture since its establishment in May this year;

(3) as some teachers have pointed out that since all of the teaching materials for Chinese History available on the market are compiled for Chinese-speaking students, such materials are not suitable for NCS students whose cultural backgrounds and proficiency in the Chinese language are different from those of Chinese-speaking students, and hence the schools have to compile teaching materials by themselves for NCS students and provide explanations in English when teaching the subject, whether the EDB currently provides assistance to the schools concerned in compiling such teaching materials;

(4) whether the EDB has formulated a Chinese History curriculum framework and learning/examination assessment guides especially for NCS students; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(5) whether the EDB has issued guidelines to the schools concerned on how they may utilise the aforesaid additional resources to provide support for NCS students?

Reply:

President,

The 2017 Policy Address announced the inclusion of Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject for the junior secondary level, with a view to enabling all secondary students to learn Chinese history in a holistic and systematic manner. As a part of the Hong Kong community, non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students should understand Chinese history and culture, learn about the development and cultural characteristics of the society in which they live, appreciate and respect different historical and cultural legacies, and integrate into mainstream Chinese society, which will be conducive to their further studies and employment in Hong Kong, or even their career development on the Mainland in future.

The Education Bureau (EDB) understands that NCS students may encounter difficulties when studying Chinese History due to language barriers and cultural differences. Therefore, the EDB provides flexibility for the schools admitting these students to make adaptations to teaching contents, pedagogy and assessment, flexibly design school-based curricula and adopt diversified teaching strategies. Examples include adopting a story-telling approach to teach history, using teaching materials of a non-text nature such as audio-visual materials, supplementing teaching with English, and deploying the one-off grant for the promotion of Chinese history and culture provided by the EDB to develop suitable learning kits or organise diversified learning activities, with a view to enhancing NCS students' interest in and effectiveness of learning Chinese History. The EDB has informed schools of the arrangement through briefing sessions and other channels.

Regarding the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan's question, our reply is as follows:

(1) Since commencement of the current school year, we have occasionally received phone calls or emails from teachers concerning arrangements about NCS students' learning of Chinese History. Through telephone conversations, emails, interviews and school visits, we immediately ascertained their needs and provided suggestions. We have also seconded teachers with experience in teaching NCS students to support these schools by sharing their experience and teaching materials, thereby allaying teachers' concerns. According to our records, there have only been eight relevant enquiries.

(2) to (5) The Ad Hoc Committee on Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learning Chinese History and Chinese Culture (the Ad Hoc Committee) was established in the 2017-18 school year to advise schools on learning and teaching strategies and curriculum adaptation. Based on the Revised

Curriculum Framework of Chinese History (Secondary 1-3) published in May 2018, the Ad Hoc Committee is deliberating on an adapted curriculum framework which will be available for schools' reference as soon as it is endorsed by the Committee on Personal, Social and Humanities Education. A working group will also be set up under the Ad Hoc Committee to advise on support strategies and measures, such as tryout teaching, developing sample teaching materials and devising related learning activities, compiling a glossary of history terms in both Chinese and English and producing teachers' handbooks. The working group would also contact relevant organisations/bodies, such as the Hong Kong Museum of History, to provide bilingual learning resources in history.

In collaboration with experts and academics, the EDB will provide schools admitting NCS students and their teachers with enhanced professional support, including (1) allowing teachers in need of support to observe how teachers experienced in teaching NCS students teach in class; (2) organising workshops for devising and developing suitable teaching materials for NCS students; and (3) designing diversified learning and teaching activities, such as e-learning, field studies, visits, competitions and drama performances, for raising NCS students' interests in studying Chinese History. Our school-based support services will continue to support teachers in adapting the curriculum and designing teaching strategies according to their school contexts.

The EDB will inform schools of the support measures available through circular memoranda and other means. Concurrently, with a view to supporting NCS students' learning of Chinese History using the Chinese language, the EDB plans to disburse additional funding to local public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools which have admitted NCS students. Each school will receive a total amount of \$100,000 in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Subject to the approval of the Legislative Council, the EDB will issue a circular memorandum to schools to provide details in relation to the grant.

