

LCQ7: Measures to cope with increasing number of inbound tourists

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kgong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

With the recent commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, as well as the imminent opening of the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, the cross-boundary infrastructure facilities between Hong Kong and the Mainland are becoming more comprehensive. The Government anticipates that there will be an incessant rise in the number of inbound Mainland tourists. On the other hand, the patterns of inbound Mainland tourists' activities in Hong Kong have become increasingly diversified and their engagement in some activities (e.g. hiking and camping in the countryside and using public cultural and recreational facilities) has impacted on the daily lives of Hong Kong people. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has studied the impacts of the improvements in recent years in cross-boundary infrastructure facilities on the various aspects (including the number of tourists) of the tourism industry, and whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the various measures which aim to enhance Hong Kong's tourist receiving capacity and if such measures need to be strengthened; if it has, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the person-time, in each of the past three years, of inbound tourists using public cultural and recreational facilities, with a breakdown of such numbers by (i) type of facilities and (ii) place of origin of such tourists and their percentages in the total numbers;

(3) whether it will step up the management of those locations where tourists usually gather, such as (i) allocating additional resources and manpower for maintaining order and keeping such locations clean and (ii) planning for the provision of more tourism facilities; and

(4) whether it has conducted any investigation into the cases in which tourists occupied designated camp sites in country parks and caused damage to the ecological environment; if so, of the outcome, and the measures put in place to raise tourists' awareness of caring for the nature?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the sustainable and healthy

development of the tourism industry. Whilst ensuring the industry's stable and orderly growth, we also seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community. With the relevant bureaux and departments consulted, our reply to the question raised by the Hon Wong Ting-
kwong is as follows.

(1) and (3) As the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) were put into service only recently, their impact on Hong Kong's travel industry is still to be ascertained. In 2016, 2017 and the first nine months of 2018, the overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong were 56.65 million, 58.47 million and 46.68 million respectively, of which 42.78 million, 44.45 million and 36.63 million were from the Mainland, accounting for approximately 76 per cent to 78 per cent of the overall visitor arrivals.

In view of the steady growth in overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in recent years and the commissioning of various cross-boundary infrastructure in succession, the Government has strived to increase or improve Hong Kong's tourism facilities, as well as to enhance the city's tourist-receiving capacity.

In October 2017, the Government published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry. One of the four major industry development strategies therein is to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics to cater for the needs and preferences of different visitor segments, thereby diverting tourists to sightsee and shop in different districts of Hong Kong strategically, and increasing the overall economic benefits brought by the tourism industry to all citizens in Hong Kong.

The Government is collaborating with various stakeholders with plans to develop new tourist attractions and implement various cultural and creative tourism projects in places like Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung, as well as to promote green tourism development in New Territories and outlying islands along the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development. The Government completed the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in April 2018. The revitalised trail, together with PMQ, Tai Kwun and the promotion campaign "Old Town Central" launched by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), have transformed the Central and Western District into a new hub of heritage, cultural and creative tourism. The construction of a number of facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District, namely the Xiqu Centre and the M+ Pavilion, will also be completed in phases in the next few years, contributing to the formation of a new tourist spot and thus the diversion of travellers. In addition, the HKTB has been actively promoting to visitors various activities in relation to traditional festivals with local distinctive characteristics, including the Yu Lan Ghost Festival, Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, Tai Hang fire dragon dance, etc., with a view to enticing tourists to patronise different districts of Hong Kong.

In respect of theme parks, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is taking

forward its expansion and development plan, and various attractions will be completed progressively from this year onwards till 2023, including the attraction "Moana: A Homecoming Celebration" stage show launched in May 2018. As regards Hong Kong Ocean Park, it is taking forward projects concerning an all-weather waterpark and two new hotels. Whilst one of the hotels has been soft-launched this year, the water park and the other hotel will be completed progressively from next year onwards until 2021.

