

LCQ5: New transport infrastructure for Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

Since 2009, the Government has been studying the construction of an Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East. EFLS is an elevated monorail which will start and end respectively at the Kowloon Bay Station and the Kwun Tong Station of the MTR Kwun Tong Line, run through the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA), and connect the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link. Some members of the public have pointed out that as, in recent years, the Government has increased the development density of KTDA and the populations of the districts in the vicinity of Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong have increased continuously, it will be difficult for EFLS to meet the transport demand in Kowloon East. They also hold the view that given the high cost of EFLS, coupled with the Government's indication that quite a number of technical difficulties have been encountered in designing the alignment of EFLS, the Government should explore alternative options. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current residential population and working population in (i) KTDA, (ii) Kowloon Bay Business Area, (iii) Kwun Tong Business Area, (iv) Cha Kwo Ling and (v) Yau Tong, as well as the relevant projected figures for the next five and 10 years;

(2) as the Government has indicated that it is conducting the second-stage detailed feasibility study for EFLS, of the progress and the preliminary conclusion of the study (including the latest cost estimates); whether it has explored alternative options, e.g. constructing a Kwun Tong South Line which will be an underground rail connecting the Yau Tong Station with the Kai Tak Station; if so, of the details (including the relevant cost estimates); if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether, in view of the development and population growth in recent years of districts such as Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong, it will study the extension of EFLS to those districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as it takes time to implement EFLS (or its alternative option), whether the Government has formulated short and medium term measures to alleviate the traffic congestion problems in Kowloon East; if so, of the details; and

(5) as the Government anticipates that upon the commissioning of the Route 6, the traffic load on the existing key road links in Kowloon East will be

greatly relieved, of the respective projected volume to capacity ratios of such key road links (i) after the commissioning of the Route 6 and (ii) after the completion of EFLS (or its alternative option), and how such figures compare with the existing figures?

Reply:

President,

With the gradual development and transformation of Kowloon East (including the Kai Tak Development (KTD)), the residential and working populations in the area are progressively increasing. We are fully aware of the public's concern about whether the developments may add burden to the traffic condition of the area. Indeed, relevant government departments have been striving hard to the timely provisioning of comprehensive railway and road infrastructure facilities, as well as proper public transport services to cope with the traffic demands in the area, thus meeting the travelling needs of the public. Relevant details are elaborated in Part (4) below.

Regarding the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) for Kowloon East, the Government has incorporated the planning intent and its indicative alignment on the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan. The technical and financial viabilities, etc., of the EFLS are being explored and studied in-depth by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD).

Based upon the findings of the preliminary feasibility study completed in 2014 and the first stage of the detailed feasibility study (DFS) completed in 2017, the CEDD is conducting the second stage of the DFS to explore the EFLS' network coverage, alignment, station locations, mode of operation, financial and cost effectiveness, etc. We will also examine the interaction between the proposed EFLS and the public transport services, as well as make reference to and explore the latest development and applicability of environmentally friendly transport technologies at home and abroad. In the course of conducting DFS, the CEDD has encountered more-than-expected complicated challenges, thus requiring more time to review and explore feasible solutions, including studying on options other than the elevated mode. Besides, the long-term financial viability and cost-effectiveness of EFLS are also one of the key considerations of the DFS.

The CEDD anticipates to complete the DFS in this year that seeks to look for suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme. Upon completion of the entire DFS, the Government will formulate the way forward for the EFLS project and report the findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council members and relevant stakeholders in due course.

Our responses to various parts of the question raised by Hon Wu, having taken into account the inputs of relevant bureau/departments, are as follows:

(1) The latest figures on current residential and working populations of the KTD, the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA), the Kwun Tong Business Area (KTBA), Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong, as well as those relevant figures in 2026

and 2031 are estimated as follows:

Area	Residential Population			Working Population		
	Current	Year 2026	Year 2031	Current	Year 2026	Year 2031
KTD	53 000	128 000	134 000	25 600	72 300	119 000
KBBA	–	–	–	79 400	87 300	105 300
KTBA	–	–	–	180 400	206 100	215 000
Cha Kwo Ling	27 650	30 150	31 650	9 150	12 900	12 100
Yau Tong	62 650	76 500	90 350	14 400	15 700	13 950
Total	143 300	234 650	256 000	308 950	394 300	465 350

(2) and (3) As stated in the preamble above, the CEDD is currently conducting the DFS for EFLS, with its study area encompassing such areas as KTD, KBBA, KTBA, Cha Kwo Ling and Yau Tong. In the course of study, the CEDD finds that the construction of EFLS in Kowloon East, be it in elevated or underground mode, will encounter lots of technical complications and challenges, particularly for those parts of developed areas. Therefore, the DFS has to take a longer time, and to explore and make reference to the latest development and applicability of other environmentally friendly transport technologies at home and abroad with a view to identifying a suitable, practicable and cost-effective EFLS scheme. The CEDD anticipates to complete the DFS within this year.

