

LCQ15: Supporting villages in organising mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Youth and Home Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

It is learnt that every year, numerous festive and cultural events take place in villages throughout the New Territories. These events are hosted by the Rural Committees (RCs) and attract a large number of visitors from the Mainland and overseas for sightseeing. However, there are views pointing out that the organisation of such events requires significant human, material and financial resources, which places a considerable financial burden on the resource-constrained RCs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government provided financial and manpower support for the following rural mega events in the past three years: (i) the Lam Tsuen Wishing Festival, (ii) the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, (iii) the Tin Hau Festival Parade of Yuen Long, (iv) the Hau Wong Festival of Tung Chung, (v) the Dragon Boat Races during the Dragon Boat Festival, and (vi) the Jiao Festivals of various villages; if so, of the details, and set out in a table the funding amount and number of support staff for each event; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether, in order to fully implement the concept of "Tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", the Government will provide direct funding to various RCs and consider introducing a new project type of Rural Festive and Cultural Events under the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme, so as to subsidise villages to organise events with distinctive festive characteristics; if not, of the reasons for that;

(3) as there are views that the development of rural mega events and tourism in the New Territories requires the participation of various RCs, and yet it is learnt that the monthly subvention granted by the Government to each RC ranges from \$15,300 to \$16,700, with the last adjustment to the subvention amount made in 2018, whether the Government will adjust such amount upwards based on changes in the Composite Consumer Price Index; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(4) whether, in addition to strengthening the promotion of rural mega events through the Tourism Commission and the Home Affairs Department, the Government will draw on the Mainland's experience and use means such as live streaming and short video clips by rural online influencers to showcase the natural scenery, traditional culture and lifestyle of New Territories villages, so as to deepen the understanding of the public and tourists about

the motherland and the New Territories, thereby promoting the development of rural mega events?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Lau, in consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Environment and Ecology Bureau, a consolidated reply is as follows:

The Government has always been supportive of the organisation of major rural events, with a view to promoting and preserving traditional culture. Among other things, the Home Affairs Department implements the Community Involvement Programme through which eligible organisations, including non-governmental organisations such as Rural Committees (RCs) and district organisations, may apply for funding support to organise projects featuring local characteristics and popular festive celebrations as well as cultural, artistic and recreational activities to promote district harmony. In the past three years, more than \$14 million has been allocated under the Community Involvement Programme to subsidise RCs and other district organisations in the New Territories in organising some of the major rural events mentioned in the question. In addition, all District Offices (DOs) in the New Territories have been in close liaison and collaboration with RCs and relevant district organisations, including the provision of manpower support to assist the organisers in carrying out relevant activities upon their invitation. Other government departments have also made concerted efforts to provide assistance for the activities in accordance with their respective duties and remit, including venue arrangements, crowd management, traffic diversions and road closures, environmental hygiene and public order. All of the above work is undertaken by the DOs and other departments concerned with their existing resources and manpower. Hence, a breakdown of the subsidy amount and manpower involved is not available.

Besides, the Countryside Conservation Office under the Environment and Ecology Bureau also subsidises local non-profit-making organisations to organise diverse and innovative countryside conservation and revitalisation projects through the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS). One of the project types funded under the CCFS is Cultural Rehabilitation/Revitalisation Projects, which aims at enhancing public appreciation and awareness in conservation of target cultural assets. This project type encompasses elements of organising countryside festive events for attracting villagers to return to their villages for gatherings. For instance, festive activities were organised in Kuk Po last year for the Kuk Po Spring Equinox Festival in celebration of the new year, introducing the public to the Hakka culture, the features of Hakka cuisine and other Chinese New Year traditions.

With regard to the promotion of major rural events, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has been promoting mega events and festivals through various channels, including social media posts and invitation to KOLs for

experiencing Hong Kong in person, as well as production of a series of promotional content, including videos, outdoor advertising, programmes in collaboration with renowned media, to carry out promotion in different source markets around the world and boost promotion impact by complementing with contents on HKTB's one-stop travel information platform Discover Hong Kong. These include "Hong Kong Great Outdoors", a promotional platform featuring hiking, beaches and outdoor activities, leisure and sightseeing, as well as island hopping. It also promotes traditional festivities, such as Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Dragon Boat Water Parade of Tai O, Hung Shing Festival. These promotional contents introduce to tourists the natural scenery, traditional culture and lifestyle of villages in the New Territories and attract them to come to Hong Kong. Efforts are also made by the DOs concerned in promoting activities in their respective districts through different channels, including websites, social media platforms and local networks.

