

LCQ1: New railway projects

Following is a question by Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

The Railway Development Strategy 2014 (the Strategy) published by the Government in September 2014 has recommended that seven new railway projects be completed within the planning period of up to 2031, but such projects do not include a coastal railway between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. So far, the Government has not yet announced the detailed proposals and the implementation timetables for the seven railway projects, resulting in the public waiting eagerly and railway construction personnel worrying about their subsistence as they will be jobless. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that at present residents of a number of districts (particularly Kowloon East and Tuen Mun) often face serious traffic congestion, whether the Government will expedite the implementation of the railway projects recommended by the Strategy and at the same time consider afresh, adopting the thinking of "letting railway provide impetus for development", the construction of the coastal railway between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

(2) given that the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link has been commissioned and the Shatin to Central Link will be completed in the coming few years, and in order to avoid railway construction personnel suffering from the plight of "overworking to death at one time and starving to death at another time", whether the Government will consult the construction industry when it draws up the implementation timetable for each railway project so as to ensure that the various projects will commence in an orderly manner; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as the Third Comprehensive Transport Study, which was completed as early as in 1999, has become outdated and irrelevant to the needs of Hong Kong's latest development, whether the Government will expeditiously embark on the fourth comprehensive transport study, so as to meet the needs for cross-boundary transport networks and support facilities arising from the Development Plan for a City Cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok's question is as follows:

Having regard to the indicative implementation window recommended in the

Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014), the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) had invited the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to submit proposals for the implementation of the Tuen Mun South Extension, Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) and North Island Line. MTRCL submitted proposals for these five railway projects to the Government in end December 2016, end March 2017, end July 2017, end January 2018 and end July 2018 respectively. The THB, the Highways Department and relevant bureaux/departments are evaluating the proposals and have requested the MTRCL to provide additional information and supplement details. In carrying out the evaluation, our main focus is to ensure that the proposals are practically feasible and can bring maximum benefits to the society.

Due to the tight housing supply and the potential housing supply that may be brought about by railway development, the Government is reviewing the proposals for the Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) and will strive to undertake public consultation on these proposals as soon as possible. We will also carry on with the detailed planning for the East Kowloon Line, Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) and North Island Line, and will embark on detailed planning for Hung Shui Kiu Station and the South Island Line (West).

In line with established procedures, prior to the finalisation of any new railway scheme, we will consult the public, including the Legislative Council and the relevant District Councils, on the detailed alignment, locations of stations, mode of implementation, cost estimate, mode of financing and actual implementation timetable of the scheme. The construction industry may also express their views through relevant channels. The Government (including the Development Bureau) reviews manpower of the construction industry and co-ordinates implementation of public works of the Government, so as to implement the public works (including infrastructure projects) in an orderly manner.

Besides, when formulating the RDS-2014, our consultant at that time evaluated in detail the feasibility of constructing a railway along the coastline between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. According to the consultant's analysis, the local population is mainly concentrated at the eastern and western ends of the coastline between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan; while the development density of the remaining areas is relatively low and no basis for new source of passengers is anticipated. Meanwhile, due to the technical difficulties involved, solely the construction cost of a railway along the coastline between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan is expected to be very high. The RDS-2014 states that the cost-effectiveness of Tuen Mun-Tsuen Wan Link can hardly be established, according to the information at that time; and in longer term, the Government would consider revisiting the railway proposal if there are further changes in the planning circumstances and population as well as an increase in transport demand in the coastal areas between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan, or other relevant new considerations in the planning for development in the region.

