

LCQ7: Emergency response and recovery work in respect of super typhoon Mangkhut

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

Quite a number of villagers have relayed to me that a number of villages were ravaged by super typhoon Mangkhut when it hit Hong Kong last month. For example, a number of houses in Kut O Village were devastated by strong winds or destroyed by fallen trees; a number of houses along the coasts of Tung Ping Chau and Sai Lau Kong were smashed to rubble; the nature trail and scenic spot of the white-flowered derris array at Lai Chi Wo were damaged; the water and electricity supply to Tap Mun was cut off for three days; quite a number of fishing boats sank or were destroyed; and large quantities of rubbish and other objects piled up in a number of villages. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it had, in advance, (i) assessed the damage that Mangkhut might cause to remote villages and (ii) formulated recovery plans; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the respective numbers of villagers who (i) had been evacuated before Tropical Cyclone (TC) Warning Signals of No. 8 or above in respect of Mangkhut were issued, and (ii) were provided emergency rescue during the time when such signals were in force, by the Government, with a tabular breakdown by village name;

(3) whether, after all the TC Warning Signals in respect of Mangkhut had been cancelled, it took the initiative to immediately contact the villagers of remote villages so as to get an understanding of how they had been affected by the typhoon and to render appropriate assistance; if so, set out in a table by village name the details of the assistance requested by the villagers and the assistance (including the dates) provided by the Government; if not, of the reasons for that;

(4) of the details of the interruptions of fresh water and electricity supply to villages caused by Mangkhut (set out in the table below);

Village Name	District in which the village is located	No. of days for which fresh water supply was interrupted	No. of water tanks/water wagons/water vessels that provided temporary water supply, and total volume of water supplied	No. of days for which electricity supply was interrupted

(5) as some remote villages are inaccessible by public transport, and the villagers there are mainly elderly persons who are unable to clear on their own the fallen trees and other objects in their villages after the onslaught of the typhoon, whether the Government has plans to take the initiative, in future after severe typhoons hitting Hong Kong, to organise volunteers and transport them to such villages for assisting the villagers in carrying out clearance work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) whether it knows the number of vessels damaged by Mangkhut; whether it will consider (i) constructing additional typhoon shelters, and (ii) enhancing the facilities of the existing typhoon shelters, so as to bolster their capability to withstand typhoons;

(7) as the houses of quite a number of villagers, together with the electrical appliances and furniture in such houses, as well as the fishing boats which were villagers' means of earning a living, were damaged during the onslaught of Mangkhut, whether the Government has provided emergency financial assistance to the villagers concerned; if so, of the details; and

(8) whether, with a view to bolstering villages' capability to withstand typhoons and facilitating recovery efforts in future, the Government will consider (i) reinforcing villagers' houses for free, (ii) helping villagers rebuild houses with better capability to withstand strong winds, (iii) constructing additional access roads to remote villages and improving such villages' infrastructure facilities, (iv) constructing for villages in coastal and low-lying locations breakwaters or other facilities for countering storm surges, and (v) implementing other disaster mitigation measures?

Reply:

President,

I have consulted the relevant bureaux and departments and my consolidated reply to the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) In order to provide an effective and efficient response to tropical cyclones and other natural disasters, the Government maintains a Contingency Plan for Natural Disaster (CPND) which sets out the Government's alert system and organisational framework for responding to such emergencies as well as

the functions and responsibilities of each government department and organisation. In addition to CPND, every relevant department has its own detailed operational plans/instructions guiding its decision making and operation.

Based on the assessment from the Hong Kong Observatory that Mangkhut would pose significant threats to the community, Security Bureau commenced co-ordination amongst departments when Mangkhut was still over 800 kilometres away from Hong Kong and no Tropical Cyclone (TC) Warning Signal was yet hoisted.

Two inter-departmental meetings chaired by the Secretary for Security were held on September 12 and 14, 2018 to review the preparedness of the government departments and agencies for Mangkhut. Representatives from over 30 bureaux/departments and public utilities attended. The meetings discussed issues on response plans, monitoring and co-ordination, preventive measures, information flow and early public warnings. The departments and agencies were urged to enhance the safety factor, prepare for the worst and be prepared to mobilise the maximum amount of resources for emergency response.

All relevant departments had taken prompt precautionary measures. For example, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and Drainage Services Department (DSD) mobilised additional resources to step up cleansing services to check that roadside gullies, drains and channels are unobstructed and clear of debris, particularly at the flooding blackspots. DSD also implemented measures at the seven sites identified to be prone to serious inundation, including Luen On San Tsuen, Kar Wo Lei, Sham Tseng San Tsuen, Lei Yue Mun Praya Road, Sai Kung Nam Wai, Tai O and the coastal village areas at the northwest boundary of Yuen Long District. For examples, in Lei Yue Mun, demountable flood barriers had been installed at 14 designated locations to alleviate flooding before the predetermined alert sea level was reached. In Tai O, DSD commenced the installation of 350 metres demountable flood barriers on the top of riverwall to raise the protection level to +3.8mPD at Wing On Street and south of Tai Ping Street for advance completion before the approach of Mangkhut.

Before the onset of the typhoon, District Offices reminded villagers of the matters that required attention and preventive measures through rural committees and village representatives. Villagers of remote areas (particularly the underprivileged groups such as the elderly) were advised to seek refuge in a safe place before Mangkhut hit Hong Kong. Apart from opening temporary shelters, District Offices, having regard to their district needs, also assisted those people in need (such as the elderly) to evacuate when the strong wind signal no. 3 was issued.