The Government has always attached great importance to rural affairs and, through the provision of monthly subvention to RCs since the 1960s, to recognise and support their work. The rates and Government rents of RCs are also paid in full by the Government. The subvention to RCs is not subject to an adjustment mechanism approved by the Legislative Council. In 2018, the Government increased the subvention to RCs with reference to the changes in the Composite Consumer Price Index. There are three levels of RC subventions at \$15,300, \$15,800 and \$16,700 per month respectively, which were set according to factors like the size of the RCs to cover their daily operating expenses. RCs may also apply for government subsidies for eligible rural activities through the various funding programmes mentioned above.

LCQ10: Developing Hong Kong into fashion design hub in Asia

Following is a question by the Hon Sunny Tan and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

As proposed by the Chief Executive in the 2023 Policy Address, the Hong Kong Fashion Design Week (Fashion Week), branded as Hong Kong Fashion Fest (Fashion Fest), would be held annually starting from 2024. In the 2024 Policy Address, it is proposed to make the new flagship Fashion Week an annual signature event to develop Hong Kong into a fashion design hub in Asia. It has been reported that the inaugural Fashion Fest was held in early December last year with resounding success. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the performance of the inaugural Fashion Fest, including the number of participants, the countries or regions from which the participants or attendees of the Fashion Fest came, and the media effectiveness, etc.;

(2) of the plans and measures in place to make the Fashion Fest an annual signature event with more international and spectacular elements (including how to step up overseas publicity on the Fashion Fest in the international fashion arena, the industrial and commercial sectors, [etc.]), and to reinforce Hong Kong's positioning as the premier textile and fashion hub in the Asian region; and

(3) as I have learnt that the fashion collections of an overseas brand were well received and successfully sold at the inaugural Fashion Fest, and the brand's founder cum designer subsequently moved to Hong Kong to develop his/her career and business, whether the Government will consider adopting more proactive policy incentives and initiatives (e.g. reduction of profits tax and business registration fees) to attract brands and designers from the Mainland and regions along the Belt and Road such as Southeast Asia to move to Hong Kong to set up their presence, so as to establish more Asian international brands based in Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive has announced in his 2024 Policy Address to make the Hong Kong Fashion Design Week an annual signature event, developing Hong Kong into a fashion design hub in Asia. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has branded the event as Hong Kong Fashion Fest to consolidate different fashion design events and introduce innovative elements and affiliate activities annually, promoting Hong Kong's fashion and textile design brands as well as promoting Hong Kong as a prime destination for hosting major cultural and creative events.

In consultation with Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Sunny Tan is as follows:

(1) The inaugural Hong Kong Fashion Fest was funded by the Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency (CCIDA) under the CSTB, with the core programmes took place from November 20 to December 4, 2024. During the period, the CCIDA carried out online and offline publicity and promotion, and invited local and international media to Hong Kong to experience in person the atmosphere of Hong Kong fashion scene. The inaugural Hong Kong Fashion Fest gathered around 160 000 participants from the industries and the public across 25 countries or regions. More than 500 media outlets and related representatives attended the events, and the event-related videos on social media garnered over 4.6 million views.

(2) The inaugural Hong Kong Fashion Fest fully showcased Hong Kong's potential and advantages as a fashion design hub in Asia, laying the

foundation for its future development into an annual signature event.

Preparation work for the Hong Kong Fashion Fest 2025 commenced at the end of last year. The CCIDA will fund and promote potential fashion design projects that align with the objectives of the Hong Kong Fashion Fest through the CreateSmart Initiative (CSI), and actively encourage collaboration within the local fashion industry. We will continue to promote the Hong Kong Fashion Fest to countries in Europe and along the Belt and Road, attracting prestigious fashion brands and industry players to Hong Kong to participate in the event and expand their collaboration opportunities with international fashion organisations and brands. We will also continue to optimise and enrich the content of the Hong Kong Fashion Fest, actively introducing different types of fashion design events to further strengthen the international appeal and influence of the Hong Kong Fashion Fest, fostering Hong Kong's role as a prominent textile and fashion hub in Asia.

On publicity, the CCIDA will adopt comprehensive public relations and marketing strategies, such as utilising digital media promotions, inviting local and overseas fashion celebrities to participate in the event, and organising networking activities for industry stakeholders, etc. in order to enhance the international visibility of the Hong Kong Fashion Fest and local fashion design.