The Chief Executive just mentioned the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" in the Policy Address. A part of the proposed railway corridor as referred to in

the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" is similar to the alignment of Tuen Mun-Tsuen Wan Link (Tuen Mun to Tsing Lung Tau). The THB plans to take forward the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" (RMR2030+ Studies) on the basis of the conceptual spatial requirements to be firmed up under the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" ("Hong Kong 2030+ Study"), which is being conducted by the Development Bureau and the Planning Department. Based on the latest planning information, including cross-boundary transport data, RMR2030+ Studies will examine the demand and supply of the transport infrastructure, including railways and major roads, in Hong Kong between 2031 and 2041, and study the loading of the heavy rails in the Northwest New Territories beyond 2030. We will consider the planning studies and the recommended strategic transport corridors in relation to the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision", as well as look into the layout of the proposed railway and major road infrastructure with regard to the transport infrastructure required for the longer-term strategic growth areas of "Hong Kong 2030+ Study" (such as the New Territories North), to ensure that the planning of large scale transport infrastructure can meet the needs of the overall long-term land use developments of Hong Kong. RMR2030+ Studies will also examine the impact of the proposed transport infrastructure on the existing transport network and formulate corresponding strategies. The Panel on Transport expressed support for the above studies in June 2017. Since "Hong Kong 2030+ Study" has not yet been finalised, we will seek funding approval in due course for implementing RMR2030+ Studies.

The Government completed the third comprehensive transport study (CTS) in October 1999. The study comprised three main aspects: (i) planning of transport infrastructure; (ii) the roles, positioning, and co-ordination of each public transport mode; and (iii) other topical transport studies. The third CTS laid down a number of broad directions, including (1) better integration of transport and land use planning; (2) better use of railway as the backbone of the passenger transport system; (3) provision of better public transport services and facilities; (4) wider use of advanced technologies in traffic management; and (5) implementation of more environmentally-friendly transport measures. These broad directions remain applicable today.

After completion of the third CTS, the THB has been conducting different studies for the various aspects of the CTS. On planning of transport infrastructure, the Government announced the "Railway Development Strategy 2000" and "Railway Development Strategy 2014" in 2000 and 2014 respectively. The Government also conducted regular internal reviews on the planning of strategic road projects in Hong Kong; took forward major road projects including Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link, Central Kowloon Route, Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel, Cross Bay Link, etc. in a timely manner; and will commence the RMR2030+ Studies. On public transport services, the Government recently announced the "Public Transport Strategy Study" in June 2017. On topical transport studies, the Government will continue to implement various measures to relieve road traffic congestion, including conducting a study to comprehensively review the hierarchy and level of tolls of all government tolled tunnels and the Tsing Ma and Tsing Sha Control Areas, and taking a series of short-term and medium to long-term measures to

relieve inadequate parking spaces in various districts by increasing their supply, and actively prepare for the Electronic Road Pricing Pilot Scheme in Central and its Adjacent Areas, etc.

The above studies on different transport topics can basically serve the purpose of a CTS. Moreover, compared to the previous approach of conducting an one-off CTS to cover the above three main aspects, THB considers that the arrangement of conducting studies on different aspects and topics at appropriate times, on one hand, allows flexibility to respond effectively to the ever-changing traffic demand arising from local developments. On the other hand, it is a more suitable approach to complete the studies in an orderly and flexible manner for early promulgation of the findings of each study, without undergoing protracted preparatory and co-ordination process for an extensive study and with resources progressively deployed.

Thank you, President.

LCQ13: Visa applications under “General Employment Policy” and “Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals”

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

Question:

Last month, the Government rejected an application for renewal of employment visa lodged by a foreign national, who was the Asia news editor of the United Kingdom-based Financial Times (FT). According to FT, this is the first occasion on which the Government rejected an employment visa application lodged by a foreign correspondent. The press, various trade associations and the international community were concerned about the incident, and requested an explanation from the Government about its decision. Regarding the vetting and approval of employment visa applications by the Immigration Department (ImmD), will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the policy and considerations adopted by ImmD for vetting and approval of employment visa applications;
- (2) of the mechanism adopted by ImmD for the vetting and approval of employment visa applications and renewal applications lodged by foreign

correspondents; apart from the considerations mentioned in (1), whether there are other considerations in the vetting and approval of such applications;

