

LCQ15: Median monthly salary of young people

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

According to the consultation document on population policy released by the Steering Committee on Population Policy in 2013, the median monthly salary of young people aged between 20 and 29 in full-time employment basically hovered around \$10,000 in the past decade. As the cumulative inflation rate during the same period was more than 10 per cent, the monthly salaries of young people in the past decade dropped in real terms. Some young people have become discouraged by the lack of opportunities for upward mobility. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective annual averages of the (a) nominal and (b) real median monthly salaries of persons in full-time employment in various age groups (i.e. below 20, 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69, and 70 or above) in each year from 2013 to 2017; and

(2) of the measures taken by the authorities in the past five years to improve the overall employment environment so as to enable young people to earn higher income, thereby increasing upward mobility opportunities for them?

Reply:

President,

Young people are Hong Kong's future. The current-term Government strives to do our best in youth development work by addressing their concerns about education, career pursuit and home ownership, and encouraging their participation in politics as well as public policy discussion and debate. In doing so, the Government aims at creating opportunities for upward mobility for young people and support them in fully realising their potential, thereby allowing the younger generation to see hope in future.

Our reply to the Hon Luk Chung-hung's question is as follows:

(1) Based on the data from the General Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the median monthly employment earnings of full-time employees by age (excluding foreign domestic helpers) in 2013 – 2017 in (a) nominal term; and (b) real term (i.e. at the 2017 price level) are shown in Annex. The figures show that the median monthly employment earnings of full-time employees across all age groups had risen notably over

the period.

(2) The Government attaches great importance to the career development of young people as well as creating ample opportunities for their upward mobility and greater room for their development. To achieve this objective, the Government has to maintain the competitiveness of the Hong Kong economy. In addition to consolidating pillar industries, the Government also explores new economic opportunities to enrich the local industry structure with a view to creating more high-quality employment opportunities and opening up more career choices for young people. In this connection, the Government is committed to developing a high value-added and diversified economy as well as facilitating the development of emerging industries. In particular, the Government has made significant efforts to promote the development of three major high value-added industries, namely innovation and technology, creative industries and finance, with a view to creating new impetus and growth areas for our economy.

In fact, following Hong Kong's sustained economic development, the wages of young graduates have substantially increased in recent years. As shown from the results of the 2015 Study on Earnings Mobility carried out by the former Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit (now renamed as Office of the Government Economist) in collaboration with the Census and Statistics Department published in May 2016, notable upward earnings mobility was enjoyed by first degree graduates from the 2001/02 and 2006/07 cohorts. Specifically, for the 2001/02 cohort, based on the median figures, first degree graduates could rise by eight income categories within ten years (where each income category covers 1/20 of the overall income distribution). Also, graduates' upward earning mobility was closely related to the manpower demand brought by economic development. There was higher upward mobility amongst science and engineering graduates between 2003/04 and 2013/14, reflecting the growth of the related industries. The Government is currently preparing the results of the 2018 Study, so as to continue the monitoring of earnings mobility on an ongoing basis and explore measures conducive to youth upward mobility.

To help the younger generation seize development opportunities, the Government has continuously enhanced their access to high-quality education and training. In doing so, young people will be equipped with skills demanded by the market in order to unleash their potential in their future career. In this connection, the Government has introduced a series of measures, including:

(i) In terms of primary and secondary education, the Education Bureau (EDB) continuously renews the school curriculum to keep abreast of the latest development as well as focus on current and emerging development priorities. With a view to preparing students to succeed in a knowledge-based, technologically advanced, and increasing globalised world, the school curriculum focuses on promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education as well as fostering students' entrepreneurial spirit. At the same time, the Government is committed to providing students with diversified life-wide learning experiences, including those for

vocational and professional education and training (VPET). In this regard, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) has established the STEM Education Centre and arranged STEM-related outreach for primary and secondary schools.