Apart from developing various tourism attractions and projects, the Government will also promote the development of ancillary facilities in Hong Kong, such as putting forth in different districts sites designated for "hotel only" or commercial sites that allow for hotel development, with a view to encouraging the development of various types of hotels and further increasing the supply of hotel rooms in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the Government is pragmatic in tackling problems brought about by tourist flows in different districts. In response to the inconvenience caused by inbound tour groups to the community, the Government has, in collaboration with the trade, adopted various targeted measures to minimise the impact to the community. Such measures include encouraging tour coaches to use legal parking spaces, as well as appealing to the trade to maintain order when receiving tour groups and make good use of information technology to strengthen visitor and vehicular flow control, etc.

In respect of environmental hygiene, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) enhances the cleansing of streets and public toilets at popular gathering spots for visitors to keep the cityscape clean. For places where public cleanliness offences (e.g. littering, spitting, etc.) are frequent, the FEHD also increases the frequency of inspection and strengthens law enforcement. Moreover, the FEHD is implementing renovation or repair works for its 23 public toilets situated at tourist attractions, and has added five public toilets at the Hong Kong Port of the HZMB newly commissioned, so as to facilitate use by tourists. The FEHD also calls upon members of the public and visitors to maintain environmental hygiene through various channels, including its website, social platforms, television, radio, poster advertisement and publicity leaflets, etc.

As regards crowd management, in case of crowding up of tourists in certain areas, the Police will, on a need basis, deploy more manpower to maintain public order and public safety, as well as smooth traffic flow thereat.

(2) We do not maintain figures in respect of inbound tourists using public cultural and recreational facilities.

(4) There are currently 41 designated campsites within country parks of Hong Kong, which are open for camping by the public including tourists. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) displays camping codes at the designated campsites to remind members of the public and visitors of proper camping manners. It also disseminates relevant information on its website to encourage members of the public and visitors to plan ahead

and be well-prepared before camping in country parks, as well as to make sure their camping activities are environmentally-friendly.

In view of the increasing popularity of green tourism in recent years, the Tourism Commission (TC) has written to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, reporting to it relevant trends and inviting it to, through appropriate channels in the Mainland, remind the travel trade and tourists to pay attention to certain codes of conduct when participating in green tourism activities in Hong Kong. Such codes of conduct include using public facilities near campsites in a proper manner, refraining from camping at non-designated camping areas and refraining from any acts that are harmful to the biological environment, etc. The TC has also frequently collaborated with the Guangdong Province Culture and Tourism Unit, the Guangzhou Tourism Administration and the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism to, through Mainland online media and newspapers, release public notices targeting at Mainland residents who intend to visit Hong Kong, so as to raise their awareness of travelling manners.

The TC will keep a close eye on the travel trends of Mainland tourists, and report destinations that the latter tend to visit to District Offices and other relevant departments in various districts for advance planning. The FEHD, the AFCD and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will also from time to time review their site management and staffing mechanism, including deploying staff to step up inspection at popular destinations during peak arrival seasons of Mainland tourists, to advise and educate individuals involved in inappropriate behaviours and take enforcement actions against violations as appropriate, and at the same time to step up site cleansing and crowd management so as to minimise the impact of relevant activities on the districts concerned.

LCQ5: Lantau Tomorrow Vision

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak, and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

This year's Policy Address has put forward the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" which proposes to progressively press ahead several development areas at Lantau Island and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun with the objective of increasing land supply and consolidating the sustainable development of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) regarding the preliminary planning of the Vision, how the Government will take on board the public views on the option of reclamation in the Central

Waters set out in the report to be submitted by the Task Force on Land Supply; of the implementation timetable for the various phases and project scopes of the reclamation works, as well as the estimated costs of the first phase of reclamation and other works;

(2) as quite a number of members of the public are concerned whether the reclamation works in the Central Waters will damage the environment and whether the facilities on the artificial islands can withstand extreme weather, of the technologies and measures the Government will adopt to ensure that the various works concerned will strike a balance between development and conservation; how the Government will convince the public of the necessity of land formation by reclamation for Hong Kong; and

