

## LCQ12: Cyber security risks amid the epidemic

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Liao and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

It has been reported that amid the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic which rages across the globe, the computer systems of hospitals in quite a number of places and even the World Health Organization have been subjected to intensified attacks by hackers. The number of cyberattacks such as phishing emails that the Hospital Authority (HA) of Hong Kong was subjected to surged from about 20 million in 2015 to over 50 million last year. Besides, the HA was also subjected to five ransomware email attacks last year. An international cyber security analysis report pointed out that last year amid the epidemic, the industries most targeted by cyberattacks, apart from health care industry, were business and professional services industries, retail and hospitality industries, financial industry and high technology industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of cyberattacks that Hong Kong's health care industry was subjected to in each of the past three years, and the annual rates of change of such numbers, with a breakdown of such cases by type of institutions/organisations and type of attacks, as well as the losses involved (if any);

(2) whether it knows the number of cyberattacks that other industries in Hong Kong were subjected to in each of the past three years, and the annual rates of change of such numbers, with a breakdown of such cases by industry and type of attacks, as well as the losses involved (if any);

(3) whether it has assessed the cyber security risks faced by the various industries in Hong Kong amid the epidemic; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it knows the new trends and major concerns in respect of cyber security risks across the globe amid the epidemic; if so, of the details and their impacts on Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the various parts of the question, our consolidated reply is as follows:

In the past year or so, COVID-19 has been rampant across the globe, and has significantly changed enterprises' mode of operation and people's way of living. Remote business, work from home, remote learning and online shopping etc. have become the new normal. Under this new normal, various sectors have to undergo digital transformation on the one hand, and on the other hand, actively respond to the new cyber security risks brought about by the transformation.

The breakdown of statistics on information security incidents handled by the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre (HKCERT) over the past three years is at Annex I. According to the statistics, a total of 8 346 information security incidents were handled in 2020, representing a decrease of 17 per cent and 12 per cent as compared with 2018 and 2019 respectively. Although there was a downward trend in the overall number of incidents, the phishing cases increased to 3 483, representing an increase of 66 per cent and 35 per cent as compared with 2018 and 2019 respectively. We note that many hackers took advantage of the public concern over the epidemic by disseminating false information through phishing methods or pretending to be health organisations seeking donations, so as to lure the victims into visiting malicious websites, disclosing sensitive information or even defrauding money. In addition, the number of malicious software cases (mainly targeting individuals) in 2020 fell sharply by 85 per cent to 181 cases as compared with that in 2019. There were signs indicating that hackers have switched their main targets to enterprises or organisations. On the other hand, despite the small number of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks at 53 cases only, the increase was over 43 per cent when compared with that in 2019. Such increase was believed to be due to the increase in the "attack surfaces" resulting from the provision of more online services by various sectors during the epidemic.

Besides, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) recorded a total of 12 916 technology crime cases in 2020, representing an increase of 55 per cent as compared with 8 322 cases in 2019. The average monetary loss per case decreased from about \$350,000 in 2019 to about \$230,000, and the total amount of monetary loss was about \$2.96 billion, similar to that in 2019. The rise in the number of technology crime cases was mainly due to the increase in online fraud (such as e-shopping fraud or romance scam). Fraudsters commit offences with technologies such as the Internet, social media and e-mail as the medium. The breakdown of technology crimes and related loss over the past three years is at Annex II. The HKCERT and the HKPF do not have information on the breakdown by enterprise, organisation and industry (including the healthcare sector).

The Government has all along been maintaining close collaboration with the HKCERT to closely monitor the impact of the epidemic on global and local cyber security risks. Under the epidemic, the HKCERT expects a proliferation of targeted and organised cyberattacks on a global scale, which aligns with the local cyber security trend. Enterprises must be well-prepared to cope with the related challenges.