(3) of the respective numbers of employment visa applications and renewal applications (i) received and (ii) rejected by ImmD in each of the past five years and, among them, the respective numbers of applications which were lodged by foreign correspondents; and

(4) as both the Chief Executive and the Chief Secretary for Administration have indicated earlier that upon deciding to reject an employment visa application, ImmD will not disclose to any person (including the applicant) the reasons behind its decision, of the justifications for adopting such a practice; whether it has assessed if such a practice is in line with the legal principles concerning procedural justice under the common law and the laws of Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Applicants who possess special skills, knowledge or experience of value to and not readily available in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) may apply to come to work in the HKSAR under the General Employment Policy (GEP) (which is not applicable to Chinese residents of the Mainland of China) or the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMP) (which is applicable to Chinese residents of the Mainland of China). Both the GEP and ASMP are non-sector specific. An application may be favourably considered if:

(a) there is no security objection and no known record of serious crime in respect of the applicant;

(b) the applicant has a good education background, normally a first degree in the relevant field, but in special circumstances, good technical qualifications, proven professional abilities and/or relevant experience and achievements supported by documentary evidence may also be accepted;

(c) there is a genuine job vacancy;

(d) the applicant has a confirmed offer of employment and is employed in a job relevant to his academic qualifications or work experience that cannot be readily taken up by the local work force; and

(e) the remuneration package including income, accommodation, medical and other fringe benefits is broadly commensurate with the prevailing market level for professionals in the HKSAR.

In processing each application, the Immigration Department (ImmD) will examine whether the applicant meets the specific eligibility criteria under the relevant admission scheme and normal immigration requirements, and take into account the individual circumstances of each application, so as to

ensure that only applicants who meet the relevant immigration policies will be admitted into Hong Kong for employment. While the ImmD endeavours to facilitate the entry of genuine visitors, at the same time the ImmD has the responsibility to uphold effective immigration control so as to safeguard the public interest of Hong Kong.

(3) The numbers of applications for visa/entry permit and extension of stay received and rejected under the GEP or ASMP during the past five years are at Annex. The ImmD does not maintain the breakdown statistics in respect of journalists.

(4) In processing each application, the ImmD acts in accordance with the laws and policies, and decides whether to approve or refuse the application after careful consideration of individual circumstances of each case. According to its established practices, the ImmD will normally not inform the applicant of the specific reason when rejecting an application. There is no requirement under the Immigration Ordinance or the common law for the ImmD to provide the reason for rejecting an application to the applicant who is not granted permission to land in Hong Kong by ImmD.

LCQ19: Assisting owners' organisations in inviting tenders for consultancy, cleaning and security services

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Hoi-dick and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

In May 2016, the Urban Renewal Authority launched the "Smart Tender" Building Rehabilitation Facilitating Services to strengthen the technical assistance and professional advice provided to property owners in respect of carrying out building repair and maintenance works. "Smart Tender" provides owners' organisations with a DIY tool-kit with guidance on arranging building rehabilitation, arranges independent professionals to provide technical advice and a market estimate on the cost of works, and has put in place an electronic tendering platform to engage contractors, so that owners may make appropriate decisions in arranging building rehabilitation works. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Secretary for Development indicated in October last year that the authorities would consider expanding the functions of the "Smart Tender" electronic tendering platform so that owners' organisations might engage consultants through the platform, of the progress of such work; and

(2) as the media have uncovered in recent years that bid-rigging was suspected to have been involved in the tender exercises for cleaning services of certain housing estates, whether the authorities will consider providing owners' organisations with services similar to those of "Smart Tender" in respect of cleaning and security services; if so, of the details (including the government department/public organisation responsible and the implementation timetable); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) which is responsible for building management policy, the Development Bureau provides a consolidated reply as follows:

(1) To assist owners to engage consultants for their building repair and maintenance works through the electronic tendering (e-tendering) platform under "Smart Tender", the URA is arranging interested and qualified consultancy firms to register under the e-tendering platform and plans to implement the initiative from early 2019 onwards.

