

LCQ4: Flood prevention measures

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

The Hong Kong Observatory issued the first Black Rainstorm Signal of this year on the 6th of this month. It has been reported that on that day, flooding occurred in extensive areas in Hong Kong which were affected by rainstorms. The flooding in Kowloon East, especially in the vicinity of Hoi Yuen Road and Tsui Ping Road, was particularly serious, and the Kwun Tong Road Underpass was even inundated for several hours, thereby severely affecting the traffic there. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the details of the investigations conducted into the flooding reports received during the aforesaid rainstorms, and other follow-up work carried out; given that Kowloon East was not a flooding blackspot in the past, of the measures in place to prevent the recurrence of flooding in that district;
- (2) of the designed flood discharge capacity of the aforesaid roads and underpass, as well as whether it has examined the need to enhance such capacity; and
- (3) given that the rainy season has begun, of the new measures in place to ensure that the various flood prevention measures, drainage systems, seawalls and breakwaters can function properly to prevent the occurrence of severe flooding; whether it will step up its efforts such as clearing the blocked drains in the urban areas?

Reply:

President,

During the rainy season, Hong Kong is from time to time threatened by inclement weather such as prolonged heavy rains and typhoons. The average annual rainfall of Hong Kong is about 2 400 millimetres, making Hong Kong one of the highest rainfall cities in the Pacific Rim. The Drainage Services Department (DSD) and the relevant government departments have been taking multi-pronged measures as well as constructing and maintaining the public stormwater drainage facilities according to their respective responsibilities to reduce the risk of flooding and eliminate flooding blackspots. Among the facilities, those serving the public roads are mainly constructed and maintained by the Highways Department (HyD).

On June 6 this year, Hong Kong was affected by a trough of low pressure, resulting in continuous heavy rains. High rainfall was generally recorded in the widespread of the territory during the period. In the districts of Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, Tai Po, Sai Kung and Kowloon East, the rainfall exceeded 200mm,

accounting for almost 10 per cent of the average annual rainfall. In the period that the Black Rainstorm Signal was in force, the maximum hourly rainfall recorded by the rain gauge at Clear Water Bay Road in East Kowloon was 139mm, which was far higher than the level of hourly rainfall of 70mm for issuing the Black Rainstorm Signal.

On that day, the DSD activated the Emergency Control Centre according to the established mechanism to monitor the flooding situations in different districts. It deployed more than 40 emergency teams to inspect areas in a number of districts where the drainage systems were prone to blockage by debris and obstacles washed down from the upstream, and also took emergency actions for the 25 flooding cases received. The affected locations resumed to their normal conditions shortly after the completion of the emergency actions.

After consultation with relevant government departments, I provide the reply to the three parts of the question raised by Hon Wong as follows:

(1) On June 6, the DSD and HyD received a total of six flooding cases that took place at East Kowloon. Their locations include Kwun Tong Road Underpass, Kwun Tong Road near Tsui Ping Road and Tsui Ping Road near Fuk Ning Road. The more serious case occurred at the Kwun Tong Road Underpass. After inspection, the HyD unveiled that the gullies and the associated drains alongside the underpass were blocked by a large amount of sands and washout deposits, coupled with the continuous heavy rains, flooding took place at the underpass. With the joint efforts of the HyD and DSD on clearing the blocked road drainage facilities, the affected road sections were reopened on the same day.

To reduce the risk of flooding in East Kowloon, the DSD and HyD specifically re-examined the flood prone areas immediately, including the road drainage facilities affected on this occasion to ensure clearance of drainage channels. With a view to reducing the flood risk and the associated traffic impact, the HyD will also deploy manpower to conduct targeted inspections and clearance during heavy rains for the road sections with higher flood risk.

The DSD will also conduct investigations into flooding cases and formulate appropriate improvement measures in accordance with the findings of the investigations. Improvement measures being considered include the study on the installation of monitoring sensors at the drainage system of Kwun Tong Road and Tsui Ping Road, and the optimisation of the operation of the stormwater storage tank at On Sau Road in the upstream with a view to enhancing the flood resilience and flood prevention capability of the areas concerned.