(ii) With regard to higher education, the Government has also implemented a series of measures to further increase subsidised post-secondary education opportunities, and is committed to promoting VPET, in a bid to provide school leavers with broader and more diversified articulation pathways and help young people grasp the opportunities for promotion in the workplace. The Government has been progressively increasing the number of University Grants Committee-funded senior year undergraduate intake places, so that 5 000 meritorious sub-degree graduates will be able to articulate to subsidised degree programmes each year by the 2018/19 academic year. In addition, the Government also implemented the Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong (NMTSS) from the 2017/18 academic year. NMTSS provides an annual subsidy of about \$30,000 to eligible students pursuing about 300 eligible self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes. In the 2017/18 academic year, about 20 000 students benefited under NMTSS.

(iii) To encourage the self-financing post-secondary education sector to offer programmes in disciplines that meet Hong Kong's economic and social needs and nurture young people to join related disciplines, EDB has implemented the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) from the 2015/16 academic year to subsidise about 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated self-financing undergraduate programmes. SSSDP will be regularised from the 2018/19 academic year with an increase in the number of subsidised places to about 3 000 per cohort. The designated disciplines for the 2018/19 academic year include testing and certification, creative industries, computer science and financial technology, etc.

(iv) To promote the development of VPET and better equip young people to join trades and industries with great manpower demand, VTC has launched the Earn & Learn Scheme which integrates structured classroom learning with on-the-job training as well as provides a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance. The Scheme enables students to develop along a clear career progression pathway. Since the 2016/17 academic year, some 3 500 students have benefited from the Scheme.

(v) The Government injected \$1.2 billion into the Qualifications Framework (QF) Fund in March 2018 so as to further strengthen and drive the development of QF, enhance recognition of qualifications for different industries and provide youngsters with quality assured pathways for further studies and career development.

(vi) The Government also injected \$10 billion into the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) in May 2018 and will implement a series of enhancement measures, including raising the subsidy ceiling and expanding the scope of CEF courses to all courses registered under the Qualifications Register. Employees may make good use of CEF to pursue continuing education and skills upgrading, thereby moving upwards along the career ladder.

(vii) To enhance the employability of young people, the Labour Department (LD) implements the Youth Employment and Training Programme in collaboration with training bodies and employers to provide a full range of pre-employment and on-the-job training as well as career guidance and employment support services to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below. Furthermore, LD operates two Youth Employment Resource Centres named Youth Employment Start to provide personalised advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to young people aged 15 to 29, so as to encourage them to make early career planning and assist those who aspire to self-employment in mapping out their career path.

(viii) Providing young people with more diverse internship opportunities can broaden their horizon and enhance their employability. EDB provides 9 000 industrial attachment opportunities each year for students studying Higher Diploma and selected Diploma of Vocational Education. The Home Affairs Bureau also implement various youth internship schemes with an aim to enable young people to understand the work culture and career prospects in different places, establish interpersonal networks, broaden their horizon and facilitate their planning for future career. Relevant schemes include the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland as well as the Pilot Scheme on Corporate Summer Internship on the Mainland and Overseas launched in March this year. In 2018/19, the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland subsidises a total of 135 youth internship programmes on the Mainland, expecting to benefit some 3 600 young people, whereas the Pilot Scheme on Corporate Summer Internship on the Mainland and Overseas provides around 250 high quality internship places for young people on the Mainland and overseas.

LCQ2: Ecological environment of Mai Po and adjacent marshes

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

Under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance, Mai Po and the adjacent marshes (the Mai Po Marshes) are designated as a restricted area. It has been reported that as mudskippers have become a gourmet dish on the Mainland in recent years, and the Mai Po Marshes are close to the Mainland, quite a number of people (mainly Mainland fishermen) trespass on the mudflats in the Mai Po Marshes to catch mudskippers illegally, thus scaring away migratory

birds and depriving them of staple food. Furthermore, quite a number of migratory birds have been injured by the hunting appliance deployed in the area. Such activities have had a severe impact on the ecological environment there. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of reports received, and the number of law enforcement operations conducted, by the authorities in each of the past three years on illegal fishing or hunting activities in the Mai Po Marshes; the respective numbers of offenders arrested, prosecuted and convicted (with a breakdown by whether they were Hong Kong residents) as well as the maximum and minimum penalties imposed on the convicted persons;

(2) of the details of the law enforcement work carried out by law enforcement departments at the Mai Po Marshes, including the training received by the law enforcement officers, frequency of and manpower for patrol, as well as the expenditure and strategies of law enforcement work; and

(3) whether, in order to conserve the ecological environment of the Mai Po Marshes more effectively, the authorities will raise the relevant penalties, increase law enforcement resources, step up efforts in public education, strengthen the co-operation with the Mainland authorities in combating illegal fishing, and review the relevant policies and legislation?