(2) When super typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong, the Police and the Fire Services Department evacuated or rescued residents in the villages, which are set out in the following table:

Location	Number of residents evacuated or rescued
Pok Fu Lam Village, Hong Kong	3
Tsang Tai Uk Village, Sha Tin	103
Luen On San Tsuen, Castle Peak	3
Fu Yung Shan Tsuen, Kwong Pan Tin Tsuen, Sham Tseng Village in Tsuen Wan	46
So Kwun Wat Tsuen, Castle Peak	10
Lei Yue Mun	28
Tai O	129

(3) After the cancellation of all TC Warning Signals, the District Social Welfare Offices under the Social Welfare Department (SWD) liaised with the District Offices to, as far as practicable, mobilise staff members and volunteers to visit and render appropriate assistance to remote and hard-hit villages. Details are as follows:

Village Name	Assistance requested by villagers	Details of assistance provided by the Government
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<p>Kat 0</p>	<p>Resuming water and electricity supply as soon as possible;</p> <p>Clearing fallen trees; and</p> <p>Clearing debris and refuse caused by the typhoon.</p>	<p>North District Office coordinated with the electricity providers and Water Supplies Department to repair damaged electricity and water supply systems expeditiously. There was no suspension of electricity service as back up electricity system had been established in Kat 0. Water Supplies Department provided temporary fresh water supply service when the water supply system was under repair. Electricity and water supply resumed normal on September 20 and September 29 respectively.</p> <p>Social Welfare Department and North District Office arranged volunteers to visit the victims in Kat 0 on September 20 and 21, distributing aids (including dried ration and daily necessities etc.) and helping victims to apply for emergency relief fund.</p> <p>On September 20, 21, 24, 28, and October 4, North District Office deployed workers from contractor to Kat 0 to clean up the fallen trees and debris in obstructed roads. Food and Environmental Hygiene Department employed additional contractors to clear the rubbish and debris in the island. Marine Department re-deployed their ships for North District Office on September 28 and October 4, conveying waste electronic appliances from the island to the contractors of Environmental Protection Department for recycling. Civil Aid Service deployed manpower to Kat 0 for clearance works on October 6, 7, and 14. Clearance works have been largely completed.</p>
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<p>Ap Chau, Sai Lau Kong and Lai Chi Wo</p>	<p>Clearance of fallen trees and removal of dangerous trees;</p> <p>Clearance of debris that blocked pedestrian ways;</p> <p>Clearance of refuse in the sea and the coast;</p> <p>Repair of roads, village roads and public facilities;</p> <p>Resumption of water and electricity supply as soon as possible.</p>	<p>After the cancellation of TC Warning Signals in respect of Mangkhut, the North District Office took the initiative to contact representatives of remote villages, to understand the post-disaster situation of these villages and the needs of villagers on September 17.</p>
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<p>Tap Mun and Tap Mun Fishermen's Village</p>	<p>Resumption of water and electricity supply, and clearance of fallen trees and refuse along the coastline.</p>	<p>Tai Po District Office contacted relevant departments and CLP to follow up residents' requests. Tai Po District Office visited Tap Mun on September 19 to enquire the needs of villagers and distribute application forms of General Chinese Charities Fund to the victims. Later on September 23, Tai Po District Office and Heung Yee Kuk visited Tap Mun again, ordering contractors to assist the clearance of fallen trees, debris and repairing of damaged roads etc.</p> <p>Before the resumption of water supply on September 23, Tai Po District Office had made six deliveries of distilled water (1 120 bottles with a capacity of 4.5 litres each) to residents for consumption.</p> <p>Before the resumption of electricity supply on September 21, Tai Po District Office had been maintaining close contact with CLP, requesting for the resumption of electricity supply and provide adequate temporary electricity generators for residents.</p>
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Tung Ping Chau	Clearance of fallen trees and re-opening of roads.	<p>Tai Po District Office contacted relevant departments to follow up residents' requests. On September 19, Tai Po District Office visited Tung Ping Chau on September 19 to enquire the needs of villagers and distribute application forms of General Chinese Charities Fund to the victims. Later on September 23, Tai Po District Office and Heung Yee Kuk visited Tung Ping Chau again, ordering contractors to assist the clearance of fallen trees, debris and repairing of damaged roads etc.</p> <p>On September 21, Tai Po District Office re-opened 2 village roads from the Tung Ping Chau Pier to Sha Tau Village and Chau Tou Village and delivered mineral water to residents for consumption. Maintenance works of the village roads concerned commenced on October 2.</p>
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<p>Sai Wan and Tai Long Tsuen</p>	<p>Some pedestrian ways were devastated. Water and electricity supplies in the village were cut off.</p> <p>Village lights collapsed along the access to Sai Wan.</p>	<p>The issues of interrupted water and electricity supply had been referred to CLP and the Water Supplies Department for follow-up. The water and electricity supplies were gradually resumed on September 19.</p> <p>Sai Kung District Office, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Sai Kung District Community Centre and Sai Wan Tsuen representatives conducted on-site visit on September 26 and enquired on the needs of villagers. Sai Kung District Office commenced repair works of pedestrian roads in early October, scheduled to be completed in late October. Highways Department cleaned up the collapsed village lights in early October, pending further reconstruction after the completion of the abovementioned repair works.</p> <p>Sai Kung District Office have been in communication with the village representatives of Tai Long Tsuen. Sai Kung District Office will commence the repairing works of pedestrian pavements in mid-December, scheduled to be completed in late February 2019.</p>
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<p>Tung A, Pak A, and Yim Tin Tsai</p>	<p>Some pedestrian ways were damaged after the typhoon.</p>	<p>Sai Kung District Office have been in communication with the village representatives of Tung A, Pak A, and Yim Tin Tsai to enquire on the needs of villagers. Sai Kung District Office will commence the repairing works of pedestrian pavements in Yim Tin Tsai in mid-November, scheduled to be completed in late December. Repair works of pedestrian pavements in Tung A and Pak A will be started in mid-December, scheduled to be completed in late February 2019.</p>
<p>Nam Wai</p>	<p>Pedestrian ways and a breakwater were devastated by sea waves and sea water flooded some houses. Requests for repair were made.</p> <p>The Kowloon-bound minibuses and buses did not stop at the mini-bus stops/bus stops off Nam Wai public toilet after the typhoon.</p> <p>A large amount of refuse piled up at refuse collection points. Requests for clearing were made.</p>	<p>Sai Kung District Office referred the fallen trees near mini bus and bus stops to the Transport Department upon acknowledging the case from the village representatives on September 20. Transport Department arranged clearance operations which was completed on September 22, traffic resumed normal since then.</p> <p>Sai Kung District Office conducted several on-site visits for road repair and debris clearance. Repair works on pedestrian pavement will be started in mid-November, scheduled to be completed in late December.</p> <p>Sai Kung District Office has contacted FEHD for enhancement in clearance of pavements and debris collection and clearance. The situation has improved since early October.</p>