(3) as the Government will study the transport infrastructure facilities for linking up the artificial islands with districts such as Lantau Island, Hong Kong Island, Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing, whether the Government will concurrently conduct a comprehensive transport study for those districts?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is currently facing acute land shortage problem. As pointed out in the preliminary observations by the Task Force on Land Supply (the Task Force) in September 2018, there is a need for more land in Hong Kong (estimated shortfall of at least 1 200 hectares). We will continue adopting a multi-pronged approach to proactively increase land resources.

The construction of the artificial islands in the Central Waters that the Lantau Tomorrow Vision (the Vision) proposed to study can provide sizeable pieces of land. The proposals of forming artificial islands of about 1 000 hectares near Kau Yi Chau and the associated traffic and transport networks, if implemented, would benefit Hong Kong considerably. Apart from the revenue arising from residential and commercial land sale, developing the artificial islands will create substantial social and economic benefits, mainly from the 105 000 to 182 000 public residential units, 200 000 diversified, high-end and high value-added job opportunities, business opportunities emanating from the third Core Business District with a scale equivalent to 80 per cent of Central, a liveable city with holistic planning, comprehensive social facilities, and land development potential to be released by a broadened transport infrastructure network. In addition, the newly-built road and railway networks will serve to enhance the overall carrying capacity of the traffic and transport system in Hong Kong while effectively relieving the existing traffic load in the North West New Territories.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Alice Mak is as follows:

(1) As regards the implementation timetable of the artificial islands in the Central Waters, we will duly consider the final report to be submitted by the

Task Force in end 2018 tentatively before firming up the details of the studies for the artificial islands in the Central Waters and consulting relevant district councils. We anticipate that funding approval will be sought from the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the first or second quarter of 2019 for commencement of the studies, which will focus on the artificial islands of about 1 000 hectares near Kau Yi Chau. Our work target is to commence the first phase of the reclamation works in 2025, with the first batch of residential units ready for intake in 2032. As for the remaining artificial islands near Hei Ling Chau, there is no concrete implementation timetable at the moment. Nevertheless, we will collect basic technical data in the above studies for future reference in long-term planning. The ultimate extent of reclamation should be subject to the results of the studies.

On construction costs, the Government does not have a formal estimate of the cost of the infrastructure, including transport infrastructure, at this stage. That said, based on an average water-depth of seven metres at Kau Yi Chau, our preliminary estimate for the reclamation cost of the artificial islands will range from \$13,000 to \$15,000 per square metre, which is comparable to the resumption cost of private agricultural land of \$14,500 per square metre. As regards the transport infrastructures, we need to conduct studies to establish a preliminary proposal, including the number of traffic lanes, alignment and the means to connect different places (e.g. bridge or tunnel). The estimated cost regarding infrastructure works is therefore not available at this stage. This is the same as the studies for the new development area projects that formal estimates on the cost of related infrastructure are not available before carrying out the respective planning and engineering studies.

Having said that, with a view to addressing public concern over the construction cost of artificial islands, we will attempt to provide relevant estimate before seeking funding approval for the studies as far as possible by reviewing and analysing relevant information. But these estimates will be based on a host of assumptions.

The Government has all along put in place a stringent audit and monitoring mechanism for the approval of funding for public works and the use of public funds. In formulating the implementation strategies, the Government will carry out detailed financial assessment by taking into account relevant factors like fiscal sustainability, and properly manage fiscal risk, to ensure that the project expenditure is fiscally affordable.

(2) The Government has taken into account the balance between development and conservation when formulating the Vision. Apart from shallower water-depth, the main reason for studying the formation of artificial islands in the Central Waters is the relatively low ecological sensitivity in the area.