We will continue to tackle information security issues through a multi-

pronged strategy. For example, by providing financial subsidy (such as Technology Voucher Programme), we support enterprises to enhance systems and cyber security measures, so as to strengthen the level of information security of various sectors. We also work closely with the Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited and the HKCERT to disseminate information and advice on cyber security matters to the public. In addition, we encourage more public and private organisations' exchange of cyber security information through the Partnership Programme for Cyber Security Information Sharing and the cross-sector Cyber Security Information Sharing and Collaborative Platform (Cybersechub.hk). Moreover, the HKCERT has been implementing the Healthcare Cyber Security Watch Programme since 2019 to notify Hong Kong healthcare sector of cyber security vulnerabilities and threats in order to reduce cyber security risks. We will continue to collaborate with relevant organisations and departments (such as the HKPF and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data) to enhance Hong Kong's overall defense capability and resilience against cyberattacks, and strive to build Hong Kong as a safe and secure smart city.

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President,

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We will continue to tackle information security issues through a multi-pronged strategy. For example, by providing financial subsidy (such as Technology Voucher Programme), we support enterprises to enhance systems and cyber security measures, so as to strengthen the level of information security of various sectors. We also work closely with the Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited and the HKCERT to disseminate information and advice on cyber security matters to the public. In addition, we encourage more public and private organisations' exchange of cyber security information through the Partnership Programme for Cyber Security Information Sharing and the cross-sector Cyber Security Information Sharing and Collaborative Platform (Cybersechub.hk). Moreover, the HKCERT has been implementing the Healthcare Cyber Security Watch Programme since 2019 to notify Hong Kong healthcare sector of cyber security vulnerabilities and threats in order to reduce cyber security risks. We will continue to collaborate with relevant organisations and departments (such as the HKPF and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data) to enhance Hong Kong's overall defense capability and resilience against cyberattacks, and strive to build Hong Kong as a safe and secure smart city.

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## **LCQ8: Development of digital economy**

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

The "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" (the 14th Five-Year Plan) puts forward accelerating digitalisation development, including the creation of new advantages of a digital economy. The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) also puts forward strengthening cooperation in innovation and technology in the Greater Bay Area, and the authorities of both Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province have planned to jointly strengthen the innovation and development of the digital economy in the Greater Bay Area. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, by drawing reference from documents such as the Implementation Plan for the Innovation and Development of Digital Economy Industries of the Shenzhen City (2021-2023), expeditiously formulate a blueprint for Hong Kong's development of digital economy with clear targets; if so, of the details and work schedule;

(2) in respect of strengthening the innovation and development of the digital economy in the Greater Bay Area, of the latest progress of the Government's work on facilitating the cross-boundary flow of the scientific research resources of Hong Kong's higher education institutions and scientific research institutes within the Greater Bay Area; whether it has formulated new plans for the coming three years to participate in developing the Greater Bay Area into a global hub for digital economy development; if so, of the details (including the timetable); and

(3) whether, in the coming year, it will formulate corresponding development strategies and plans in respect of the seven digital economy key industries (i.e. cloud computing, big data, Internet of Things, industrial Internet, blockchain, artificial intelligence, as well as virtual reality and augmented reality) as set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the various parts of the question, our consolidated reply is as follows:

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has been actively promoting the development of digital economy. In December 2017, the Government published the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong (Blueprint), formulating the blueprint for the development of digital economy in Hong Kong and the building of a world-renowned Smart Hong Kong characterised by a flourishing economy and people's high quality of living. The Blueprint set out 76 initiatives under six smart areas, i.e. "Smart Mobility", "Smart Living", "Smart Environment", "Smart People", "Smart

Government" and "Smart Economy", with a view to addressing city management challenges and improving people's livelihood through innovation and technology (I&T), and more than 40 initiatives have been completed.

In December 2020, the Government released the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong 2.0 (Blueprint 2.0), setting out over 130 smart city initiatives which continue to enhance and expand existing city management measures and services, hoping that members of the public can better perceive the benefits of smart city and I&T in their daily lives.