Reply:

President,

Mai Po Marshes and Inner Deep Bay Restricted Area (Restricted Area), comprising a total area of about 800 hectares, includes all the mangrove swamps adjoining the marshes, and the intertidal mudflats and shallow waters of Inner Deep Bay. Mudskippers are common fish species in Hong Kong and can usually be found in the mudflat and shallow water habitats in places such as Inner Deep Bay, Sai Kung, Sha Tau Kok, Tolo Harbour and Lantau Island. Mudskippers are not only found in the Restricted Area. They are not protected species and are occasionally sold in small amount in the local food market. However, conducting illegal activities (including catching mudskippers) in the Restricted Area might affect to different extent the resting of protected wild animals, especially water birds, and the ecology of the area.

The Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap 170) stipulates that any person who enters into or be within the Restricted Area without a permit issued by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries and Conservation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 on conviction. The Ordinance also bans the possession of hunting appliance, or hunting any local wild animals by means of hunting appliance except in accordance with a special permit. Upon conviction, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$100,000 and an imprisonment of one year. Regarding the law enforcement, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) conducts regular patrol and enforcement operations in the Restricted Area. At the request of the AFCD, the patrolling officers of the Marine Police responsible for Deep Bay and coastal areas would provide support and take joint enforcement actions.

My consolidated reply to the questions raised by Hon Hui Chi-fung, after consulting the Security Bureau, is as follows:

(1) In the past 3 years (i.e. 2015-2017), the AFCD received two to four reports of illegal hunting in the Restricted Area and conducted around 800 boat or foot patrols and enforcement operations each year. A total of 200 to 970 fishing gears were seized in the operations annually. There was no prosecution case established under the Ordinance in the Restricted Area. The breakdown of figures is tabulated in the Annex.

(2) The AFCD carried out around 800 patrols in the Restricted Area per year to monitor the ecological conditions and conduct enforcement operations. Upon receiving reports about illegal entry to the Restricted Area, the AFCD will arrange staff to conduct inspections and enforcement operations. Joint operations of the AFCD, the Police or other concerned departments will be carried out when necessary.

At present, there are 13 AFCD staff responsible for the management and enforcement operations in the Restricted Area. Regular training related to surveillance, enforcement and prosecution is provided to the relevant staff. As these activities form part of the nature conservation work of the AFCD, there is no separate breakdown for the expenditure involved. The Police will also provide assistance and support upon the AFCD's request while the number of patrols and manpower allocation will be subject to crime situation and the need of police operations.

(3) To effectively conserve the ecological habitats in Mai Po Marshes, the AFCD and the Police have strengthened collaboration and taken targeted surveillance, patrol, enforcement operation, intelligence collection and exchange. In respect of cross-boundary co-operation, the Police has been liaising with relevant mainland authorities to combat criminal activities entering into Hong Kong. The AFCD has also contacted its Mainland counterpart for combating illegal fishing activities in Restricted Areas through education and publicity efforts for fishermen in both Hong Kong and the Mainland of China. In addition, the AFCD reviews the provisions of the Ordinance and relevant policies from time to time with a view to better conserving the wild animals and their important habitats.

Thank you, President.

[Land Registry releases statistics for June](#)

The Land Registry today (July 4) released its statistics for June 2018.

Land registration

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- * The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in June was 9,252 (+18.8 per cent compared with May and +17.1 per cent compared with June 2017)
 - * The 12-month moving average for June was 7,319 (1.6 per cent above the 12-month moving average for May but 1.6 per cent below that for June 2017)
 - * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in June was \$80.8 billion (+27.2 per cent compared with May and +9.3 per cent compared with June 2017)
 - * Among the sale and purchase agreements, 6,713 were for residential units (+21.6 per cent compared with May and +10.0 per cent compared with June 2017)
 - * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$68.0 billion (+30.4 per cent compared with May and +15.0 per cent compared with June 2017)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

- * The number of searches of land registers made by the public in June was 459,250 (-8.6 per cent compared with May and -1.5 per cent compared with June 2017)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.