In taking forward the detailed engineering studies for individual projects, we will conduct the requisite environmental impact assessments under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, and make specific proposals on respective mitigation measures, thereby ensuring all relevant statutory requirements are complied with. The prevailing reclamation

techniques are effective in reducing impacts on surrounding water quality and ecology arising from the works. For instance, the use of "non-dredging methods" for reclamation and "deep cement mixing" can effectively reduce pollution caused by the removal of seabed sediments. We will explore other more advanced and environment-friendly reclamation techniques and designs in the studies with a view to further protecting the environment. In addition, we will in the studies explore to retain the existing eco-shorelines as far as possible and establish eco-shorelines at the artificial islands if situation warrants.

As always, we strive to encourage green groups and relevant stakeholders to participate in conservation initiatives. We will set up the \$1 billion Lantau Conservation Fund mentioned in this year's the Policy Address as soon as possible and continue to take forward the planning, design and implementation of various development and conservation initiatives and local improvement projects in Lantau in a coordinated and integrated manner.

In terms of addressing climate change, the Government is deeply concerned about the respective threats and set up the Steering Committee on Climate Change, which is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration in 2016, to steer and co-ordinate the work of government departments on climate change. As regards marine infrastructure works, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) updated the Port Works Design Manual in early 2018, taking into account the future climate change projected in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change set up under the United Nations (UN). The CEDD will pay close attention to the latest reports and timely update the design standards of port works as appropriate.

To enhance resilience against extreme weather, we will make reference to the latest design standards when designing the artificial islands in the Central Waters under the coming engineering studies, and provide higher breakwater, wave breakers and non-building buffer zones along the shorelines as appropriate. It has been proved that structures and works (such as the Hei Ling Chau Typhoon Shelter and the Hong Kong International Airport near the artificial islands in the Central Waters), if suitably designed, could stand intact in the face of super typhoons like Mangkhut.

Since the delivery of the Policy Address, we have, on various occasions (including press briefings, interviews on radio and in other media, meeting of the LegCo Panel on Development, etc.), explained the objectives, details and implementation plans of the artificial islands in the Central Waters, while paying heed to the views and suggestions from different sectors of the society. In addition, the relevant department has also briefed the public on the Vision which mentions the artificial islands in the Central Waters by means of distribution of pamphlets and webpages.

We are aware of the public's concern about the technical assessment. We will conduct the needed site investigations, technical studies, and traffic and environmental impact assessments, etc. in the future studies and then draw up a detailed proposal. In the course of the studies, public engagement

activities will be conducted to provide more comprehensive information for consulting the public and gathering their views and suggestions.

(3) According priority to transport infrastructure is one of the important policy directions for the Vision. In the future studies for the artificial islands in the Central Waters, we will conduct strategic studies on the major road and railway networks linking the proposed Kau Yi Chau artificial islands, Hong Kong Island West, North Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun. The studies will include related traffic assessments. On the whole, we believe that the new major road and railway networks can effectively relieve the existing traffic load of the North West New Territories to and from urban area.

LCQ22: Protection of animal rights, interests and welfare

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

Regarding the protection of animal rights, interests and welfare, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Police will roll out the "Animal Watchers Scheme" in the next financial year, of the details of the scheme (including the specific work initiatives and timetable, manpower required, estimated expenditure, and what types of persons may take part in the scheme);

(2) of the Government's initiatives for protecting animal rights, interests and welfare as well as the expenditure involved, in each of the past three years and in the coming year (set out by work initiative);

(3) as the Government plans to amend to section 56 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374) (which provides that where an accident involving a vehicle on a road occurs whereby damage is caused to an animal, the driver of that vehicle shall stop and report the accident to the Police as soon as possible) to bring cats and dogs within the ambit of the section, of the relevant details (including the legislative timetable); whether it will (i) set up a hotline for drivers to report to the Police such accidents or for eyewitnesses to report to the Police hit-and-run drivers involved in such accidents, and (ii) enhance its support for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong) in handling injured animals;