In parallel, the DSD and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) are implementing in phases various public works projects conducive to the enhancement of the flood prevention capability of East Kowloon. Under the project Development of Anderson Road Quarry Site, the CEDD is constructing a flood retention lake and a stormwater storage tank. It is anticipated that the date of operation would be in 2023-2024; and the surface

runoff could be greatly reduced and the burden of the downstream drainage system relieved. As scheduled to commence construction works by 2020, the DSD's project Revitalisation of Tsui Ping River will improve certain bottlenecks at Tsui Ping Nullah. In addition, the DSD has commenced an investigation study on "Drainage Improvement Works in Kwun Tong" in 2018, which mainly includes the construction of stormwater storage tanks at Sau Nga Road Playground, Hoi Bun Road Park and Kwun Tong Ferry Pier Square; and the addition of stormwater drains within the district. The DSD plans to commence the detailed design work within this year for implementing the long-term improvement scheme the soonest possible.

(2) The roads and underpasses under HyD are designed with due consideration of the drainage requirements of individual circumstance and the required drainage facilities are constructed in accordance with the design standard. To cope with the drainage demand under heavy rains, a pumping system has been installed at the affected underpass at Kwun Tong Road. Under normal situation, the gullies in the underpass will collect the rainwater flowing in through the road surface. The rainwater will then be pumped out by the pumps and discharged into the sea through the nearby nullah at King Yip Street.

(3) After the subject flooding incident, the DSD, HyD and other works departments have stepped up the precautionary measures for typhoons and heavy rains, including clearing and maintaining the drainage channels, coastal seawalls and breakwater facilities. The DSD will strengthen the inspection of the drainage in the vicinity of different construction sites and require the responsible persons of the sites to take effective measures to prevent muddy water from being discharged to the public drainage systems and roads.

To manage the risk of road flooding, the HyD has arranged contractors to inspect all the road drains and drainage systems of highway structures under their jurisdiction, and worked with the relevant government departments to strengthen the inspection and clearance works of the outfalls and drains of public roads to ensure that they are free from blockage. With the aim of reopening the affected roads within the shortest period of time to minimise the inconvenience caused to the public and ensure the safety of road users, the HyD will also enhance the cleansing of drainage facilities such as the roadside gullies and pumping systems in road underpasses. Besides, it will deploy additional resources to strive to inspect public roads before and after rainstorms for cleaning up the flooding and blockages that may occur due to rainstorms.

Apart from deploying emergency teams to handle flooding cases under emergency situations, the DSD will also endeavour to deploy manpower to make arrangements for "just-in-time clearance", inspecting the about 200 locations which are susceptible to blockage by litter or debris from surface runoff so as to ensure that drains can be cleared in a "in-time" and targeted manner.

Further, government departments have set up storm surge early alert systems for a number of low-lying areas prone to seawater inundation. Upon the issuance of storm surge early alerts by the Hong Kong Observatory, the DSD will deploy pumping facilities and install flood barriers at the areas concerned, and provide sandbags to the residents and merchants in need in

order to relieve the flood risk brought by storm surges.

Thank you, President.

Operator and manager of unlicensed guesthouses fined

A man and a woman were fined \$4,500 and \$5,000 at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (June 24) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that in July and December last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department, inspected two suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Argyle Street and Jordan Road in Kowloon. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms in these guesthouses on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's records, these guesthouses did not possess licences under the Ordinance on the days of inspection. The man and the woman responsible for operating and managing the premises were charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaeng@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

LCQ3: Freedom of assembly and procession amid the epidemic

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

To cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, the Government made the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (No-gathering Order). It has been reported that on a number of occasions since the No-gathering Order came into operation on March 29, this year, the Police have issued notices of objection to public meetings and processions on grounds of epidemic prevention, and have issued to participants of such events fixed penalty notices for violating the No-gathering Order. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of COVID-19 patients who reported that they had participated in public meetings or processions within the 14 days prior to being confirmed of infection;