(2) Bid-rigging involves complicated issues. Currently, various government departments and organisations have been adopting a multi-pronged approach to provide support to owners, with a view to preventing and combating the problem of bid-rigging.

Separately, the Government has been providing a legal framework through the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) (BMO) to assist owners in discharging their responsibilities on building management effectively. To ensure that the BMO keeps pace with societal changes, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) under the HAB has reviewed the BMO and will introduce amendments on various aspects, including procurement of large-scale maintenance projects. Although the proposed amendments to the BMO cannot solve the problem of bid-rigging and the associated crimes at source, the relevant amendments seek to enhance owners' participation and transparency and accountability in building management, with a view to raising owners' awareness and better protecting their interests.

Meanwhile, the HAD has also enhanced support to owners' corporations and owners in discharging their responsibilities on building management. For example, the HAD has launched the Central Platform on Building Management in September 2018, under which one-stop briefings on building management and maintenance are organised regularly. At each briefing, representatives from relevant government departments and organisations will provide information and introduce their services and schemes on building management and maintenance. The Government has been providing assistance through various means to owners in properly managing their buildings. The Government will keep under review the existing services for building owners and introduce new support services as appropriate.

LCQ16: Nurturing and import of information technology talents

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

Regarding the nurturing and import of information technology (IT) talents, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of funding applications under (i) the Postdoctoral Hub Programme and (ii) the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, which are implemented under the Technology Talent Scheme, received and approved by the authorities since the Scheme was launched in August this year;

(2) of the number of companies involved in the approved applications under the Postdoctoral Hub Programme, and among such companies, the respective numbers of those which are (i) organisations funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), and (ii) incubatees and innovation and technology tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation/Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (incubatees and IT tenants);

(3) of the types of courses and technology involved in the approved applications under the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, as well as the total amount of grants approved;

(4) of the respective numbers of applications for importing talents under the Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS) received and approved by the authorities since the TechTAS was launched in May this year; the utilisation of quotas by organisations which have been granted quotas (including the number of quotas granted and the number of non-local talents employed); a breakdown of the number of such non-local talents by their nationalities, the regions in which the institutions awarding the relevant degrees to them were located, the number of years for which they have worked in the relevant technology areas, and their average monthly salaries upon arrival in Hong Kong; the number of companies whose applications were approved, and among them, the respective numbers of those which are (i) the ITF-funded organisations, and (ii) incubatees and IT tenants; a breakdown of the number of such companies by business type (i.e. biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber security, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science) and by the quota granted (i.e. one to five, six to 10, 11 to 20, 21 to 50 and more than 50 persons);

(5) given that the 11 professions covered by the first Talent List promulgated by the authorities in August this year include (i) experienced data scientists and experienced cyber security specialists and (ii) innovation and technology experts, and that under the General Points Test of the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, bonus marks will be given to applicants who meet the specifications of the respective professions under the Talent List, of the respective up-to-date numbers of persons who have been assessed as meeting the specifications of the two professions;

(6) of the channels through which the various aforesaid subsidy, training and talents admission schemes are publicised and promoted by the authorities, as well as the relevant details;

(7) regarding the talents in specific IT areas who are in short supply in Hong Kong, whether the authorities will draw reference from the practices of governments of overseas countries, such as the implementation of a Capability Transfer Programme by the Singapore Government, and employ foreign specialists to transfer professional knowledge and technical skills to local staff; and

(8) whether the authorities will discuss with universities and relevant organisations with a view to organising more IT courses which are recognised by the Qualifications Framework, providing tuition fee subsidies and internship opportunities for students, as well as offering continuing education scholarships and professional certifications for graduates?