<p>Ma Nam Wat</p>	<p>Metal frames and a large amount of refuse were found on the sea and the coast respectively. Requests for clearance were made.</p> <p>Pedestrian ways along the coast and a breakwater were damaged. Requests for repair were made.</p>	<p>Sai Kung District Office has been in close contact with the village representatives to understand the needs of the villagers, and referred to the Marine Department (MD) and FEHD for followed up actions MD will, in late October, arrange manpower to clear the marine refuse. FEHD had already removed the accumulated rubbish near the coast by phases, and will continue to arrange manpower to clean up the remaining large-sized debris.</p> <p>Sai Kung District Office will commence the repair works on the damaged pedestrian ways in mid-December. It is expected to be completed in late February 2019.</p>
<p>Tai O and Ma Wan Chung Village, Tung Chung</p>	<p>Houses were damaged by collapsed trees;</p> <p>Clearance of fallen trees and debris;</p> <p>Assistance in removal of furniture and electrical appliances;</p> <p>Replacement of electrical appliances damaged in flood; and</p> <p>Cleansing of houses.</p>	<p>Through co-ordination of SWD, two non-government organisations (NGOs) took the initiative to contact villagers of Tai O and Ma Wan Chung Village in Tung Chung after the typhoon, and provided the following assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arranging for the residents in need to move to temporary shelters; – Arranging for volunteers to assist in clearing debris, removal of furniture and electrical appliances as well as cleansing houses; and – Assisting residents to replace damaged electrical appliances by applying for charitable funding or donations.

<p>Tui Min Hoi Chuen, Woo Mei Village, Po Lo Che Tsuen and Tseng Lan Shue Village</p>	<p>Hit by floods and strong wind, some families suffered damage to the interior of their homes, furniture and electrical appliances;</p> <p>Houses were seriously damaged and no longer inhabitable; and</p> <p>Fallen tress blocked access roads to homes or damaged houses.</p>	<p>Social workers from SWD visited the affected families and assessed their situations. Grants under charitable funds were made in four cases for home repairs and replacement of furniture and electrical appliances.</p> <p>SWD also made payment from charitable funds for those cases with badly damaged homes to help them cover the urgent living expenditure arising from temporary accommodation elsewhere. Meanwhile, SWD will keep in contact with the Lands Department to follow up the long-term housing arrangement for cases of destroyed homes, and both departments will jointly follow up the grants under the Emergency Relief Fund/ charitable funds, so as to help families whose houses were damaged repair the rooftops destroyed by strong wind, make good their homes and replace furniture.</p> <p>With the assistance of social workers from SWD, some families were evacuated to stay in private residential care homes for the elderly temporarily prior to the typhoon. Thereafter, through liaison by SWD, volunteers helped with speedy clearance of fallen trees, and the families concerned moved back to their homes. Besides, SWD co-ordinated with District Offices to make payment to them from charitable funds to cover the accommodation fee for their stay in such elderly homes.</p>
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<p>To Tau Wan Village and Tsang Tai Uk Village</p>	<p>Financial assistance for repairing damaged homes or/and replacing damaged electrical appliances/furniture.</p>	<p>Social workers from SWD and the Integrated Family Service Centres operated by NGOs visited some affected residents to understand their plights and help those in need apply for financial assistance under charitable funds for home repairs.</p>
<p>Kat O, Tap Mun, Sai Lau Kong and Tung Ping Chau</p>	<p>Application for emergency financial assistance; Replacement of electrical appliances damaged in floods; and Removal of debris and clearance of pedestrian ways after the disastrous typhoon.</p>	<p>SWD proactively liaised with the District Offices and NGOs to provide the following assistance to villagers in Kat O, Tap Mun, Sai Lau Kong and Tung Ping Chau after the typhoon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distributing emergency supplies packs to the affected villagers; – Assisting the affected villagers to apply for emergency financial assistance for home repair or replacement of damaged furniture and electrical appliances, so as to help them rebuild their homes; – Arranging for volunteers to help the affected villagers remove debris and clear the pedestrian ways; and – Distributing rice cookers and fridges donated by institutions to some of the affected villagers.
<p>Mai Po, Shek Wu Wai, Fung Kat Heung and Ko Po Tsuen</p>	<p>Financial assistance for replacing damaged electrical appliances and furniture.</p>	<p>After the typhoon, SWD proactively liaised with five village offices in Yuen Long to understand the post-typhoon situation in various villages, and help residents in need replace damaged electrical appliances and furniture through application for grants under charitable funds or referral to NGOs.</p>

(4) Interruptions of fresh water and electricity supply to villages caused by Mangkhut are tabulated as follows:

Village name	District where the village is located	Number of days affected by power interruption (Notes 1,2,3)
Kai Kuk Shue Ha	North District, NT	4
Lai Chi Wo	North District, NT	4
Sam A Tsuen	North District, NT	4
Kuk Po	North District, NT	4
Fung Hang	North District, NT	4
Kat O	North District, NT (Islands)	4
Tap Mun and Tap Mun Fishermen's Village	Tai Po	4
Chau Tau	Yuen Long	3
Tung Shing Lei	Yuen Long	3
Hadden Hill	Yuen Long	3
Pak Sha Tsuen	Yuen Long	3
Wong Nai Tun	Yuen Long	3
Shek Tong Tsuen	Yuen Long	3
Yeung Uk Tsuen	Yuen Long	3
Tin Fu Tsai	Tuen Mun	6
Tseng Tau Village	Tuen Mun	3
Lung Ha Wan	Tuen Mun	3
Wong Chuk Yeung	Tuen Mun	3
Ko Lau Wan	Tuen Mun	3
Mau Tso Ngam	Kowloon Peak	3
Fu Yung Pit	Kowloon Peak	3