(4) as a study report has pointed out that the number of cats and dogs kept as pets in Hong Kong will increase from about 297 100 in 2005 to about 545 600 in 2019, whether the Government will explore the establishment of a public hospital for animals, so as to provide pet owners with an option other than private veterinary clinics;

(5) as the Police announced in April this year that dedicated investigation teams had been set up in the 22 Police districts across the territory with criminal investigation teams to handle cases of animal cruelty, of (i) the training received by members of such teams and (ii) the number of cases that such teams have handled so far; and

(6) whether it will consider afresh the proposal to establish an animal police team and, by way of amending the relevant legislation, vest in the Police more power to handle cases of animal cruelty; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to promoting and safeguarding animal welfare, and has been adopting a multi-pronged approach in this regard. Having consulted the Security Bureau, my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) To enlist public support and assistance in combatting acts of cruelty to animals, the Police will implement the "Animal Watchers" Scheme in the financial year 2019-20, with a view to agglomerating the strengths of animal lovers at the community level in four directions of education, publicity, investigation and intelligence-gathering; raising public awareness on prevention of cruelty to animals; and encouraging the public to report in a timely manner as well as providing information that could help investigations. Participants of the Scheme could disseminate to the community the messages of caring for animals and preventing cruelty to animals through organising and participating in various activities promoting animal welfare. In addition, the Police will co-ordinate and deepen the co-operation among stakeholders, including relevant government departments, animal welfare organisations (AWOs) and animal lovers.

The Police will liaise with stakeholders shortly on the planning and implementation of the Scheme, with a view to finalising the details within next year.

(2) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been implementing measures and work to safeguard and promote animal welfare. In the past three years, AFCD has been:

(i) implementing and strengthening public education and publicity programme and enhancing their website to promote responsible pet ownership and proper care of animals, advising against abandonment and needless surrendering of

pets to the Government, and championing the need for dog licensing and rabies vaccination as well as the benefits of neutering;

(ii) implementing the new licensing regime under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Animal Traders) Regulations (Cap 139B) to regulate pet trading and dog breeding and sale;

(iii) devising codes of practices for the proper trading, breeding and keeping of pets and other animals;

(iv) strengthening enforcement action against pet owners and traders in contravention of relevant legislation;

(v) improving the handling of reports or complaints on cruelty to animals through the inter-departmental special working group comprising representatives of the relevant government departments and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA);

(vi) strengthening collaboration with, and providing technical and financial support to, AWOs in animal adoption and carrying out activities relating to animal welfare and management; and

(vii) assisting the AWOs concerned in implementing the trap-neuter-return trial programme for stray dogs.

The Government will continue to carry out the work on safeguarding animal welfare in the coming year. In addition, the Government is mapping out the major direction and drawing up preliminary proposals for amending and implementing the legislation related to animal welfare, with a view to consulting the public early next year. The proposals include introducing animal keepers' responsibility of positive duty of care of animals and exploring raising the penalties for acts of cruelty to animals.

The expenditures and estimates involved for carrying out the above work by AFCD over the past three years and in the financial year 2018-19 are as follows:

Financial year	Expenditure (\$ million)
2015-16	50.5
2016-17	53.7
2017-18 (revised estimate)	57.7
2018-19 (estimate)	57.7

AFCD does not have the breakdowns of expenditures involved for carrying out the above work and measures.

(3) AFCD completed in late September 2018 a public consultation on the responsibility requirement for a driver to stop in case of a traffic accident involving injury to an animal. The Government is considering the views received and drafting the legislative amendment proposal, with a view to submitting the proposed amendments to the Legislative Council in the first quarter of next year.

In the event of a traffic accident involving animals, members of the public could report the case to the Police by calling the 999 hotline. After receiving the report, the Police will handle the case in accordance with established procedures, and notify the relevant departments or SPCA to provide assistance as necessary.

The Government has been providing funding to SPCA to carry out work on safeguarding animal welfare, including enhancing the rescue services for handling injured animals.