Reply:

President,

The required information is as follows:

1. As of October 15, 2018, the Postdoctoral Hub Programme has received 189 applications, of which 165 applications have been approved and the remaining ones are being processed. The Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme (RTTP) has received 43 training grant applications, of which 34 have been approved, involving 62 trainees. The remaining applications are being processed.

2. As of October 15, 2018, the applications approved under the Postdoctoral Hub Programme involve 14 organisations (including two private companies) with Research and Development (R&D) projects funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) and 18 incubatees/innovation and technology (I&T) tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and Cyberport.

3. As of October 15, 2018, the RTTP has approved 34 training grant applications, which involve 11 registered public courses and different technology areas such as Industry 4.0 related technologies, information technology (IT), textile and clothing, biomedical and healthcare, automobile technology and environmental technology. The total funding amounts to some

\$0.68 million.

4. Under the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC)'s Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS), the technology companies/institutes applying for quotas to admit overseas and Mainland technology talent to undertake R&D work in Hong Kong must be tenants or incubatees of the HKSTPC or Cyberport. In addition, they must be engaged in the seven specified technology areas (i.e. biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber security, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies or material science).

Since its launch on June 25 till October 15, 2018, the TechTAS has received 156 quota applications. The ITC has approved a total of 139 quotas for 19 technology companies/institutes. Their business areas and number of quotas being awarded are set out in the Annex.

We do not keep information on whether the companies/institutes allotted with quota(s) have received funding from the ITF.

Many technology companies/institutes allotted with quota(s) have made use of the quotas for application to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for employment visa/entry permit for their non-local technology talent. As of October 15, 2018, the ImmD has approved 12 applications. Based on the information provided by the ImmD, details of the non-local persons approved for entry under the TechTAS by regions, locations of degree-awarding institution (for their highest qualification) and monthly remuneration are listed below:

Region	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
Mainland China	7
Asia	4
Australia	1

Location of the degree-awarding institution (for the highest qualification)	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
Mainland China	6
Asia	3
Australia	2
Europe	1

Monthly remuneration (HK\$)	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
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\$20,000 – 39,999	3
\$40,000 – 79,999	6
\$80,000 or above	3

The ImmD does not keep information on the number of years of work experience of the concerned non-local persons in relevant technology areas.

5. To complement the Talent List of Hong Kong promulgated by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the ImmD's Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS) has since August 28, 2018 provided immigration facilitation to eligible applicants. Applicants who meet the specifications of the respective professions under the Talent List, will be awarded 30 bonus points under the General Points Test of the QMAS, subject to documentary proof. As of September 30, 2018, the ImmD has received seven applications for data scientists and cyber security specialists, and 18 applications for innovation and technology experts under the Talent List. The applications are being processed.

6. The Government is committed to promoting the QMAS and other talent admission schemes. The Government launched a new Announcement in the Public Interest (API) for the QMAS on December 20, 2017, which is broadcast in major television stations, major control points and offices of the HKSAR Government outside Hong Kong. The relevant API has also been uploaded to the Youtube Channel and Facebook of the ImmD and Information Services Department to strengthen the publicity.

In addition, the Government attaches great importance to overseas publicity, including commissioning overseas publicity visits and strengthening the promotion through the economic and trade offices outside Hong Kong, the Invest Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and relevant organisations with a view to attracting talent to come to Hong Kong for development. After launching the TechTAS, we have promoted and introduced details of the scheme through different channels such as press releases, websites and online social media. We have also issued e-mails or letters to eligible organisations inviting them to participate in the scheme. Furthermore, we have been organising and participating in briefing sessions to introduce details of the scheme to industrial and trade organisations, universities, training bodies and incubatees/I&T tenants of the HKSTPC and Cyberport.