Note 1: CLP service teams commenced power supply restoration work for customers while Mangkhut gradually moved away from Hong Kong. Power supply was resumed for most affected customers within 3 days. However, for areas more severely damaged and with blocked roads, or remote areas where service teams and equipment could only be transported thereto by sea, as well as for those cases in which the customers' equipment was damaged, it took more time to restore their power supply.

Note 2: As power can be supplied to the villages from multiple electricity supply sources, for some customers with access to alternate sources, power

supply was restored in a time shorter than those tabulated above.

Note 3: The above data was manually compiled on the basis of the data of CLP's outage management system. Some customers might experience a longer power supply interruption due to network client problems.

Village name	District in which the village is located	No. of days for which fresh water supply was interrupted	Temporary water supply				Total volume of water supplied (in cubic metre)
			No. of water tanks	No. of water wagons	No. of water vessels	No. of public stand-pipes	
Scenic Garden#	Cheung Chau	1	0	0	0	1	5
Tap Mun*#, Ko Lau Wan*# and Sai Wan*#	Sai Kung	6	0	0	1	0	About 100
Kat O# and Sai Lau Kong #	North District	6	9	0	1	0	About 200
Ap Chau#	North District	10	2	0	0	0	5
Along Route Twisk * (including Kwong Pan Tin Tsuen, Route Twisk Villa, Sun Hoi Tin Village, Chuen Lun, etc.)	Tsuen Wan	3-4	14	1	0	0	20
Sheung Tsuen (part)*	Yuen Long	3	6	1	0	0	155
Ta Shek Wu (part)*	Yuen Long	4	1	0	0	0	48
Ki Lun Shan Village (part)*	Yuen Long	3	2	0	0	0	13
Wo Shang Wai#	Yuen Long	1	1	0	0	0	6

* Water supply suspension caused by the suspension of electricity supply.
Water pipes were damaged by fallen trees and strong waves, some of the damaged pipes are located in remote areas, longer time is needed to ascertain the location of the concerned pipes for repair works.

(5) When the typhoon was over, the Government mobilised considerable manpower to carry out clearance operations each day and invited a number of contractors to provide temporary manpower and equipment for speedy clearance of fallen trees and their removal from road surface so that road traffic could resume normal. Community organisations and volunteer groups from different districts helped clear debris and tree branches on roads and beaches. In the aftermath of the typhoon, the Civil Aid Service has been assisting other government departments in recovery and restoration work, including clearing obstruction caused by fallen trees. Such operations are still on-going.

Individual District Offices took consideration of the actual situation and needs, and collaborated with NGOs and district bodies to organise volunteers for assisting villagers with necessary clear-ups in remote villages.

(6) As on October 14, MD received 555 reports of vessel accidents in relation to Mangkhut, and handled 125 stranded, listed and capsized vessels. MD conducts periodic assessment of the demand and supply of sheltered space in Hong Kong to ensure sufficient supply of sheltered space for local vessels. According to MD, there is adequate sheltered space in Hong Kong waters for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather to safeguard vessels and their crew members.

(7) The Government provides cash assistance programmes, including the General Chinese Charities Fund and special aid fund which make grants under the administration of the Home Affairs Department, to help people facing economic difficulties caused by Mangkhut. Under the existing mechanism, applications for cash assistance from both funds must be submitted to District Offices for approval by the respective District Officers.

The Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) aims to provide prompt assistance for persons who are in need of urgent relief as a result of fire, flooding, tempest, landslide, typhoon or other natural disasters. Grants from ERF are intended for relief rather than compensation. According to the Emergency Relief Fund Ordinance (Cap. 1103), ERF is vested in the Director of Social Welfare Incorporated as Trustee. The responsibility for approving grants and making payments is vested in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), MD, SWD and LandsD.

(8) In respect of construction of breakwaters or other facilities at villages in low-lying areas to counter storm surges, the Government will make assessment with regard to the situation of different villages and implement measures, taking into account their practical effectiveness, technical feasibility, site restrictions, and cost effectiveness. For instance, in Tai

0, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) completed a series of works to tackle tidal back flow during improvement works in Tai O (Phase 1) in 2013, including the construction of a river wall about 220 metres long, a floodwater pumping station, and a demountable flood barrier some 350 metres in length, to reduce the impact of tidal back flow. To reinforce certain coastal areas in Tai O against wave impact, the CEDD completed the restoration of the old pier at Shek Tsai Po near Tai O Heritage Hotel in Tai O. On the other hand, DSD is raising the flood discharge capacity of the Tai O Wing On Street Stormwater Pumping Station. The project is expected to be completed by 2019/20.

Furthermore, CEDD will thoroughly examine the situation of coastal and low-lying areas or exposed places, and conduct studies on storm surge, and wind and wave to evaluate the effects of inclement weather on those locations arising from climatic changes. Based on the findings of studies, it will formulate measures, including improvement works and management measures, to cope with and withstand such weather.

The Home Affairs Department has always been undergoing projects within the scope of minor works for improving access to remote villages and rural infrastructure (such as installation of drainage facilities on both sides of village access roads). It will also carry out works for necessary follow-ups in the wake of typhoons.

The review of the mechanism of emergency response and recovery in respect of the super typhoon co-ordinated by Security Bureau has commenced. The Government will take into account the Mangkhut experience in conducting the review, including considering ways to bolster the capability of rural and low-lying areas to withstand and recover from typhoons.