CSSA caseload for October 2018

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in October showed a drop of 718 cases, representing a decrease of 0.3 per cent compared with that of September, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (November 21).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of October stood at 228 550 (see attached table), with a total of 325 347 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, all categories of cases recorded a decrease. Low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 2.3 per cent to 3 752 cases while unemployment cases showed a drop of 0.9 per cent to 12 202

cases.

Single parent cases and permanent disability cases fell by 0.8 per cent and 0.6 per cent to 25 054 cases and 16 859 cases respectively. Ill health cases dropped by 0.3 per cent to 23 257 cases while old age cases slightly slipped by 0.1 per cent to 143 232 cases.

LCQ2: East Rail Line

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

It has been over a century since the Hong Kong section of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, the predecessor of the East Rail Line (ERL), came into existence. In recent years, incidents of disruptions of train service of ERL have happened from time to time. Earlier on, an overhead power line of ERL was damaged during the onslaught of super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong causing a train service disruption lasting nearly one day. Some members of the public have pointed out that ERL, which is a major means of transport to and from New Territories East, Kowloon and the Mainland, has become outdated, and its train compartments are also very crowded during peak hours. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of incidents of delay of train service of ERL lasting over one hour in the last decade and their causes and, among such incidents, the percentage of those caused by equipment failure;

(2) whether it knows how the current passenger throughput of ERL during peak hours compares with the design capacity; if ERL is overloaded, of the authorities' proposals to divert the passengers; and

(3) whether it will consider expeditiously embarking on a study on the feasibility to construct, as a replacement of ERL, an entirely new express rail which is covered or underground; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) is committed to providing safe, reliable and smooth railway services for its passengers amounting to over 5.3 million daily. To ensure that the railway system and equipment are kept in good working order, the MTRCL has put in place a comprehensive and stringent asset management and maintenance mechanism. For example, trains, signalling

system, power supply system and railway tracks are regularly maintained and renewed to internationally recognised high standard. Moreover, the MTRCL invests substantial resources annually in enhancing, revitalising and maintaining its railway assets and infrastructural facilities to maintain high quality of railway service. In 2017, the MTRCL has invested over \$8 billion in upgrading and maintaining its railway assets, which is around 44 per cent of the total revenue of around \$18 billion of Hong Kong transport operations. Relevant investment in the previous three years (2014-2016) also amounted to around \$6-8 billion each year.

As the Hon Chan Chun-ying mentioned, the East Rail Line (ERL), formerly known as the Kowloon-Canton Railway, has served Hong Kong people for over a century. To keep up with the times, the ERL has been improving its railway system. The stations along the line had undergone redevelopment or relocation, and the trains and infrastructural facilities including signalling and track equipment had also been renewed to tie in with the modernisation programme. For example, the MTRCL integrated the Train Operations Center in Fo Tan which managed train operations of ERL and Ma On Shan Line to the Operations Control Center in Tsing Yi in 2013, in order to enhance the efficiency of the overall railway network. Since 2014, the MTRCL has implemented station improvement work in various ERL stations, including adding entrances and exits, integrating station lobby, installing traction lifts etc., to create a more convenient and comfortable environment for passengers. As of today, the ERL is about 42 kilometres in length with 14 stations, carrying around 1 million passenger trips daily on average. Indeed, the ERL bore witness to the rapid development of Hong Kong, and in particular, the new towns in North and East New Territories. In view of the construction of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL), a major enhancement project are being undertaken for the signalling system, trains and platform facilities of the ERL with the objective of providing safe, reliable and comfortable services to the public.

My reply to the Hon Chan Chun-ying's question is as follows:

(1) On the whole, the ERL has been operating smoothly. In the past decade (from 2009 to September this year), there were 11 cases of suspension of train service for over one hour due to incidents on the ERL. Among these, four cases were caused by factors within MTRCL's control (viz. equipment failure or human factors), and seven cases were due to causes outside MTRCL's control (viz. passengers' behaviours or external factors such as bad weather). Even in case of bad weather (e.g. when tropical cyclone signal number 9 or above is in force) necessitating the suspension of train service, the MTRCL will immediately check the condition when the weather has changed and clear obstructions and repair damaged equipment where necessary. All these efforts are made with the aim of restoring train services as soon as practicable when weather permits. After each of such incident caused by equipment failure, the monitoring department would ask the MTRCL to look into the cause of the incident and review the contingency plan in the light of the experience gained and introduce measures to avoid recurrence.