To promote the TechTAS, the ITC, the HKSTPC and Cyberport have disseminated relevant information via their respective websites. In addition, the ITC and the ImmD have held several briefing sessions at the Hong Kong Science Park and Cyberport, attracting over 300 participants. The HKSTPC has, through its one-stop business support centre TecONE, provided consultancy services relating to the TechTAS for technology companies/institutes. Cyberport has publicised the TechTAS via its e-newsletter, in addition to offering advisory services and briefings on the scheme to individual interested companies/organisations.

7. Having regard to the latest development of the IT sector, we have included experienced data scientists and cyber security specialists in the Talent List of Hong Kong promulgated recently to attract more international technology talents to come to Hong Kong. To address the practical business needs of the industry, the Talent List will be updated from time to time to ensure that the relevant measures match the industry's demand for IT talents.

8. Over the years, the Government has been encouraging the universities and other local course providers to apply for and organise IT programmes recognised under the Qualifications Framework having regard to the latest market situation and demand. For example, the Vocational Training Council launched the Higher Diploma in Data Science and Analytics in 2017 and the Higher Diploma in Financial Technology in 2018. The relevant programmes are listed on the Qualifications Register (QR).

In addition, a series of enhancement measures for the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) will be implemented with effect from April 1, 2019. These include doubling the subsidy ceiling to \$20,000 per applicant and expanding the scope of the CEF courses to all eligible courses registered on the QR. The QR now covers 14 areas of study and training including computer science and information technology.

LCQ14: Implementation of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

The Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (the Scheme) has been in operation since August 1 this year. Under the Scheme, sellers are required to provide free removal service when they sell a new item of regulated electrical equipment (i.e. air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, computers, printers, scanners and monitors) to members of the public. However, quite a number of members of the public have relayed to me that the recycling service operator commissioned by the Government to collect waste electrical equipment (the operator) has failed to meet its performance pledge of collecting such equipment door-to-door within three working days upon receipt of a service request from sellers, with the waiting time even exceeding ten days in some cases. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the number of vehicles and manpower under the operator for providing the recycling service;
- (2) whether it knows the average number of items of waste electrical equipment collected daily by the operator since the implementation of the Scheme;
- (3) of the number of licence applications for regulated e-waste disposal (including storage, treatment, reprocessing or recycling of e-waste) received, approved and rejected by the Government so far; if it has rejected some applications, of the reasons for that;
- (4) of the respective numbers of complaints against the operator and sellers received by the Government since the implementation of the Scheme, and the number of complaints about the disposal of waste electrical equipment on the street;
- (5) as it has been reported that since the operator's plant for storing waste electrical equipment is full, the operator has been provided a land on loan by the Government for temporary storage of waste electrical equipment, of the relevant details; whether the operator has breached the contractual requirements by failing to dispose of waste electrical equipment properly;
- (6) given that the operator has failed to meet its performance pledge, whether the Government will consider reviewing the current mode of commissioning an operator and switching to commissioning multiple recyclers and granting subsidies to them according to the quantity of waste electrical equipment they have collected; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (7) given that the operator turns waste electrical and electronic equipment into materials of value (such as plastics and metals) through processes such as detoxification, dismantling and recycling, of the outlets for such materials and the receiver of the income so generated (if any)?

Reply:

President,

The Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), or in short WPRS, came into effect on August 1, 2018. It covers air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, computers, printers, scanners and monitors (collectively referred to as regulated electrical equipment, or REE). The WPRS marks another important milestone in Hong Kong's waste reduction and recycling efforts, as WEEE generated locally that would have been otherwise exported for disposal or sent to the landfills are now collected and recycled properly into resources.

Currently, an REE seller is required by law to arrange for its customer a statutory free removal service to collect a used equipment of the same

class abandoned by the customer. Upon purchase of the REE item, the customer is entitled to ask the seller to arrange for delivery of the new item and removal of the used item on the same day at no extra charge. REE sellers may provide the statutory free removal service on their own or through other collectors. If a seller opts for the service provided by the operator of the Government's WEEE Treatment and Recycling Facility (WEEE·PARK), i.e. ALBA-IWS, the operator will, after receipt of a service request from the seller, collect the waste equipment three working days from the date of sales as requested by the customer. For instance, if a customer purchases a new item on Monday, the seller may arrange for delivery of the new item and the operator's removal of the used item on the same day on Thursday.