Besides, we have implemented as scheduled several digital infrastructure projects in the past three years, including the Next Generation Government Cloud and the Big Data Analytics Platform which commenced operation in September 2020, and the "iAM Smart" one-stop personalised digital services platform which was also launched in December of the same year. We also actively promote the opening up of data by public and private organisations in a bid to foster technological research and innovation, thereby bringing convenience and benefits to members of the public and assisting the industry in expanding business opportunities at the same time. Currently, more than 4 500 datasets are available on the webpage of the Government's Public Sector Information Portal, and over 10 billion downloads were recorded in 2020.

The "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" (the 14th Five-Year Plan) clearly supports Hong Kong's establishment of an international I&T hub and put forth nurturing and building up of emerging digital industries, including artificial intelligence (AI), big data, blockchain, cloud computing and cyber security etc. in the era of digital economy, thereby enhancing industry level, such as communication equipment, core electronic components and key software etc. Meanwhile, the National 14th Five-Year Plan also proposes high-quality Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) development, and supports Hong Kong's integration into national development, leveraging the complementary advantages of the Mainland.

To act in concert with the national development strategy to enable Hong Kong to better integrate into the overall development of the country, the HKSAR Government is taking forward a series of I&T infrastructure initiatives. The areas of development of these initiatives will align with the above emerging industries mentioned in the 14th Five-Year Plan in the age of digital economy, including the Cyberport expansion project that will strengthen its I&T ecosystem and continue to drive the development of cutting-edge technologies such as AI, big data and blockchain etc.; the Hong Kong-Shenzhen I&T Park that will focus on technology domains such as AI and big data etc.; as well as the Phase 2 expansion of the Hong Kong Science Park project which will focus on the needs of research activities for technologies such as AI. The Blueprint 2.0 initiatives also make use of these digital technologies, including cloud computing, big data analytics, AI, blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and 5G etc. to improve public services and stimulate the industry to develop more innovative technological applications.

Hong Kong all along has advantages in scientific research in the above

technology areas. According to the university ranking published by Quacquarelli Symonds in 2021, five Hong Kong universities rank among the top one hundred in overall performance and their faculties of engineering and technology, demonstrating Hong Kong's strong capability in basic research. According to the finding as early as in 2018 by Scopus, the world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, universities in Hong Kong as a whole ranked third globally in terms of producing the most highly cited and impactful research on AI. In addition, the City University of Hong Kong has established the State Key Laboratory of Terahertz and Millimeter Waves approved by the Ministry of Science and Technology. The City University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong have also participated respectively in the establishment of the GBA Joint Laboratory of Big Data Imaging and Communications, as approved to be set up by the Department of Science and Technology of Guangdong Province, led by the Shenzhen Academy of Information and Communications Technology, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Joint Laboratory on Smart Cities led by the Shenzhen University.

Apart from the strength in scientific research capability, Hong Kong also has an edge in internationalisation and a robust intellectual property protection regime, while other GBA Mainland cities have capabilities in advanced manufacturing and commercialising research and development results. As a result, for more than 15 years, the HKSAR Government has been collaborating with the Guangdong Provincial and Shenzhen Municipal Governments through the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme (TCFS) to enhance productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in Guangdong and Hong Kong. The themes of the 2020 TCFS are also in line with the emerging industries in the era of digital economy covered in the National 14th Five-Year Plan, such as new-generation information technology, AI, IoT, big data and cloud computing. The 2020 TCFS received a total of 211 project applications to be jointly funded by Guangdong/Shenzhen and Hong Kong. The Guangdong/Shenzhen authorities and the Innovation and Technology Commission will each conduct independent vetting of the eligible applications received, and compare the results to identify projects to be jointly supported afterwards.

The HKSAR Government will continue to facilitate effective flow of innovative elements, including talent, capital, goods and information etc., thereby promoting collaboration in scientific research and better leveraging the complementary advantages among different cities in the GBA. Government policy bureaux/departments and related organisations will actively collaborate with the relevant Mainland authorities with a view to fostering the development of digital economy and I&T in Hong Kong, and strive to build Hong Kong into an international I&T hub.

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Hong Kong into an international I&T hub.