(3) The Hong Kong Fashion Fest creates a platform for local and overseas fashion designers and brands, as well as industry leaders and relevant professionals, by providing opportunities for exchanges and showcasing their works. We are pleased to note that a local fashion designer has received multiple inquiries for retail and business collaborations from both local and international sources after showcasing his works at the inaugural Hong Kong Fashion Fest. The fashion designer subsequently met with the leading figures in French fashion design industry to discuss potential collaborations for entering the French market. In addition, a Southeast Asian fashion designer has successfully increased her brand's exposure and sold a few thousand high-end fashion pieces through her participation in the international fashion show of the Hong Kong Fashion Fest. Eventually, she decided to continue developing her fashion career and business in Hong Kong. We believe that the Hong Kong Fashion Fest will help attract more international brands and talents from Asia to establish their base in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong offers an ideal business environment for foreign investors, featuring the advantages of low tax rates and a simple tax system, as well as simple and efficient procedures for foreign entrepreneurs to register their companies and apply for work visas. The CCIDA will actively liaise with InvestHK to provide support for local and overseas fashion brands seeking to develop their businesses in Hong Kong, and assist creative talent and enterprises in establishing themselves here.

LCQ22: Special child care centres

Following is a question by the Hon Lillian Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

The special child care centres (SCCCs) under the Social Welfare Department provide whole day training and care for children with moderate to severe disabilities to facilitate their growth and development, helping them prepare for articulation to primary education. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of children receiving services provided by SCCC in various districts in the past five years (with a breakdown by type of disability), as well as their average waiting time for such services;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective numbers and percentages of children receiving services provided by SCCC who have successfully articulated to mainstream schools and special schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether SCCC will provide follow-up services to the children mentioned in (2); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will regularly assess and review the teaching plans of SCCC, so as to ensure that children receiving such services can adapt to social development and better articulate to primary education; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

In response to Hon Lillian Kwok's question, our reply is as follows.

(1) and (2) As of the end of January 2025, there are 50 Special Child Care Centres (SCCCs), including six Residential Special Child Care Centres, across the territory providing full-day training and care for children aged two to six with moderate to severe disabilities. Children assessed to have the following developmental problems may register for SCCC service waitlist through the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services (CRSRehab):

- (i) moderately or severely mentally handicapped;
- (ii) moderately or severely physically handicapped;
- (iii) deaf or with severe to profound hearing impairment;
- (iv) blind or with severe visual impairment; or

(v) severe behavioural/emotional problems, hyperactive disposition or autistic disorder.

CRSRehab allows parents to register their children under the age of two in advance for the service waitlist. However, service allocation will only be provided once the child reaches the age of two and when a service vacancy becomes available.

To ensure children with special needs receive training and support as early as possible, they may, while waitlisted for SCCC service, concurrently apply for and receive services at Early Education and Training Centres (EETCs) or On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS) as transitional service, pending SCCC service placement. The multi-disciplinary service teams of OPRS also provide support to teachers and child care workers at kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres participating in OPRS.

Children on the SCCC waiting list who are not receiving the aforementioned transitional services may apply for a training subsidy under the Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, without being subject to any means test. They may utilise the subsidy to acquire self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services run by recognised service providers to receive training as early as possible.

The numbers of service users for SCCCs and the average waiting time, broken down by the eleven administrative districts of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the past five years, are tabulated below:

District	Number of service users				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25 (as at December 31, 2024)
Central/Western/ Southern & Islands	213	231	235	227	233
Eastern/Wan Chai	187	187	193	216	212
Kwun Tong	210	198	223	230	209
Wong Tai Sin/ Sai Kung	265	278	284	299	300
Kowloon City/ Yau Tsim Mong	189	177	198	240	239
Sham Shui Po	136	138	131	148	168
Sha Tin	183	178	184	211	190
Tai Po/North	217	223	226	223	231
Yuen Long	182	201	200	210	226

Tsuen Wan/ Kwai Tsing	219	237	203	227	229
Tuen Mun	112	105	121	161	194
Total	2 113	2 153	2 198	2 392	2 431

Average waiting time (in months) (Note 1 and 2)				
2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
17.5	19.9	20.2	19.3	19.2

Note 1: As the average waiting time is compiled on a financial-year basis covering April 1 of a year to March 31 of the next year, the figure for 2024-25 is not available.

Note 2: The figure includes the waiting time of children before they reach the age of two, but does not include the waiting time of pre-school rehabilitation service users who are receiving EETCs or OPRS as transitional service, or users who are waiting for a change of service type/choice of centre.

The SWD does not maintain data on the number of SCCC service users categorised by type of disability, nor does it have information on the number of SCCC service users admitted to mainstream or special schools.