(4) The number of registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong has been increasing in recent years, now amounting to 970. Around 140 veterinary clinics are present in Hong Kong, providing general and specialist consultation services. Furthermore, the clinic established by the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) also provides animal emergency services, and CityU is establishing an animal health centre to provide treatment for various animal diseases. Hence, there are currently sufficient clinics in Hong Kong offering various veterinary services. In addition, as mentioned above, AFCD has been providing subventions to AWOs on their work on safeguarding animal welfare, including the provision of veterinary services. Currently, the Government has no plan to establish a public animal hospital.

(5) and (6) On case investigation, in the light of public demand for the setting up of dedicated criminal investigation teams in Police districts to handle animal cruelty cases, the Police announced in mid-April this year that dedicated investigation teams, comprising officers with experience and skills in investigating and handling other serious crimes, have been set up in the 22 Police districts with criminal investigation teams across the territory. A platform is in place for dedicated investigation teams of various districts to exchange their experience in investigations. The Police also provide relevant officers with training on handling animal cruelty cases to ensure that they are able to conduct thorough investigations into such cases. In addition, the Police, AFCD and SPCA have established a co-operation mechanism, whereby officers of AFCD and SPCA will provide professional advice and assist in the investigation at the scenes of animal cruelty cases where necessary.

From April to September this year, the dedicated investigation teams in various Police districts handled 57 suspected animal cruelty cases, amongst which 22 have been detected. In the first six months of 2018, the Police initiated prosecution against a total of 11 cases under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap 169). The convicted persons concerned were sentenced to imprisonment of two months to one year. The Police will continue

to monitor the crime trend of animal cruelty and step up enforcement in this respect.

On education and training, the Police from time to time invite officers from AFCD and SPCA to explain the multi-agency approach for the investigation of animal cruelty cases to Police officers participating in foundation training and criminal investigation courses. The handling of animal cruelty has also been incorporated in the training days of various Police districts, so that frontline officers can have a better grasp of the latest situation and trend of animal cruelty.

In addition, the Police invite relevant officers to share their experience at seminars organised from time to time. A veterinary officer from AFCD, an officer from SPCA, a professor from the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of CityU and officers from dedicated investigation teams with rich experience in handling relevant cases were invited to share their experience at a large-scale seminar on the handling of animal cruelty cases held at the Police Headquarters in July this year, with a view to enhancing the professionalism and capability of officers in handling such cases. Two overseas experts were also invited to talk about animal welfare and share experience in veterinary forensics at another seminar organised by the Police at the end of October.

LCQ3: Measures to increase land supply

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Kwok Ka-ki and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

Upon the completion of all the development projects under the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" (Hong Kong 2030+) published in 2016, Hong Kong can accommodate 9 million people. This figure is about 800 000 higher than Hong Kong's projected peak population of 8 220 000 in 2043, i.e. providing a 10 per cent buffer. One of the proposed development projects in Hong Kong 2030+ is the construction of artificial islands with an area of 1 000 hectares (ha) in the Central Waters to accommodate 400 000 to 700 000 people. On the other hand, the Policy Address delivered last month put forward the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, proposing the construction of artificial islands with an area of about 1 700 ha in the Central Waters to accommodate 700 000 to 1 100 000 people. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the various items of estimated construction costs in relation to the artificial islands mentioned in the Policy Address, including reclamation,

external transport facilities and the public facilities on the islands;

(2) of the rationale for setting the buffer population in Hong Kong 2030+ at 800 000; the reasons why the Government has, after a lapse of two years, proposed to increase the reclamation area in the Central Waters by 700 ha to accommodate additional 300 000 to 400 000 people; and

(3) given that the Government may invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance to resume private land for "public purposes", whether the Government will consider, as a replacement for the reclamation plans in the Central Waters, invoking the Ordinance expeditiously to resume sufficient land (including brownfield sites) for the "public purposes" of developing public housing, other public facilities, etc., so that irreversible damage to the environment can be avoided?