[LCQ5: Recovery work of super typhoon Mangkhut](#)

Following is a question by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

Last month, super typhoon Mangkhut caused serious damage to Hong Kong. However, the majority of members of the public had to go to work at a time when the storm had not completely subsided and the transport services had not resumed normal, resulting in chaos. Regarding the follow-up work after the onslaught of the typhoon, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some members of the public have relayed that the factors contributing to the damage of many vessels in Sai Kung during the onslaught of the typhoon include: insufficient berthing spaces at typhoon shelters, typhoon shelters being remotely located making vessel owners unwilling to berth their vessels there, inadequacies of the breakwaters and wind protection facilities, and the disorderly berthing of vessels, of the Government's measures to solve these problems;

(2) whether it will improve the resilience of the areas near Tseung Kwan O seafront against typhoons, such as by reinforcing the seawalls, constructing breakwaters, replacing the pavement slabs and seats of the waterfront promenade with more sturdy ones, and installing additional flood prevention facilities for the housing estates concerned; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will set up a mechanism whereby the Government may declare a certain period after a natural disaster to be "a period of special circumstances", within which the work arrangements for employees should be in line with those during the time when the Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is in force; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Mangkhut was the most powerful super typhoon affecting Hong Kong over the past few decades. It reached a peak sustained wind speed of 250 kilometres per hour. While Mangkhut hit Hong Kong, it brought severe storm surge to the territory, which led to inundation in low-lying areas and caused widespread damage to Hong Kong. Over 54 000 reports of fallen trees and 500 reports of broken windows were received by government departments. The recovery work of Mangkhut requires more time and resources than did previous typhoons, and needs prioritisation.

In fact, every government department has been sparing no effort in the recovery work of Mangkhut. Given the unprecedented destruction and widespread damages, however, some recovery work is still on-going and the relevant government departments will continue to follow up vigorously.

I have consulted the relevant bureaux and departments and my consolidated reply to the questions raised by Dr Hon Quat's question is as follows:

(1) As in mid October, the Marine Department (MD) received altogether 220 reports of accidents in relation to Mangkhut in Sai Kung District, and handled 125 stranded, listed or capsized vessels. Over the past weekend, MD obtained consent from the shipyard owners to start clearing the sunken vessels off the shipyards in Pak Sha Wan. Should the owners of those sunken vessels agree to apply for parting with the ownership of the vessels, MD will arrange clearance of the wreckages as soon as possible.

As for constructing additional breakwaters and typhoon shelters to increase the sheltered space, MD's observation is that only 3 among the 14 gazetted typhoon shelters, namely the Rambler Channel, To Kwa Wan and Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelters, reached a 100 per cent occupancy rate during the passage of super typhoon Mangkhut. The remaining 11 typhoon shelters, including the Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter in Sai Kung, still had sheltered space available, indicating that sufficient sheltered space can be found in Sai Kung district and within the waters of Hong Kong for local vessels to use during typhoon. Regarding the provision of more private mooring buoys, representatives of MD attended a Sai Kung District Council meeting in March this year to brief the councillors on the proposal of designating a new private mooring area in Yim Tin Tsai and expanding the private mooring area in Tso Wo Hang. With the general support from the councillors, MD is now devising a detailed plan in consultation with the local stakeholders.

(2) Based on the experience gained from Mangkhut, the Government will examine the applicability of different flood prevention strategy, together with assessment of the practical effectiveness, technical feasibility, land constraints and cost-effectiveness, etc. of various measures.

In Tseung Kwan O Waterfront Park, strong wind and backflow of seawater caused damage to the facilities. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department, together with the Architectural Services Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, carried out on-site assessment and restoration, including connection to temporary power sources for night-time lighting and repaving part of the pedestrian ways. In order to complete the repairs concerned as soon as possible, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will actively discuss with various government departments on ways to improve the facilities in Tseung Kwan O Waterfront Park, including looking into a change in paving material and park benches, as well as exploring the feasibility of relocating power cubicles with the Architectural Services Department. Relevant departments are now reviewing the overall layouts of the Park to formulate improvement measures with a view to mitigating potential damage to the park facilities under typhoon in future. After the completion of the design plan, departments will consult with the relevant stakeholders as soon as possible.

The Civil Engineering and Development Department will thoroughly examine the situation of coastal and low-lying areas or exposed places, and conduct studies on storm surge, and wind and wave to evaluate the effects of inclement weather on those locations arising from climatic changes. Based on the findings of studies, it will formulate measures, including improvement works and management measures, to cope with and withstand such weather.

To alleviate the flooding problem in the housing estates along Tseung Kwan O seafront, the Drainage Services Department can render technical support in respect of the affected building facilities like car parks. For example, additional floodgates may be installed at the entrance to stop seawater from flooding into the building which may result in damage to the facilities, and special devices may be added to the drainage system and manhole covers.

(3) The Government attaches great importance to the safety of employees at work, as well as on their journey to and from work, whether during the effective period or upon the cancellation of typhoon or rainstorm warnings. On the other hand, the Government also understands the importance of early resumption of social services and economic activities as soon as possible after typhoons or rainstorms. Taking into account the general interests of employers, employees and the community, the Labour Department has formulated the "Code of Practice in Times of Typhoons and Rainstorms" (the Code) which provides advice and practical guidelines on work arrangements in times of typhoons and rainstorms; resumption of work arrangements after cancellation of typhoon and rainstorm warnings; as well as wage computations and leave arrangements. The Code also advises the employers to take prime consideration of employees' safety in the workplace and during the journey to and from work. Employers are also advised to be flexible in handling cases of employees facing genuine difficulties.