(2) of the number of notices of objection to public meetings and processions issued by the Police on grounds of epidemic prevention since the coming into operation of the No-gathering Order; and

(3) as some medical practitioners have pointed out that as long as all participants of public events wear face masks and maintain social distance, their risks of being infected during the events can be greatly reduced, whether the Government has assessed if the objection by the Police to the holding of public events on grounds of epidemic prevention has infringed upon the freedom of assembly and procession enjoyed by Hong Kong residents under Article 27 of the Basic Law; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether it will request the Police to revise such practice; if the assessment outcome is in the negative, of the justifications for that?

Reply:

President,

According to the views of the World Health Organization and health experts, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) would not be eradicated before effective treatment methods and vaccines become available. The Government needs to incorporate work in relation to disease prevention and control and infection management into the new normal of the daily operation of society. Hence, there is a need for the Government to reduce the risk of the novel coronavirus disease spreading in the community through various social distancing measures. Currently, the Government adopts the "suppress and lift" strategy, striving to strike a balance among factors such as public health protection, economic impact and society's acceptance level, etc., with a view to maintaining various appropriate anti-epidemic measures on one hand while allowing room for gradual resumption of normal operation and activities in society when the situation permits.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen is as follows:

(1) According to epidemiological investigation data from the Centre for

Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, as at June 23, 2020, none of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 actively reported to the CHP that he/she had participated in public gatherings or processions in the 14 days prior to being confirmed of infection. Yet, this does not mean that public gatherings or processions do not pose risk of spreading the novel coronavirus disease in the community. There is still a need for the Government to maintain appropriate social distancing measures having regard to public health considerations under the "suppress and lift" strategy.

(2) and (3) In Hong Kong, fundamental rights and freedoms are fully protected by the Basic Law, and the right to freedom of expression as well as the right of peaceful assembly are guaranteed by Article 27 of the Basic Law. However, these rights and freedoms are not absolute. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance, the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities. Any person exercising the right to freedom of expression or the right of peaceful assembly should respect the rights of others, and should not compromise public order and public safety while doing so.

In view of the impact of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease, the Government has put in place the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) to restrict group gatherings in public places through legislation. This is one of the elements of the overall measures for social distancing, aiming to reduce the risks of transmission of the novel coronavirus disease in the community as far as practicable. No political considerations have ever come into play. Since Cap. 599G coming into effect on March 29 up to June 16, 2020, the Police has prohibited nine public meetings and objected to five public possessions in accordance with the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245), having regard to considerations of public safety and public order and for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In the past few weeks, the epidemic situation and number of confirmed cases in Hong Kong have gradually stabilised, and we are currently in the "lifting" phase under the "suppress and lift" strategy. Having considered the public health risks, the Government gazetted on June 16, 2020 the latest directions and amendments under Cap. 599G, relaxing the number of persons allowed in group gatherings in public places from 8 to 50. With the exception of exempted persons, the aforementioned measure to prohibit group gatherings at public places is effective from June 19 till July 2. At the same time, the Government has also relaxed the restrictions on catering business and scheduled premises, though the relevant premises are still required to continue adopting measures to prevent infection.

At the same time, although the epidemic situation in Hong Kong has subsided, we must keep up our infection prevention measures. Experts also predicted that sporadic infection cases and clusters may possibly continue to appear in Hong Kong. Earlier, Hong Kong came across local cluster cases without known sources. This together with the resumption of school have caused the community and experts to express concerns about whether the

cluster cases would cause large-scale outbreaks in the community. The Government is of the view that social distancing measures should generally be maintained at this stage, and that the conditions are not present to allow full relaxation of different kinds of group gatherings in public places.