Reply:

President,

The discussions over "Lantau Tomorrow" in the past few weeks have helped us better understand the community's concerns on various issues such as costs and benefits of the works, environmental conservation and impact of climate change, reclamation techniques and materials, land use and transport connection. The Government understands these concerns and plan to seek the funding approval of the Legislative Council in the first or second quarter next year, so as to commence the planning and engineering studies to look into various relevant aspects in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, so that society can discuss and make trade-offs based on objective, scientific and robust findings of the studies.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by Hon Kwok is as follows:

(1) "Lantau Tomorrow" proposed in the Policy Address is a vision spanning two to three decades. At this stage, we are planning to conduct detailed studies and therefore there is yet formal estimate on the costs for reclamation works and transport infrastructures. As the average water-depth of Kau Yi Chau is at about 7 metres, and in light of the recent experience on reclamations in Tung Chung, our preliminary cost estimate on reclamations for the artificial islands is at about \$13,000 to \$15,000 per square metre (sq m), which is similar to the cost of resuming private agricultural land at \$14,500 per sq m. As regards transport infrastructures, as Kau Yi Chau artificial islands would only be about 10 kilometers (km) away from Central/Sheung Wan, whereas New Territories North (NTN) is some 30 km from the metro core, the costs for providing transport infrastructures for the artificial islands should be no more than that for supporting a new development area (NDA) of similar scale in the NTN.

On the other hand, the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands will bring benefits to Hong Kong. Apart from the revenue arising from the sale of private residential and commercial land, developing the artificial islands will also create substantial social and economic benefits, coming mainly from

the 105 000 to around 180 000 public housing units; 200 000 diversified, high-end and high value-added job opportunities; business opportunities emanating from the third Core Business District (CBD3) of which the scale is equivalent to 80 per cent of Central; a liveable city in Kau Yi Chau with holistic planning; comprehensive provision of community facilities; and the land development potential to be unleashed by an expanded transport infrastructure network, etc..

In formulating the implementation strategy, the Government will carry out detailed financial assessments and fiscal risk management by taking into account relevant factors like fiscal sustainability to ensure that the project expenditure is financially affordable.

(2) Under the estimate of "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" (Hong Kong 2030+), with the full implementation of all planned development projects as well as the two strategic growth areas namely the East Lantau Metropolis (ELM) and NTN, the maximum housing capacity would be about 9 million people. However, this is not our population target. It is just a projection based on a host of assumptions to allow society to grasp more easily the potential development capacity of land in overall terms. In other words, the 800 000 people on top of the population peak of 8.22 million in 2043 is not a buffer population as claimed by Hon Kwok; this figure also does not imply that the Government intends to bring in this amount of additional population. It barely reflects the assumptions under the Hong Kong 2030+ estimation that society needs a certain amount of land as buffer capacity, enabling us to have more room for planning and greater flexibility, so as to prepare for the changing circumstances and to improve the existing planning standards, thereby making Hong Kong more liveable.

Hong Kong 2030+ estimates that we are short of at least 1 200 hectares of land for housing, economic development and various infrastructures and facilities. As pointed out by the Task Force on Land Supply (Task Force), this figure is yet to take into account factors such as public aspiration for improvement in living space and quality of life, upgrading of various community facilities and the need to create a land reserve, etc. Hence, the actual shortage is likely to be under-estimated. On the other hand, there is considerable uncertainty in the implementation of the planned or ongoing land supply projects; if they cannot be realised timely or fully, the land shortage would be even greater. In other words, 1 200 hectares is just a starting point of the land supply target.