(2) As regards the current passenger throughput of the ERL, the patronage per

hour per direction during the morning peak hours for the critical link (i.e. Tai Wai to Kowloon Tong) in 2017 was 57 800 passenger trips, and the loading was 67 per cent or 94 per cent on the basis of a density of six or four persons (standing) per square metre respectively. Train service has been able to meet passenger needs. The ERL is now replacing the signalling system which will enable it to increase the frequency of its service from a maximum average of one train every three minutes at present to every two minutes. The MTRCL will closely monitor the loading of the ERL, including the loading upon the commissioning of the SCL, which will form the North South Corridor with the ERL. The Corporation will review and study proposals in this regard in a timely manner. Specifically, to cope with demand generated by future patronage, the Corporation may consider feasible measures such as increasing train frequency as far as possible under the new signalling system, arranging short-haul trips to run between busy stations, easing passenger flow through station management measures, and offering fare concessions to alleviate the heavy loading of trains during the peak periods.

(3) The Transport and Housing Bureau plans to take forward the Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030 (RMR2030+ Studies) on the conceptual spatial requirements to be firmed up under the Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030 (Hong Kong 2030+ Study), which is being conducted by the Development Bureau and the Planning Department. Based on the latest planning information, including cross-boundary transport data, RMR2030+ Studies will examine the demand and supply of the transport infrastructure, including railways and major roads, in Hong Kong between 2031 and 2041, and study the loading of the heavy rails in the Northwest New Territories beyond 2030.

We will consider the planning studies and the recommended strategic transport corridors in relation to the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, as well as look into the layout of the proposed railway and major road infrastructure with regard to the transport infrastructure required for the longer-term strategic growth areas of Hong Kong 2030+ Study (such as the New Territories North), to ensure that the planning of large scale transport infrastructure can meet the needs of the overall long-term land use developments of Hong Kong. RMR2030+ Studies will also examine the impact of the proposed transport infrastructure on the existing transport network (including the ERL) and formulate corresponding strategies. The Legislative Council Panel on Transport expressed support for the above studies in June 2017. Since Hong Kong 2030+ Study has not yet been completed, we will seek funding approval in due course for implementing RMR2030+ Studies.

LCQ3 : Support for tenants in

inadequate housing

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng Wing-shun and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 21):

Question:

According to the 2016 Population By-census, the number of people residing in inadequate housing was as high as 210 000. The findings of a recent survey with households in inadequate housing as targets revealed that 80 per cent of the respondents were waiting for public housing, and one-third of them had been waiting for over five years. The support measures that the respondents most hoped the Government to provide were (in descending order): building more public housing, disbursing a rent subsidy and increasing supply of transitional housing. Regarding the provision of support for tenants in inadequate housing, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how the Government supports community organisations in taking forward transitional housing projects; whether it will make public a list of government lands suitable for building transitional housing, and establish a dedicated fund to support the building of transitional housing;

(2) given that the Hong Kong Housing Authority has planned, by making reference to the relevant practice of the Hong Kong Housing Society, to allow owners of its subsidised sale flats with premium unpaid to sublet their flats, of the details of the plan, including whether the owners may let the entire flats; and

(3) given that at present, the Community Care Fund grants a rent subsidy only to CSSA recipients living in rented private housing, whether the Government will provide a rent subsidy or similar type of support to those tenants in inadequate housing who are not receiving CSSA?

Reply:

President,

In the face of the current demand-supply imbalance in housing and high property prices and rents, some low-income households may have to rent inadequate accommodation. The Government is greatly concerned about the housing difficulties faced by the public and has been actively increasing housing land supply in the short, medium and long term through a multi-pronged approach, so as to fundamentally solve the housing problems in the long run.

As pointed out by the Chief Executive in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government would allocate more land for public housing development, and has committed that 70 per cent of the housing units on Government's newly

developed land would be for public housing. The Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) will take into account the views of the community on the ratio of public and private housing in updating the housing supply target for the next ten-year period (i.e. 2019/20 to 2028/29) under the Long Term Housing Strategy.