LCQ12: Aircraft noise

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Government has indicated that in order to reduce the impact of aircraft noise on areas in the vicinity of flight paths, the Civil Aviation Department has implemented a number of aircraft noise abating measures in accordance with the balanced objectives, promulgated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of managing aircraft noise. Such measures include requiring aircraft in the small hours to avoid, as far as possible, overflying populated areas, and adopting ICAO's noise abatement departure procedure during take-off and the continuous descent approach for landing. However, in recent months, I have received complaints from quite a number of residents in Ma Wan who pointed out that quite a number of aircraft overfly Ma Wan at an altitude below 5 000 feet after taking off in late hours (i.e. between 11pm and 7am the following day), thus generating tremendous noise and making it difficult for them to fall asleep. In addition, a number of residents in Clear Water Bay and Tseung Kwan O have relayed that aircraft have been overflying the two districts at an extremely high frequency in late hours since May this year, causing serious noise nuisance to the residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of aircraft departing Hong Kong which overflew Ma Wan at an altitude (i) below 5 000 feet, (ii) between 5 000 and 7 000 feet, and (iii) above 7 000 feet, from May last year to May this year (set out in a table);

(2) of the respective numbers of times, as recorded by the various aircraft noise monitoring terminals in late hours in each month from May last year to May this year, for which aircraft noise levels reached (i) 70 to 74 decibels (dB), (ii) 75 to 79 dB and (iii) 80 dB or above (set out in a table);

(3) among the aircraft departing Hong Kong from May last year to May this year, of the types of those with noise levels reaching 80 dB or above, and the airlines to which such aircraft belonged;

(4) of (i) the number of flights overflying Sai Kung District in late hours, and (ii) the number of complaints about aircraft noise received by the authorities from the residents there, in each month from January to June this year;

(5) of the measures to be put in place to further abate aircraft noise; and

(6) whether it will set up an aircraft noise monitoring terminal in Sai Kung District; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In accordance with international standards and recommendations, the design of flight paths takes into account factors including terrain environment and required obstacle clearances. To ensure aviation safety, departing aircraft are required to comply with the minimum climb gradient requirements specified in the departure procedures published in the Hong Kong Aeronautical Information Publication (HKAIP). The departure procedures published in the HKAIP are designed in accordance with the safety requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). According to the relevant requirements, departing aircraft are required to fly at an altitude of not less than 1 800 feet in the vicinity of Ma Wan. The actual climb gradient of departing aircraft is dependent on various factors such as the payload and performance characteristics of individual aircraft and weather conditions, etc. Generally speaking, as far as minimum climb gradient is concerned, the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) would not specify additional requirement for departing aircraft apart from the requirements set out in the HKAIP.

Our reply to various parts of Hon Chan Chi-chuen's question is as follows:

(1) The number and altitude of aircraft flying over Ma Wan between 11pm and 7am the following day when departing to the northeast of the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) between May 2017 and April 2018 (Note 1) are set out at Annex 1.

(2) The CAD has 16 noise monitoring terminals (NMTs). The aircraft noise events recorded between 11pm and 7am the following day by these terminals from May 2017 to April 2018 (Note 1) by month are set out at Annex 2.

According to the noise data recorded at the Ma Wan NMT between 2012 and 2017, the number of noise events of 70 decibels or above and of 80 decibels or above has decreased by 33% and 80% respectively. This shows the effectiveness of the aircraft noise mitigating measures adopted by the CAD, the details of which are elaborated in part (5) below.

(3) Between May 2017 and April 2018 (Note 1), the operating airlines and aircraft types of departing aircraft with noise events of 80 decibels or above recorded between 11pm and 7am the following day are set out at Annex 3.