The 1 700-hectare reclamation area proposed under Lantau Tomorrow is part of the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision", the details of which are subject to further studies and assessments. In the first phase, we will focus on the studies for developing the artificial islands of about 1 000 hectares near Kau Yi Chau. This scale is similar to that of the ELM mentioned in the respective public engagement documents of the Task Force and Hong Kong 2030+. As for the remaining artificial islands of about 700 hectares near Hei Ling Chau and the waters south of Cheung Chau, the studies will collect technical data for future reference in long-term planning, and there is no concrete implementation timetable at the moment. The Government will take into account

the findings in the final report to be submitted by the Task Force to the Government tentatively by the end of this year before firming up the details of the proposed studies.

(3) If the Government considers that a certain area needs to be developed for a "public purpose" such as public housing or government facilities, and has made public the relevant planning and studies, the Government will continue to invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance (LRO) (Cap. 124) timely to resume private land for development that meets the "public purpose". In the coming few years, about 500 hectares of private land will be resumed under a few mega land development projects. In other words, if the Government has already conducted planning studies and confirmed that development that fulfills the "public purpose" test is feasible, the Government will continue to invoke the LRO to resume private land.

On the other hand, I hope the community would appreciate that the Government needs time and is required to comply with relevant regulations and procedures to take forward relevant studies and planning work. Taking the rezoning of the some 210 sites with potential for housing development as an example, we have spent considerable amount of time on handling the technical feasibility studies and local consultation. Starting from 2013, hitherto, we have completed rezoning of about 120 sites, but there are still more than 90 sites for which rezoning work is still ongoing or not yet initiated. Meanwhile, the Government is carrying out other planning and engineering studies, and will soon commence studies to look into the development potential of about 200 hectares of brownfield sites in the NTN as well as another 760 hectares of more scattered brownfield sites. However, the Government has only limited planning resources. It would be unrealistic to assume that the Government can deal with planning and development of all different areas in Hong Kong at the same time, or to expect that resuming private lands alone could resolve the severe land shortage problem in Hong Kong, or that all private lots carry potential for high density development.

"Lantau Tomorrow" is a vision spanning two to three decades and means a lot, in different aspects, to the future development of Hong Kong. The Central Waters is in proximity with the Hong Kong Island, Lantau and various major infrastructures. Creation of artificial islands at this strategic location can effectively increase land supply and open up spaces for housing and economic activities. In terms of residential units, the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands can provide 150 000 to 260 000 units, 70 per cent of which (105 000 to 182 000 units) are public housing. This quantum suggests huge potential of Kau Yi Chau, when compared with the aggregate of about 130 000 public housing units to be provided by the four NDAs or new town extension projects that are ongoing or being planned. Also, the strategic location of Kau Yi Chau allows us to develop the CBD3 for Hong Kong to strive ahead. The newly proposed major roads and railway network will connect the artificial islands with the Hong Kong Island, Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun to help divert traffic between North West New Territories and the metro area and relieve congestion at the West Rail. On the other hand, the transport network helps adjust the current uneven distribution of homes and jobs so as to make the territorial spatial planning pattern more balanced. The Kau Yi

Chau artificial islands can also provide decanting space for households affected by urban renewal and enable larger-scale urban redevelopment projects, while thinning out the dense population in the urban area. These multiple strategic benefits cannot be easily replaced by other land supply options.

For Hong Kong to avoid the recurrence of the current dire land shortage, we cannot afford to rely on just one single option to tackle the land supply issue. A multi-pronged approach, as evident from past experiences and backed by the broad support from the Task Force and the general public, is a pragmatic strategy that meets Hong Kong's overall interest. Based on the above considerations, we believe that conducting detailed studies for developing the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands is a crucial step under the multi-pronged strategy.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected smuggled smartphones \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (November 13) seized 330 suspected smuggled smartphones with an estimated market value of about \$500,000 at Lok Ma Chau Control Point.

Customs officers yesterday intercepted an outgoing container truck at Lok Ma Chau Control Point and found the batch of smartphones in a false compartment at the bottom of the vehicle.

The 62-year-old male driver was arrested. Investigation is ongoing.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