Furthermore, holding a large scale public gathering in an open public place cannot be directly compared to a group gathering held within a designated area of a premise. For the former, the organiser is unable to effectively put in place infection control measures and ensure that all participants comply with the relevant measures. For the latter, responsible persons of religious venues, catering or scheduled premises, etc., can implement a series of infection control measures within the area of the premises and require all persons entering the said premises to follow the measures. Having considered that members of the public are starting to show signs of fatigue towards disease prevention and control in the community, taking account of the outcome of risk assessment, we have relaxed the number of persons allowed in group gatherings in public places to 50 in order to facilitate the conduct of social and economic activities, such as various sports or local tours, so that society could gradually return to normal business. The Government will review the relevant measures in place from time to time having regard to the development of the epidemic situation and in accordance with the "suppress and lift" strategy, including further adjusting the relevant restrictions on group gatherings.

In view that the global epidemic situation is still not fully under control, and the need for prevention and control of the novel coronavirus disease is becoming the new norm, the Government appeals to the public to stay vigilant, establish good personal hygiene habits, maintain an appropriate social distance from others as far as possible, and adopt necessary anti-epidemic measures in crowded places, in order to help effectively cut the virus transmission chain.

Thank you, President.

LCQ2: Mutual recognition system for health codes of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

The authorities of the Mainland, Macao and Hong Kong are separately implementing measures to put inbound travellers under compulsory quarantine. Some Hong Kong businessmen who need to frequently commute between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as those Hong Kong people who reside on the Mainland but work in Hong Kong have relayed that the quarantine measures have seriously affected their work and family lives. The authorities of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao are taking forward a system for mutual recognition of health codes (mutual recognition system) to facilitate cross-boundary flow of people between the three places amid the epidemic. Under the mutual recognition system, holders of a health code containing certification of negative result of the nucleic acid test on coronavirus disease 2019 issued within seven days by a designated medical institution may be exempted from compulsory quarantine on arrival in the three places. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest progress of the implementation of the mutual recognition system by the authorities of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao; whether the authorities will expeditiously increase the quota for the Hong Kong health code under the mutual recognition system, with priority being accorded to the following people: those who need to commute between the three places on business, work, study, humanitarian or special grounds; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) whether it will expeditiously increase the capacity of local medical institutions in conducting the nucleic acid test under the mutual recognition system and the test quota, as well as subsidise the private sector for providing testing services, so as to lower the test fees payable by members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus epidemic, the Government has been closely monitoring the development of the situation and responding comprehensively with decisive and appropriate measures. Currently, in view of signs that Hong Kong's epidemic situation is subsiding, the Government adopts the "suppress and lift" strategy, striving to strike a balance among factors such as public health protection, economic impact and society's acceptance level, with a view to maintaining various anti-epidemic measures on one hand while allowing room for gradual resumption of normal operation and activities in society when the situation permits.

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Starry Lee is as follows:

Guangdong and Hong Kong are closely connected and there are frequent economic and trade activities between the two places. Currently, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in Guangdong Province has relatively subsided. In view of this and in line with our "suppress and lift" strategy, relevant policy bureaux and departments of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government are actively discussing with the

relevant departments of Guangdong Province the related arrangements under the framework of joint prevention and control. Regarding the mutual recognition of virus test results and exemption of designated cross-boundary travellers from compulsory quarantine, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong are considering the launch of a pilot scheme to relax cross-boundary flow of people between the two places within certain limits in order to facilitate people who need to travel between Guangdong and Hong Kong.

Currently, the pilot scheme being discussed between the governments of the Hong Kong SAR and Guangdong Province is expected to include the following arrangements:

*In the initial phase of the pilot scheme, the number or coverage of persons eligible for exemption from quarantine will be subject to restrictions. If there is a quota on the number of persons, we will consider a suitable mechanism for allocating the quota, such as through an open booking system. Furthermore, exempted persons must not have left Hong Kong or Guangdong in the past 14 days preceding their departure.