Given the diversity in nature and requirements of different jobs in various trades and industries, it is crucial to maintain different degrees of operation under inclement weather conditions for some essential services, such as public transport, public utilities, medical services, homes for the elderly or persons with disabilities, hotels and security. Moreover, the circumstances of employees commuting from home to workplace in different districts are as varied as the impact of inclement weather on public transport and road systems there. The preliminary view of the Labour and Welfare Bureau is that it is not practical to introduce a piece of legislation to govern the work arrangements of employees under specific circumstances, otherwise the operational needs of different industries and the community as a whole will be overlooked, and the flexibility in the work arrangements between the employers and employees will be affected.

The Security Bureau is co-ordinating a review on the emergency response and recovery in respect of handling super typhoons. We are also aware of the comments from different Members on post-typhoon work arrangement. We will take account of the Mangkhut experience and examine ways to enhance the plans and systems for response and recovery.

Thank you President.

LCQ18: Lion dance permit applications

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

Under section 4C of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap 228), any person who organises or participates in a lion dance, dragon dance or unicorn dance, or any attendant martial arts display (dragon and lion dance sports) in a public place is guilty of an offence, unless the person has been issued with a permit by the Commissioner of Police. Some members of the public have relayed to me that the application procedure for the permit is very cumbersome (e.g. applications must be accompanied by a photocopy of the Hong Kong Identity Card (HKIC) of the organiser as well as each participant and other relevant documents, and applications have to be made at least 14 days prior to the date of the event), which causes inconvenience to the applicants and creates a negative labelling effect that dragon and lion dance sports are undesirable activities, thereby obstructing the popularisation and development of such sports. Regarding the regulation of the dragon and lion dance sports, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of applications for permits received and approved by the Police in the past three years, and the average processing time for each approved application;

(2) whether it will consider setting up a counter dedicated for permit application in each divisional police station;

(3) whether it will relax the requirement that applications must be accompanied by a photocopy of HKIC of each participant;

(4) whether it will consider streamlining the application procedure for permits, accepting applications through electronic means and completing the vetting and approval of the applications within one day after receipt; and

(5) whether it will relax the regulation of dragon and lion dance sports, with a view to eliminating the negative labelling effect created on the sports; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Section 4C of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap 228) stipulates that any person who organises or participates in a lion dance, dragon dance, unicorn dance (hereinafter referred to as lion dance), or any attendant martial arts display in a public place, save for persons exempted by the Commissioner of Police (CP), shall be subject to the conditions of the permit issued by the CP. The purpose of such a policy is to prevent the involvement of lawbreakers in these activities and to ensure that such activities will not cause public disorder, including traffic congestion, noise nuisance or other inconvenience to the public, or affect public safety. For scrutiny of the applications, the Police require all applicants and participants of such activities to authorise the Police to check their criminal conviction records.

The Police give thorough considerations to each and every application. The Police may grant exemption for appropriate activities having regard to the participants and arrangement of each activity. In case the applicant or participants of an activity are found to have criminal conviction records, the Police shall, taking into account the nature and gravity of their convictions, consider whether the purpose of such activity is to be used to undertake illegal activities. Persons with criminal conviction records are not automatically banned from taking part in these activities. Upon scrutiny, the Police shall reject applications which are considered to be adversely affecting public order or public safety, or suspected to be related to illegal activities.

The reply to the Hon Alice Mak's question is as follows:

(1) As at August 2018, the figures on the applications for lion dance permit received by the Police are as follows:

Year	Number of applications for permits	Number of permits issued	Number of exemptions granted
2015	2 473	2 461	12
2016 (Note 1)	2 340	2 332	7
2017 (Note 2)	2 355	2 349	5
2018 (January to August)	2 124	2 119	5

Note 1: One application was rejected since the location of the activity and the arrangement of the performance would affect traffic safety.

Note 2: The applicant of one application withdrew his application afterwards.

At present, the Police's Performance Pledge sets out that the processing time for lion dance permit applications is 14 days. In case an application is submitted less than 14 days before the activities with reasonable grounds, the Police will also process the application as far as practicable to facilitate the applicant in organising the activity. The Police do not maintain information on the processing time for permit applications.

(2) to (5) Currently, lion dance permit applications are mainly processed by dedicated Licensing Office Sub-Units or Miscellaneous Enquiries Sub-Units of various police districts, depending on the venue of the activity. Applications involving more than one police district or region will be processed by regional formations or the Police Licensing Office respectively.

Unless applications for permits are exempted by the Police, applicants of lion dance permits and participants of such activities must submit

information on the activities to the Police and authorise the Police to check their criminal conviction records, so that the Police may assess whether the activities involve lawbreakers and whether they would affect public order or public safety.

The Police regularly review the existing mechanism and continue to maintain close liaison with the sector to refine the application procedures for lion dance permits. To expedite the procedures for approving applications for exemption, since September this year, the Police have extended the power to approve exemptions from the Police Licensing Office to regional and district commanders, and advised the front-line districts and regions to consider approving exemptions for appropriate activities to simplify the application procedures. In addition, the Police are proactively examining the feasibility of allowing submission of lion dance permit applications and uploading of the necessary documents through electronic means, so as to save the time needed for applicants to submit applications in person at police stations. Depending on the progress of system development, the online application system is expected to commence operation in 2020.

It is necessary for the Police to ensure that public order is not disturbed and that public safety is not affected when lion dance activities are conducted in public places. The scrutiny of the information on the activities and participants will help ensure that the relevant activities will not be used by lawbreakers for illegal purposes. There is no intention on the part of the Government to impede the proper development of lion dance activities. Organisers of such activities are required to submit applications to the Police only when their performances are to be held in public places. The Police will consider granting exemptions to facilitate the applicants if they are satisfied that the lion dance activities do not involve any lawbreakers and will not jeopardise public order and public safety.