(3) and (4) Each child with special needs undergoes periodic developmental assessments upon admission to and during their training at SCCC. The results of these assessments are used to design individualised training programmes that set learning goals tailored to each child. This approach aims to help children with special needs develop their abilities to the fullest extent and build a strong foundation for their future education and development. To enhance the effectiveness of transition from pre-school to primary education, a collaborative mechanism has been established among the Education Bureau (EDB), the SWD, the Department of Health, and the Hospital Authority. This mechanism allows primary schools to gain an early understanding of the special needs of incoming students when they promote from pre-school centres/kindergartens to primary schools, so as to assist them in successful integration into primary school life. With parental consent, pre-school rehabilitation service units subvented by the SWD prepare progress reports for students promoting to Primary One. These reports are transferred to the recipient schools via the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) of the EDB before the commencement of the new school year.

Red flag hoisted at Stanley Main Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (March 19) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

Electronic Health Record Sharing System (Amendment) Bill 2025 to be gazetted on Friday

The Government announced today (March 19) that the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (Amendment) Bill 2025 will be gazetted on Friday (March 21). The Bill aims to refine the existing legal framework of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth) to tie in with and support its function enhancements and continuous development.

The Bill seeks to amend the Electronic Health Record Sharing System Ordinance (Cap. 625) to expand and enhance the data collection, sharing, usage and protection mechanism of eHealth, in tandem with the "eHealth+" five-year development plan. "eHealth+" serves to transform eHealth into a comprehensive healthcare information infrastructure to complement the healthcare reform, including promoting primary healthcare, improving workflow efficiency and facilitating cross-boundary services, thereby providing citizens with more coherent and high-quality healthcare services.

Building a comprehensive personal electronic health record (eHR) for citizens

The Bill will provide a legal framework for building a comprehensive personal eHR for citizens, including streamlining the consent mechanism. Once citizens agree to join eHealth, their healthcare providers (HCPs) will be able to deposit health data into their personal eHealth accounts. Meanwhile, citizens will continue to retain full control over their personal data and can grant individual HCPs access to their eHealth records at their own will.

At present, most private HCPs have registered with eHealth and frequently access the records with individual citizens' consent, but only a

few would deposit records of the services provided into citizens' eHealth accounts. The Bill will empower the Secretary for Health to require specified HCPs to deposit important specified health data into the personal eHealth accounts of citizens registered with eHealth. Such arrangement can assist citizens in obtaining their records from HCPs and enhance service efficiency.

Supporting primary healthcare development and service process management

To support the development of primary healthcare services provided by multi-disciplinary teams, the Bill will expand the scope of healthcare professionals (HCPs) who can access health data on eHealth. In addition to the existing 13 types of HCPs subject to statutory registration, HCPs registered with the accredited professional bodies under the Department of Health's Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions, and other specified HCPs that provide healthcare in healthcare facilities controlled or managed by the Government and the Hospital Authority (such as the District Health Centres under the Primary Healthcare Commission) will also be included. With citizens' consents, these HCPs may access their health data on eHealth when providing healthcare for them.

Electronic medical documents, including medical certificates, prescriptions, and healthcare referrals, can reduce the risk of losing paper documents and facilitate convenient access and use of the documents by citizens. The Bill will provide a clear legal framework for governing electronic medical documents issued or authenticated through eHealth, and enabling the Government to designate eHealth as the only platform for issuing certain medical documents under appropriate circumstances, in order to facilitate the centralised management and support the usage of these documents.

Supporting citizens in using healthcare services across the boundary

The use of cross-boundary healthcare services has become increasingly common among citizens. At present, citizens can self-carry their own eHRs for cross-boundary uses via the eHealth mobile application. To better support citizens' needs, the Bill will introduce provisions to provide for the recognition of individual HCPs and public health record systems outside Hong Kong (e.g. service providers under the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme), subject to sufficient protection of data privacy and system security as well as due compliance with specified requirements and conditions. This will enable citizens to use their eHRs across the boundary in a more convenient and secure manner.

If an individual citizen uses services at a recognised HCP outside Hong Kong, he/she can choose to authorise the HCP to securely access his/her eHealth records and deposit the health records of the services received into his/her personal eHealth account, with a view to enhancing the quality and safety of cross-boundary healthcare services. HCPs outside Hong Kong can only access and deposit citizens' eHealth records when a registered citizen provides explicit consent when using its services. Under no other circumstances will eHealth records be transmitted across the boundary.

Refining the legal provisions for the access and use of eHealth data

The Bill will also refine the legal provisions governing the access and use of eHealth data. Among other things, the Bill will empower the Government and other authorised persons to use identifiable data in eHealth for the purposes of enrolling citizens in, administering, and evaluating government healthcare programmes. The Bill will also specify that citizens and specified categories of related persons, such as parents of minors and authorised caregivers, may provide to and obtain eHealth records of the citizen, thereby empowering citizens' self-management of health records.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council for First Reading on March 26.