*The governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong will mutually recognise the COVID-19 test results conducted by designated testing facilities which meets the standards. The mutual recognition will be done through the "Health Code" of the two places. In relation to this, one of the preparatory tasks of the Hong Kong SAR Government is to develop a "Hong Kong Health Code" system, which enables the virus test results of participants of the pilot scheme in Hong Kong to be uploaded onto the code. Before departing from Hong Kong, eligible persons with negative test results can connect to the electronic platform through a web browser using smartphones or mobile devices, and apply for the "Hong Kong Health Code" online and download it to their mobile phones or devices. To facilitate the mutual recognition of test results by the boundary control officers of Guangdong and Hong Kong, participants of the pilot scheme can on their own accord choose to exchange the "Hong Kong Health Code" for use on the "Yuekang Code" system of Guangdong for health declaration purpose when they enter Guangdong. Eligible persons arriving at Hong Kong from Guangdong can also choose to use the code exchange function on the "Yuekang Code" to directly transfer the valid nucleic acid test results onto the platform for filling in the electronic health declaration form for entering Hong Kong.

*Furthermore, exempted persons must undertake nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 at private hospitals, clinics or medical laboratories recognised by the Hong Kong SAR Government, and must be tested negative. To facilitate the aforesaid arrangement for mutual recognition of tests, the Hong Kong SAR Government has been encouraging and helping local private laboratories to enhance their testing capabilities for COVID-19, as well as bringing down the price by increasing market competition. At the same time, with a view to lowering the price of testing, we are working with the private testing sector to actively explore ways to lower the cost as much as possible while upholding the testing standards.

We will announce the details as soon as possible after the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have completed discussion on the pilot scheme.

In addition, the Government is discussing with the Macao SAR Government the arrangement for mutual recognition of virus test results and exemption of cross-border travellers from compulsory quarantine. Details will be separately announced after the discussion has completed.

Thank you, President.

LCQ14: Public housing development projects

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

It is learnt that rezoning sites for housing purpose has been one of the major sources of lands for public housing in recent years. There are comments that different administrative and statutory procedures are involved from the moment that the Government has made a decision to rezone the land use of a site to the moment that the site is spade-ready for housing construction, and the pace of public housing supply will be affected should there be delay in any one of the procedures. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) regarding the various public housing development projects since 2013 which involved land use rezoning, of the respective average time taken to complete the following six development procedures: (i) conducting pre-feasibility study, (ii) carrying out site investigation and design of infrastructure works, (iii) seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee of this Council for the relevant site formation and infrastructure works, (iv) land resumption (if applicable), (v) land clearance, and (vi) carrying out site formation and infrastructure works;

(2) regarding the following projects, of the respective (A) commencement dates/expected commencement dates and (B) completion dates/expected completion dates for the various procedures mentioned in (1) (set out in the table below):

- (a) Long Bin (Phase 1),
- (b) Long Bin (Phase 2),
- (c) Tuen Mun Area 54 Site 4A (South),
- (d) Wang Chau (Phase 1),
- (e) Wah King Street,
- (f) Wah Fu North,
- (g) Kai Lung Wan North, Kai Lung Wan South,
- (h) Wah Lok Path, Pok Fu Lam,

- (i) Ex-Cha Kwo Ling Kaolin Mine Site A and Site B,
- (j) Tuen Mun Area 54 Site 5,
- (k) Yau Yue Wan Village Road,
- (l) Pak Shing Kok Road,
- (m) Near Tan Kwai Tsuen (South),
- (n) Kai Tak Site 2B3,
- (o) Kai Tak Site 2B4,
- (p) Kai Tak Site 2B5,
- (q) Kai Tak Site 2B6,
- (r) Shek Lei Interim Housing,
- (s) San Hing Road (Phase 1),
- (t) San Hing Road (Phase 2),
- (u) Ex-Mount Davis Cottage Area, Ka Wai Man Road (Phase 1), and
- (v) Ex-Mount Davis Cottage Area, Ka Wai Man Road (Phase 2);