LCQ22: 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 (October 24):

Question:

Regarding the impacts of the decline in the population of school-aged Primary One (P1) students as well as the supply of and demand for P1 places on schools, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the annual numbers of students applying for P1 discretionary places in the last, current and next school years, and the percentages of such numbers

in the populations of school-aged P1 students in the territory, with a tabulated breakdown by school district and school net;

(2) of the respective annual actual/provisional numbers of P1 places and classes provided/to be provided by (i) government, (ii) aided, (iii) Direct Subsidy Scheme and (iv) private schools in the last, current, and next school years, with a tabulated breakdown by school district and school net; the criteria adopted by the Education Bureau (EDB) for determining the provisional number of P1 classes in the next school year;

(3) as the population of school-aged P1 students will decline continuously from the next school year onwards, of the impacts of such a situation on schools in the next school year as projected by EDB, including the respective numbers of (i) classes and (ii) teaching posts which need to be cut; the measures to be taken by EDB to alleviate such impacts, and whether such measures will include lowering the threshold for operating P1 classes and comprehensively implementing small class teaching; and

(4) given that quite a number of schools operated additional primary classes (i.e. the so-called "partly-enlarged class structure") over the past few years in response to the shortage of primary places at various grades, and as the students of such classes will graduate from the next school year onwards, these schools will have a decline in the total number of classes and thus surplus teachers, of (i) the number of schools which will cut their number of classes, (ii) the total number of classes to be cut, and (iii) the total number of teaching posts which need to be cut, in each of the next five years as projected by EDB (with a tabulated breakdown by school district and school net)?

Reply:

President,

The Primary One Admission (POA) System, which is school net-based, is divided into two stages: Discretionary Places (DP) and Central Allocation (CA). During the DP stage, parents may apply to any public sector primary schools without restriction on districts. Children who cannot secure a discretionary school place may participate in CA which also 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 address. Certain school nets may cover different districts.

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

(1) The respective numbers of children who applied for a public sector Primary One (P1) place at the DP stage of POA 2017 and 2018 (i.e. for admission to P1 in 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years respectively) are 57 823 and 58 965, both of which were around 90% of the P1 school-age population in Hong Kong (i.e. aged 6 population who are residing in Hong Kong). A total of 55 880 and 56 648 children participated in and were allocated P1 places in POA 2017 and 2018 respectively. A breakdown of successful applicant children

by school net and allocation stage (i.e. DP and CA stages) is tabulated at Annex 1.

The relevant figures for POA 2019 are not available as information on the applicant children at the DP stage is still being collated.

(2) According to the annual Student Enrolment Survey, the number of operating P1 classes and places by district and school type for the 2017/18 school year is tabulated at Annex 2. Information collected from the Student Enrolment Survey of the 2018/19 school year is being collated. The number of approved P1 classes of public sector primary schools by district for the 2018/19 school year is set out at Annex 3, and the provisional number of P1 classes of public sector primary schools for the 2019/20 school year will not be available until March 2019.

To optimise the use of public resources, EDB has established the criteria for operation of classes since the implementation of the POA System. In accordance with the principle of fairness, the criteria are applicable to all schools participating in the system. EDB has, where circumstances permit, implemented small class teaching in public sector primary schools by phases starting from P1 since the 2009/10 school year. Since P1 places of small class teaching schools are planned on the basis of 25 students per class under the POA, the threshold for operation of a P1 class has been lowered to 16 students. The number of P1 classes to be operated by public sector schools in a given school net in each school year is determined by factors such as the projected demand for P1 places, the number of classrooms available, the class structure and parental choices, etc. Upon completion of registration of successful DP applicant children in early December every year, EDB works out the "provisional number of places for CA" for each school based on the number of remaining applicant children anticipated to participate in the CA and the situation of individual schools (such as availability of classrooms) to prepare for CA. Under the existing mechanism, a school going to have an intake of less than 16 students may not be allowed to operate a P1 class if there are still unfilled P1 places in other schools of the same school net. In such circumstances, EDB will take into account special factors, such as whether the school is located in a remote area where there is no appropriate alternative school, to determine whether there is a need to operate a P1 class in that school. In addition, EDB confirms the number of approved classes of each aided school by verifying their actual student enrolment every September.

(3) and (4) According to the current projections of P1 school-age population, the overall demand for P1 places is expected to reach the peak in the 2018/19 school year, and drop significantly in the 2019/20 school year and then progress to a stable level. Since the P1 enrolment has been increasing in the past few years, it is expected that the overall number of primary students, operating classes and teaching posts on establishment of public sector primary schools will remain generally stable in the next few years. The projected primary school-age population for the 2018/19 to 2023/24 school years (i.e. aged 6 – 11 population who are residing in Hong Kong) is tabulated at Annex 4.

Over the past years, EDB has implemented flexible measures based on the consensus reached with the school sector to increase the provision of P1 places, which include borrowing school places from neighbouring school nets, using vacant classrooms to operate additional classes, operating time-limited schools in vacant school premises and temporarily allocating more students per P1 class, to meet the transient increase in demand and to mitigate the impact on schools when such demand subsides. With the drop of P1 school-age population, these flexible measures will be adjusted or withdrawn in light of the demand as planned. We believe that this will effectively alleviate the impact arising from the decrease in student population. It is noteworthy that the demand for school places in individual districts/school nets may be different from the overall situation. Based on current projections, it is expected that some districts/school nets may still have to continue with the flexible measures mentioned above to increase the provision of P1 places in the 2019/20 school year to meet the transient demand. EDB will keep in view the situation of different districts and liaise closely with the schools concerned to ensure the provision of sufficient school places for all eligible applicant children under the POA.

Following the decrease in P1 school-age population starting from the 2019/20 school year, individual schools may be affected by the diminishing demand for school places in their respective districts and parental choices. Regarding the decrease in P1 school-age population, we have earlier had meetings with representatives of the Subsidised Primary Schools Council and the Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association, and have reached consensus on the related follow-up actions and measures to address the concerns. Among them, the schools concerned can apply for retaining up to a maximum of three years redundant teachers arising from class reduction due to the decreasing P1 population who fail to secure a teaching post or be absorbed under the prevailing mechanism for handling redundant teachers. EDB will keep in view the matter and review timely. Besides, starting from P1 in the 2019/20 school year, the threshold for approving classes will be reduced from 25 to 23 students per class if the number of classes in a school has to be reduced in light of the enrolment in the student headcount in mid-September, so as to enhance the stability of the number of approved classes and hence the regular teaching posts in schools.