As mentioned in Hon Vincent Cheng's question, public rental housing (PRH) is the fundamental solution to addressing the housing needs of many households living in inadequate housing. Based on the estimate as at September 2018, the total public housing production in the five-year period from 2018/19 to 2022/23 is about 100 800 units, comprising some 74 600 units of PRH/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme. This five-year housing production forecast represents a steady increase as compared with the previous four five-year periods.

Apart from striving to increase housing supply, the Government has adopted various measures to alleviate the housing difficulties faced by the grassroots households. After consulting the Development Bureau and the Labour and Welfare Bureau, I now reply to Hon Cheng's question as follows:

(1) The 2017 Policy Address stated that the current-term Government would think out of the box to facilitate the implementation of various short-term community initiatives to increase the supply of transitional housing, with a view to alleviating the hardship faced by families on the PRH waiting list and the inadequately housed. A Task Force under THB will provide coordinated support and, upon consulting relevant bureaux and departments, provide appropriate assistance and facilitation according to the needs of the proposed items. These include offering advice on administrative or statutory procedures and assisting application for funding support. For example, the Community Housing Movement (CHM) operated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service has introduced multiple projects. The CHM has been receiving subsidies from the Community Chest of Hong Kong and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund to support its operation expenses. The Modular Social Housing Scheme on a private site on Nam Cheong Street in Sham Shui Po has also obtained funding support from the Community Care Fund.

The "GeoInfo Map" website of the Lands Department provides by district the basic information of a total of 850 vacant government sites which are available for short-term tenancy application by non-government organisations (NGOs) for community purposes, including transitional housing. Whether an individual site is suitable for transitional housing depends on its land use zoning and actual site conditions including its topography, technical constraints or infrastructural facilities required.

The Development Bureau plans to consult the Legislative Council's Panel on Development by the end of this month and then seek the approval of the Finance Committee for the allocation of \$1 billion funding to provide subsidies to NGOs in relation to works costs incurred by them in making effective use of vacant government sites for various short-term non-profit making community purposes. Projects with policy support given by the Task Force under THB and that make use of vacant government sites to provide

transitional housing are also eligible to apply.

(2) The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) launched the Letting Scheme for Subsidised Sale Developments with Premium Unpaid in September 2018. The Scheme allows eligible owners to sublet bedrooms in their flats with premium unpaid to specific tenants (i.e. family and elderly applicants who have been waiting for PRH for three years or more, and non-elderly one-person applicants who have been waiting for PRH for six years or more), with a view to improving the latter's housing situation before PRH allocation. Participating owners must have owned their flats for at least ten years. Also, each flat must have at least two bedrooms, one of which the owner must keep for their own residence. HKHS is reviewing the Scheme and collecting views from the public, and will fine-tune the operational details as and when necessary.

The 2018 Policy Address has suggested that, in the light of the operational experience of the Scheme, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) may consider joining the Scheme. HA will work closely with HKHS with a view to deliberating and considering the timing and specific arrangements for joining the Scheme.

(3) Different government departments have all along been providing appropriate assistance to grassroots households from different perspectives including housing, social welfare, community support, etc. through different policies and measures. For example, eligible persons may apply for early allocation of PRH units through Compassionate Rehousing or Express Flat Allocation Scheme. The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme provides a safety net for those who are unable to support themselves financially to meet their basic needs. Other recurrent cash schemes, such as the Working Family Allowance Scheme and the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme, also provide financial support to low-income households.

We are concerned that in the midst of the present tight housing supply, rent subsidy may prompt the landlords to increase rent, thereby indirectly turning the rent subsidy into additional rent, leaving the tenants with no effective assistance. Furthermore, providing recurrent rent subsidy to a selected group of tenants may increase the demand for rented accommodation, thereby triggering a rise in rental level and increasing the burden of households who are unable to receive the subsidy due to various reasons.

The continued increase in housing supply remains the fundamental solution to the problems of surging housing price and rent caused by insufficient supply. The Government will continue to work closely with the community to expedite the construction of public housing, so as to effectively address the housing needs of the society.