(4) The Government has planned a number of measures for addressing the transport needs of the Kowloon East. On the provision of inter-district roads, the Government is proactively taking forward the Route 6 projects, which will provide a link between Kowloon West and Tseung Kwan O, to help relieve the traffic burden along the major east-west road corridors in Kowloon (including the existing major road links in Kowloon East) and Tseung Kwan O. The Government will also leverage the development of the two Action Areas in Kowloon East (i.e. Kwun Tong Action Area (KTAA) and Kowloon Bay Action Area (KBAA)) to improve the local traffic condition. Relevant measures include a new through road extending from Kei Yip Lane in KTAA to divert traffic away from the Wai Yip Street/Hoi Yuen Road roundabout, which will be converted into a signal-controlled junction to rationalise the traffic flows. As for KBAA, it is recommended to widen Sheung Yee Road and modify the Hoi Bun Road/Cheung Yip Street junction to increase the traffic capacity.

The Energizing Kowloon East Office has completed two feasibility studies on improving the pedestrian environment in KTBA and KBBA, and formulated 22 traffic improvement schemes. Among those traffic improvement schemes proposed, 16 of them have been completed, such as provision of kerbside loading and unloading bays and enhancement of road junction layout, which are conducive to improve the road usage and junction capacity. The Government strives to complete the remaining improvement works as soon as possible.

In addition, the Transport Department (TD) and franchised bus companies

have all along been jointly studying the feasibility of rearranging the bus stops along Kwun Tong Road. From 2017 to 2019, the TD and bus companies re-arranged the bus stops of six bus routes which travel via Kwun Tong Road to alleviate traffic congestion arising from buses queueing for stops.

In the meantime, the CEDD carries out in a progressive manner various road infrastructure works in KTD. Apart from the recently commissioned roads including Shing Kai Road and Kai Sun Road, the realignment and widening of the existing traffic route at Shing Cheong Road and Shing Fung Road to a dual two-lane road were completed substantially in end 2019. The construction works in regard of the Road D3 (Metro Park Section) for connecting among Shing Kai Road, the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the Hong Kong Children's Hospital commenced already. The concerned works are anticipated to complete by 2022. Upon completion of the said road works, the transport infrastructure of KTD will be further improved.

(5) The Route 6 comprises the Tseung Kwan O – Lam Tin Tunnel at its eastern section, Trunk Road T2 and the Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel in its middle section and the Central Kowloon Route at its western section. It will provide an east-west express link between Tseung Kwan O and West Kowloon to ease the traffic congestion problem in existing key east-west road corridors in Kowloon and Tseung Kwan O as well as support new development projects. The completion of Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel in 2026 will bring about the full commissioning of Route 6. By then, the traffic demand on the existing major road links in Kowloon East (including Tseung Kwan O Tunnel, Kwun Tong Bypass and Kwun Tong Road) will be greatly relieved. According to the traffic impact assessment completed in 2018, the projected volume to capacity (v/c) ratios of the relevant road links during peak hours after the commissioning of Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel will be improved as follows:

Road Link	v/c Ratio during Peak Hours in 2026	
	Without Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel	With Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel Completed
Tseung Kwan O Tunnel	1.3	1.0
Kwun Tong Bypass (near Sheung Yee Road)	1.3	1.0
Kwun Tong Bypass (near Hoi Bun Road)	1.1	0.9

With respect to the EFLS, CEDD is conducting the second stage of DFS with a view to examining and establishing the suitable mode, technical feasibility and its implication to the major roads in the area.

Tender results of the re-opening of 10-year Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), announces that a tender of 3-year Government Bonds through the re-opening of existing 10-year Government Bond issue 10GB2301 under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme was held today (April 22).

A total of HK\$4.0 billion 3-year Government Bonds were offered today. A total of HK\$13.100 billion tender applications were received. The bid-to-cover ratio, i.e. the ratio of bonds applied for to bonds issued, is 3.28. The average price accepted is 101.50, implying an annualised yield of 0.547%.

HKSAR Government Institutional Bond Issuance Programme Government Bond Tender Results

Tender results of re-opening of 10-year Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme:

Tender Date	: April 22, 2020
Issue Number	: 10GB2301 (Re-open)
Stock Code	: 4215 (HKGB 1.10 2301)
Issue and Settlement Date	: April 23, 2020
Tenor	: 3-year
Maturity Date	: January 17, 2023
Coupon Rate	: 1.10%
Amount Applied	: HK\$13.100 billion
Amount Allotted	: HK\$4.0 billion

Bid-to-Cover Ratio*	: 3.28
Average Price Accepted (Yield)	: 101.50 (0.547%)
Lowest Price Accepted (Yield)	: 101.27 (0.632%)
Pro-rata Ratio	: About 88%
Average Tender Price (Yield)	: 101.05 (0.711%)

* Calculated as the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued.