In tandem, small class teaching has been implemented in public sector primary schools by phases where circumstances permit starting from P1 since the 2009/10 school year (i.e. schools are allocated 25 students per class under the POA System for planning of school places). As at the 2018/19 school year, almost 80% of public sector primary schools have already implemented small class teaching. With the decrease in overall projected demand for P1 places from the 2019/20 school year, both the school sector and EDB consider that this will provide conditions for more schools to implement small class teaching. As such, EDB has issued letters to invite all schools which have not yet implemented small class teaching to plan and make early preparation so that they can implement small class teaching as soon as practicable where the supply and demand of school places allow.

We will continue to maintain communication with the school sector and strive to provide a stable learning and teaching environment for schools.

LCQ3: Labour interests and rights of employees who perform duties during and immediately after inclement weather

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (Oct 24):

Question :

As super typhoon Mangkhut which hit Hong Kong last month had caused extensive damage to the community, the authorities needed to deploy considerable manpower for the recovery efforts. During the time when the typhoon was gradually moving away from Hong Kong, the majority of employees needed to go to work while the transport networks were partially paralysed, which put them in an extremely awkward position. Regarding the protection of labour rights and interests of employees who perform duties during and immediately after inclement weather, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of workers engaged by outsourced service contractors who participated in the clearance work during and after the typhoon, and a breakdown of such number by job type; whether the Government will consider granting a special hardship allowance to those workers and regularising such an allowance; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the number of reports received by the Government in respect of employees who sustained injuries while commuting to and from work during the time when Mangkhut hit Hong Kong; and

(3) how the Government will step up the protection of the occupational safety and health as well as other labour rights and interests of those employees who perform duties during and immediately after inclement weather; whether it will enact legislation to protect those employees who are unable to go to work owing to natural disasters against wage deduction, being withheld good attendance bonuses or dismissal; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the relevant bureaux and departments, my consolidated reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) Individual government departments would, taking into account their different operational requirements, tender and enter into a wide range of service contracts with their selected outsourced service contractors, each prescribing specific requirements and different scope of services, such as property management service, street cleaning and public hygiene, estate security and cleaning, parks and roadside horticultural maintenance service, or repair of various systems etc. As the scope and service requirements of different departments on outsourced service contractors vary from one another, and the Government does not have a standard list of outsourced service contracts that deal with the cleaning work during and after the storm, we do not have a definite number of additional staff employed by outsourced service contractors in handling the cleaning work in association with this storm. Besides, we understand that quite a number of existing outsourced service contracts already contain clauses on a requirement to perform cleaning work during and after typhoons. As such there would not be figures on extra manpower so incurred under these service contracts.

As there is no employment relationship between the Government and employees of outsourced service contractors, the Government does not have the practice of granting special hardship allowance to these workers. On the other hand, as we understand, some service contractors would grant special hardship allowance to their employees according to individual circumstances.

Despite the above, the Government is very concerned about the employment terms and conditions as well as the labour benefits of non-skilled employees engaged by government service contractors. The Chief Executive has just announced in her Policy Address measures for enhancing the protection of these non-skilled employees. These include the provision of at least 150 per cent of wages to non-skilled employees for working under Typhoon Warning Signal No. 8 or above. The improvement measures will be applicable to government service contracts which are tendered from April 1, 2019 onwards and rely heavily on the deployment of non-skilled employees. Other improvement measures include the entitlement to a contractual gratuity and statutory holiday pay upon employment for not less than one month. To provide incentives for outsourced service contractors to enhance the wage rates of their employees, we will also increase the technical weighting in marking schemes for tender assessment to not less than 50 per cent, and increase the weighting for "wage level" as an assessment criterion to at least 25 marks out of 100 marks in the technical assessment.

(2) The Labour Department (LD) does not keep employees' compensation claims statistics involving cases on accidents occurred to employees whilst travelling to and from work.

(3) LD attaches great importance to ensuring the work safety of employees. During regular inspections at workplaces, in particular those of high-risk industries such as the construction industry and the container handling

industry which involve outdoor work activities, Occupational Safety Officers pay attention to the work arrangements and contingency measures in relation to working under inclement weather conditions. LD has been urging employers to avoid assigning employees to work during inclement weather such as typhoons and rainstorms. If it is inevitable for an employee to work during inclement weather, the employer should assess the relevant risks in advance so as to ensure the work hazards are properly controlled, and adopt so far as is reasonably practicable the necessary measures to minimise the risks.

As regards employees' compensation, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO) provides that when Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above or when the Red or Black Rainstorm Warning is in force, the employer is in general liable to pay compensation under ECO if an employee sustains an injury or dies as a result of an accident while travelling from his place of residence to his place of work by a direct route within a period of four hours before the time of commencement of his working hours for that day, or from his place of work to his place of residence within a period of four hours after the time of cessation of his working hours for that day.

The nature and requirements of different jobs in various trades and industries vary from each other. Certain essential services need to maintain different levels of operation even under inclement weather conditions. The extent of impact caused by typhoons to public transport and road systems may differ. It is not practical to regulate work arrangements of employees under specific circumstances through across-the-board legislation, as it will overlook the operational needs of different industries and the community as a whole. It will also affect the flexibility of employers and employees in working out their work arrangements.

Taking into account the general interests of employers, employees and the community, LD has published the "Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms" to provide practical guidelines on work arrangements, resumption of work as well as calculation of wages and holiday arrangements under such circumstances. LD will continue to promulgate through various channels to remind employers to provide reasonable and practicable means having regard to the actual conditions and adopt a flexible approach so as to ensure the safety of employees, maintenance of good labour-management relations as well as the smooth operation of the organisations.