(4) The HKIA has two parallel runways which run northeast to southwest. The direction from which aircraft land at and depart from the HKIA mainly depends upon the wind direction and other operational considerations. Sai Kung area is primarily affected by aircraft approaching the airport from northeast direction, i.e. using Runway 25. When westerly wind prevails at the HKIA, aircraft will approach the airport from the northeast overflying Tseung Kwan O, Sai Kung, Ma On Shan, Shatin and Tsuen Wan for safety and operational reasons. As such, under acceptable wind direction, wind speed and safety conditions, arriving aircraft between midnight and 7am will be arranged to land from the southwest direction over the sea, i.e. using Runway 07, in order to alleviate the aircraft noise impact on the aforesaid areas.

Furthermore, all aircraft approaching the HKIA from the northeast direction between 11pm and 7am on the following day are encouraged to adopt the continuous descent approach (CDA) subject to operational considerations. As aircraft on CDA descent from a higher altitude, noise experienced in areas such as Sai Kung and Ma On Shan will be lower. The number of aircraft flying over Sai Kung area between 11pm and 7am the following day when approaching from the northeast of the HKIA between January and April 2018 (Note 2) is set out at Annex 4. The number of complaints against aircraft noise from residents of Sai Kung area received by the Transport and Housing Bureau and the CAD between January and June 2018 is set out at Annex 5.

(5) The CAD has implemented a series of aircraft noise mitigating measures in accordance with the balanced approach to aircraft noise management promulgated by the ICAO. These measures include requiring aircraft to avoid overflying populated areas, to adopt the noise abatement departure procedures prescribed by the ICAO during take-off and the quieter CDA for landing, etc. in the small hours as far as possible. The CAD has also implemented the Radius-to-Fix turn flight procedures since 2012 to allow aircraft equipped with satellite-based navigation technology to adhere closely to the nominal centre line of the flight track when departing to the northeast of the HKIA and making south turn to the West Lamma Channel. This keeps the aircraft at a distance away from the areas in the vicinity of the flight paths (particularly Ma Wan), and reduces the impact of aircraft noise on these areas.

Apart from implementing the aircraft noise abatement operational procedures mentioned above, the CAD has prohibited aircraft not meeting the relevant aircraft noise standards from landing and taking off in Hong Kong. Since 2002, aircraft not complying with the noise standards in Chapter 3 of Volume I, Part II of Annex 16 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chapter 3 noise standards) are not allowed to operate in Hong Kong. To strengthen this aircraft noise mitigating measure, starting from 2014, the CAD has imposed further restrictions on aircraft which are marginally compliant with the Chapter 3 noise standards to land and take off in Hong Kong. To further strengthen this measure, the CAD is also planning to impose more stringent requirements with additional operating restrictions on aircraft which do not comply with the noise standards in Chapter 4 of Volume I, Part II of Annex 16 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chapter 4 noise standards) (Note 3), or equivalent, to operate at the HKIA from 10pm to 7am on the following day starting from the Summer Season of 2019. The airlines have been consulted on the plan, and they showed understanding and support. This measure, when implemented, will further alleviate the aircraft noise impact on the local communities.

With the advancement of aviation technology, aircraft engines are quieter than before, and the improved design of airframe has also helped reduce noise significantly. To reduce the impact of aircraft noise on the areas near the flight paths, many airlines are replacing their aircraft with quieter models progressively. The CAD will continue to monitor the progress made by airlines in aircraft fleet replacement and deployment of quieter aircraft for night time operations, as well as the effectiveness of such

measures.

(6) The CAD monitors the implementation of various aircraft noise mitigating measures and the noise caused by aircraft operating into and out of the HKIA through a computerised Aircraft Noise and Flight Track Monitoring System. At present, there are a total of 16 NMTs installed in Hong Kong covering locations along or close to the flight paths, which are respectively at Sha Lo Wan, Tung Chung, Sunny Bay, Ma Wan, Tsing Yi (2 terminals), Tai Lam Chung, Tsing Lung Tau, Ting Kau, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung, Tai Wai, Mid-Levels, North Point, Jardine's Lookout and Shau Kei Wan. Sai Kung is at a distance from the airport where overflying aircraft are at relatively higher altitudes and the aircraft noise impact is relatively low. Nevertheless, the CAD will where necessary deploy mobile noise monitoring equipment for short term aircraft noise monitoring and data collection at other locations for analysis in order to have a better understanding of the impact of aircraft noise on those locations.