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## **“Cruise-to-nowhere” itineraries can resume under set of health control protocols from end-July**

The Government announced today (May 26) that cruise lines are expected to resume, for Hong Kong residents, "cruise-to-nowhere" (CTN) itineraries, which do not involve ports outside Hong Kong, at end-July 2021 the earliest on the condition that they strictly comply with a set of health precautionary measures specifically designed for cruise travel.

"With the stabilising COVID-19 epidemic situation in Hong Kong since mid-February this year, the public, the cruise trade and the tourism industry have strong aspirations for the gradual resumption of cruise travel which has been suspended for more than 15 months since February last year. The resumption of CTN itineraries under prudent health precautionary measures can strike a proper balance between public health protection on the one hand, and the public aspirations for some form of leisure travel on the other. CTN itineraries underpinned by health control safeguards will offer an additional safe vacation option for the community as from the coming summer," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said.

The health precautionary measures, which have been worked out in consultation with relevant bureaux and departments (B/Ds) as well as the cruise trade, include:

- (a) all incoming crew members are required to comply with the prevailing quarantine and testing requirements for travellers entering Hong Kong (see Note 1);
- (b) all crew members must be fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines recognised by health authorities before commencement of a cruise journey, except for those not suitable to do so with valid medical proof. Non-local crew members who have not been vaccinated prior to entry into Hong Kong may receive vaccinations for free in Hong Kong, and they have to be fully vaccinated before they can serve on a cruise journey. Cruise lines will strictly implement the COVID-19 vaccination requirement for crew members;
- (c) all fully vaccinated crew members are still required to undergo a COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) nucleic acid test shoreside and obtain a negative result every 14 days. Meanwhile, crew members who are not suitable for vaccination due to medical grounds must undergo every seven days a COVID-19 PCR nucleic acid test shoreside and obtain a negative result, as well as undergo every three days testing at on-board facilities and obtain a

negative result;

(d) all passengers must be fully vaccinated (see Note 2), except for those not suitable to do so with medical proof or aged below 16, before commencement of a cruise journey;

(e) all passengers have to undergo a COVID-19 PCR nucleic acid test within 48 hours prior to boarding and obtain a negative result;

(f) cruise lines are required to adopt a maximum 50 per cent passenger capacity on a cruise ship, comply with the respective sets of hygiene, social distancing and contact tracing measures for various similar premises and facilities in force under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), and promulgate contact tracing mechanism for journeys; and

(g) passengers are required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application to scan the QR code of the cruise ship before boarding. After boarding, they must also follow the social distancing and contact tracing mechanism executed by the cruise lines.

There will be a robust contingency management mechanism catering for fluctuations of the local epidemic situation. In the event that there is a suspected case on board during a cruise journey, the journey will be suspended at once and the cruise ship will return to the cruise terminal in Hong Kong. Relevant B/Ds will invoke contingency management measures based on an epidemiological investigation and laboratory findings, having regard to the circumstances of the case and relevant health guidelines. Such measures may include requiring the concerned passengers and crew members to undergo testing, medical surveillance and/or quarantine.

"Given the nature of a cruise operation, considerable lead time is required for cruise lines to prepare for resumption of CTN itineraries. The announcement today enables the tourism industry, in particular cruise lines, to make preparations for the resumption immediately by arranging their cruise ships and crew members to come to Hong Kong. In fact, cruise lines interested in resuming CTN itineraries have already indicated that they will arrange crew members suitable for vaccination or those already vaccinated to serve in Hong Kong to the extent possible. Hong Kong residents who have yet to be vaccinated may wish to do so as soon as possible in order that they may join CTN itineraries. The relevant B/Ds will, in the meantime, continue to work in tandem with the cruise lines in the coming few weeks on the detailed execution plan and on-board inspections," Mr Yau said.

Relevant further information will also be uploaded to Tourism Commission's website before CTN itineraries resume.

Note 1: Such requirements include those under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) where applicable.

Note 2: For both the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine (CoronaVac vaccine) and Fosun Pharma/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty vaccine), "fully vaccinated" in general means having received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine 14 clear days ago.