Project name/ location	Development procedure											
	(i)		(ii)		(iii)		(iv)		(v)		(vi)	
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)

(3) whether the Government will, upon the completion of the land use rezoning procedure, forthwith commence the work on land resumption (if necessary); if not, of the procedure(s) to be completed by the Government before such work may commence, and the criteria adopted for determining the appropriate timing for commencing such work;

(4) whether it will formulate a policy to the effect that notice(s) for resumption of land must be published in the Gazette within a specified period of time from the completion of the land use rezoning procedure, so that those persons who will be affected by land resumption may anticipate the time when the Government will resume their land; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(5) as the Government has indicated that it will further simplify and expedite the work process, including compressing the time required for engineering feasibility studies ("EFSs") as far as possible and speeding up statutory procedures such as land use rezoning upon completion of EFSs, with a view to expediting the implementation of housing development projects, whether the Government (i) has assessed the extent to which the time needed for public housing production can be reduced upon the implementation of the relevant arrangements, and (ii) has formulated quantitative indicators (e.g. the reduction of the time needed for the various development procedures by certain months, or the completion of such procedures within certain months) and monitored if the relevant projects have met the targets; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will consider doing so?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Transport and Housing Bureau, our response to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) & (2) Since 2013, a total of 81 sites have been rezoned for public housing development. In implementing individual public housing projects, the relevant departments (including the Housing Department (HD), the Planning Department (PlanD), the Lands Department (LandsD) and the departments responsible for the associated works) would jointly formulate the development timetables, and would work closely to perform their respective roles in taking forward the relevant works in an orderly manner. That said, as the procedures required and time involved in each project may vary due to the actual situation and technical requirements of the respective projects, it would be difficult to make direct comparisons.

We do not compile statistics on a continuous basis regarding the average time required for the various preparatory works for public housing sites. As for the public housing development projects mentioned in the question, the commencement and completion dates of the relevant preparatory works are set out in the Annex.

(3) to (5) Generally speaking, upon completion of the land rezoning procedure, the Government will carry out various procedures as required having regard to the actual situation of individual sites, including gazettal of relevant works projects, funding application, land resumption and clearance, site formation and infrastructure works, etc.

After confirming the scope of development and boundary of land resumption of the project, and having sought funding approval for the project from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo), the Government will commence the statutory land resumption procedures in accordance with the relevant ordinance to affix land resumption notice to revert the land privately owned to the Government, and to clear the structures on the resumed private land and other government land. In the process, the LandsD will process the compensation and rehousing arrangements for land owners and occupiers in accordance with the established policy. In view of the concerns raised by LegCo members, the Government has undertaken in 2018 that, under normal circumstances, the Government will not commence land resumption and clearance until after the funding approval of LegCo has been sought for the relevant works project, unless with the agreement of the relevant LegCo Panel.

The PlanD has earlier reviewed 160 hectares of brownfield sites and shortlisted eight brownfield clusters suitable for public housing development. The Development Bureau has examined with relevant departments how to further simplify and expedite the workflow for the said brownfield clusters, including compressing the time required for engineering feasibility studies (EFSs) as far as possible, speeding up such statutory procedures as rezoning, gazettal of works and land resumption after completion of EFSs, and pursuing certain procedures concurrently as circumstances would permit. As for these eight brownfield clusters, at this stage, we expect to transform

them into "spade-ready sites", through completing EFSs, detailed design, rezoning, land resumption, clearance, land decontamination and site formation works, and hand over the sites to the HD for construction of public housing in about six years (versus at least eight years now in general). We aim at compressing the time needed for production of certain housing units to within 10 years approximately from the commencement of EFS to increase the supply in the short to medium term. Subject to the outcome of the EFS for individual sites and the progress of relevant statutory procedures or construction works, the development lead time may be adjusted in future. At this stage, it is difficult to set the targets of time required for the various development procedures.

The Government will continue to adopt the multi-pronged strategy in maintaining a steady increase in land supply, and strive to take forward various public housing development projects with a view for their early completion.