Note 1: The data for May 2018 are pending verification and thus not available yet.

Note 2: The data for May and June 2018 are pending verification and thus not available yet.

Note 3: Volume I, Part II of Annex 16 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation sets out the aircraft noise standards formulated by the ICAO at different times. The aircraft noise standards of Chapter 3, which were formulated at a later stage than those of Chapter 2, are more stringent. Aircraft marginally complying with Chapter 3 noise standards refers to an aircraft which is in compliance with Chapter 3 noise standards, but its noise level is relatively close to the upper limit prescribed in Chapter 3. The aircraft noise standards of Chapter 4, which are applicable to aircraft for which the application for a Type Certificate was submitted between 2006 and 2017, are more stringent than those of Chapter 3. Generally speaking, the noise levels of Chapter 4-compliant or equivalent aircraft are lower than those of Chapter 3-compliant aircraft.

LCQ14: Office areas of government departments

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Government anticipates that the civil service establishment will

increase by 6 700 posts to about 190 000 posts by the end of 2018-2019, representing a rate of increase of about 3.7%. However, quite a number of civil servants have relayed to me that as the offices of many government departments are already very crowded, it is difficult to make room for the offices of newly recruited civil servants. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities had, when deciding to increase civil service posts, formulated measures to ensure that the required additional office accommodation could be provided according to the approved schedules of accommodation as laid down in the Accommodation Regulations (the Regulations);

(2) in respect of those government departments which need to handle and store a large amount of documents, such as the works departments handling a large amount of large-sized building plans, whether the authorities will, having regard to the actual needs of such government departments, plan larger office areas for them;

(3) in respect of those government departments which need to have direct contact with members of the public and members of the industries concerned, whether the authorities have set standards for the sizes and numbers of the relevant (i) conference rooms, (ii) service counters, (iii) office desks and (iv) seats;

(4) of the policy bureaux and government departments (including district offices) whose actual office areas at present are below the relevant standards in the Regulations; and

(5) given that, according to my observation, most of the offices of the Buildings Department (BD) are very crowded, thereby affecting BD officers' everyday work and health as well as causing inconvenience to members of the relevant industries who need to visit BD frequently to deal with various kinds of business, whether the authorities will address such problems squarely and make improvements; if so, of the implementation timetable for the improvement measures?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the different parts of the question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

(1) to (3) To effectively meet the operational needs of departments and to ensure the optimal use of government resources, the Government Property Agency (GPA) formulates the government office space standards (including working space for individual staff and ancillary facilities such as meeting rooms, service counters, etc.) in accordance with the principles set out in the Accommodation Regulations to facilitate departments' estimation of office space requirements.

Departments will review the existing usable office space and apply for additional office accommodation where necessary after the creation of new civil service posts is confirmed. If there is a genuine operational need for more office space, such as handling and storing large-sized layout plans, GPA or the Property Vetting Committee will duly consider the information and request from the department and approve the additional space required according to the prevailing standards.

Upon confirming the additional office space require, GPA will identify suitable premises having regard to the department's requirements on location and timing, etc. If the requirements cannot be met by government-owned premises, GPA may consider leasing premises for the purpose.

(4) GPA has no information on the actual office areas of individual departments below the relevant government office space standards. In allocating premises to departments, GPA has ensured that the provision is made according to the standard. After allocation of premises, departments will manage their own office accommodations and they can make minor adjustments to the office layout in light of the operational needs to optimise the use of office space. If needed, they may apply for additional office space according to the aforementioned mechanism.

(5) Based on the staff establishment of the Buildings Department (BD) in 2015, the whole block of the North Tower of the West Kowloon Government Offices (WKG0) under construction has been reserved for the use of BD. The total office space of BD will increase from the existing provision of about 25 000 square metres (m²) to about 29 600 m² upon the department's relocation to the WKG0 in 2019, representing an increase of about 4 600 m². It is anticipated that there will be a significant improvement in the overall office accommodation of BD. As regards BD's request for additional office requirement to cope with the increased manpower after 2015, GPA has approved office space requirement of about 2 500 m² and identified suitable premises to meet most of the requirements. GPA will continue to identify suitable premises to meet BD's accommodation needs.