Since its initial operation in October 2017 and up to the end of September 2018, the WEEE·PARK has processed over 6 900 tonnes of WEEE in total, well exceeding the target amount for its first year of operation. The figure reflects that the scheme has initially achieved its objective.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Hak-kan is as follows:

(1) and (2) The total number of staff currently employed by ALBA-IWS is around 190. Using the combination of its own fleet, outsourced vehicles and in collaboration with relevant industry stakeholders, the operator's logistics team deploys resources flexibly to meet the demand for collection services. Since the implementation of the WPRS, ALBA-IWS handles around 900 collection orders on average on each working day.

(3) As at October 21, 2018, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has issued a total of five waste disposal licences for e-waste (e-WDLs), with another 12 applications being processed. There were another six applications deemed invalid or withdrawn by the applicants because of non-conforming land uses or the operations concerned being within the scope of exemption under the legislation.

(4) From the implementation of the WPRS on August 1 up to October 21 this year, the EPD has received a total of 57 complaints, of which 33 involved REE sellers, 19 were on the operator's services and five of general nature. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) does not keep separate statistics on complaints about the disposal of WEEE on streets. However, according to FEHD, their frontline staff did not observe any major change in the number of waste REE found at refuse collection points before and after the implementation of WPRS.

(5) The WEEE·PARK is a government facility and its operator provides collection and treatment services under the WPRS. As the service demand at the initial implementation stage of the WPRS exceeded the projected demand, the EPD has made available some vacated places in the Kowloon Bay Waste Recycling Centre, which has ceased operation and is to be demolished, as a short term measure, for the temporary storage of WEEE collected from the public to be transferred to WEEE·PARK for treatment. There was no breach of the contractual requirement on the part of the operator in relation to this short term measure.

(6) Following adjustments made after the initial period, the scheme has been operating smoothly in general. The operator has been able to collect the waste equipment from customers three working days after receipt of the service requests. Only in certain special circumstances (less than 0.1% of the cases), the operator might take longer time to arrange for the collection, for instance, from more remote locations in the outlying islands due to the need to accommodate the conveyor schedule. In terms of treatment performance, as mentioned above the actual quantity processed by the operator up to the end of September has exceeded its target quantity for its first year of operation. There is no question of the operator being unable to meet the contractual requirements.

The design capacity of the WEEE·PARK is about 30 000 tonnes per year, which is roughly half of the amount of waste REE generated in Hong Kong every year. There is room for existing and potential recyclers to participate in the market for treating waste REE. If necessary, the WEEE·PARK may increase its capacity by arranging an additional shift in the operation of the facility to cope with the demand. As mentioned above, up to October 21 this year, the EPD has issued a total of five e-WDLs, with another 12 applications being processed. We encourage licensed recyclers to take part in the recycling and treatment of waste REE. We will also continue to keep abreast of the market development to ensure that the overall handling capacity locally is adequate to underpin the implementation of the WPRS.

(7) Under the contract, the Government will determine and pay the operator the operation fee calculated based on the actual weight of WEEE collected and treated. The operator will properly separate and remove small amount of harmful substances such as heavy metal (e.g. mercury, lead) and greenhouse gases from WEEE by using advanced technologies and equipment. Other parts of WEEE will be dismantled and shredded, followed by safe sorting and screening procedures to turn them into sorted plastic and metal materials of high quality for reuse in other industrial productions. The remaining small amount of waste that cannot be recycled or reused will be sent to the landfills or other EPD recognised treatment facilities for proper handling. Any income or expenditure arising from the disposal of such recyclables and waste is borne by the operator in full.