[LCQ12: Long-term measures to tackle epidemics](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

By now, Coronavirus Disease 2019 has broken out in more than 110 countries/regions around the world, with the cumulative number of confirmed cases exceeding 100 000. There are comments that in an era of globalisation, with contacts among people of different places becoming increasingly frequent, and problems relating to health, the environment, biochemical safety, cross-species transmission of viruses, etc. becoming more and more changeable and unpredictable, the Government should formulate long-term measures to tackle epidemics. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will draw up a contingency plan under which, in the event of a large-scale outbreak of an infectious disease in Hong Kong, government officers in each policy bureau may be split up to continue working at different locations, so as to reduce the risk of mass infection; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Government has set up a certain number of temporary quarantine centres in tackling the current epidemic, but the sites selected

for some of these centres have been queried by the residents nearby as being too close to residential areas, whether the Government will identify locations far away from residential areas (e.g. outlying islands) for setting up permanent quarantine centres; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it has been reported that places such as Mainland China, South Korea, Taiwan and France have criminalised acts of spreading rumours, and given that earlier on Hong Kong has seen cases of people scrambling for food and daily necessities which were caused by rumours, what measures the Government will take to curb the spread of various kinds of rumours amid an epidemic outbreak?

Reply:

President,

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) is still severe in some overseas countries and regions. To safeguard the health of the public and protect Hong Kong's healthcare system, currently the focus of the Government's prevention and control work is to prevent the virus from being imported into Hong Kong from other places and to slow down the spreading of cases in the community. In this regard, the Government has put in place and will continue to implement a series of stringent border control and social distancing measures. The Government will review the feasibility of the relevant measures from time to time and make timely adjustments, having regard to the latest situation of the outbreak.

In consultation with the Civil Service Bureau and Security Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Chun-ying is as follows:

(1) The Government attaches great importance to the occupational safety and health (OSH) of its employees. Having regard to their specific operational needs and circumstances as well as OSH risks, bureaux/departments would formulate effective safety management systems and measures. For example, in the event of an infectious disease outbreak, the Government would implement targeted infection control measures to reduce social contact, the risk of infection and spread of the virus so as to protect the staff. These measures include, where possible, introducing flexible working hours to reduce staff using public transport during peak hours; adopting a roster system to reduce the number of staff working in an office at any one time; adjusting the frequency, duration and mode of meetings; arranging staff to work at different office premises, etc.

(2) In the long run, we believe there is a need to set up in Hong Kong permanent quarantine facilities to cope with outbreaks that may occur in the future. After the COVID-19 outbreak has subsided, we will assess the situation in a holistic manner and consider Hong Kong's long-term quarantine needs for making preparations.

(3) Hong Kong residents enjoy the freedom of speech and communication, but these freedoms are not absolute. While there is currently no specified criminal offence in Hong Kong targeting the deliberate dissemination of false information, the Internet is not an unreal virtual world without any legislative regulation. Should any speech made involves illegal acts, regardless of whether such acts occur on the Internet or not, as long as they involve criminal offences, they would be regulated by the relevant legislation.

However, as messages can be disseminated rapidly on the Internet, especially via the social media and communications software, unique challenges are presented to the law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the proposal to introduce specific legislation targeting deliberate dissemination of rumours would involve many complicated and controversial issues, such as protection of human rights; how to define certain speech as rumours; how to define a rumour's impact on society and ascertain its degree of impact; how to prove that the person who made the relevant speech did so deliberately with the intent to disrupt public order with false information; and whether the introduction of a specified criminal offence would be the most effective measure for tackling the issue, etc. These questions must be considered and thoroughly discussed by the community.

In response to the malicious act of spreading rumours during the fight against the outbreak leading to panic buying of goods such as rice and toilet paper in the market, the Government timely issued a press release to clarify and condemn the rumour mongers. The current outbreak prevention and control measures implemented by the Government do not target freight services. The Government has made clarifications and shared information about food and goods supply on numerous occasions through government websites as well as other media channels, and have reminded members of the public not to easily believe in the rumours. The Government has also been maintaining close liaison with suppliers and the trade and encouraged them to come forth to explain the supply situation so as to dispel the public's worries. In fighting the virus, the Government appeals to members of the public to stand united, pay close attention to information released by the Government, be vigilant against rumours and not to easily believe in them.

LCQ16: Innovation and Technology Fund

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

The aim for the Government to establish the Innovation and Technology

Fund (ITF) is to encourage and assist Hong Kong enterprises in upgrading their technological level and introducing more innovative ideas to their businesses. However, the success rates of applications for a number of funding schemes set up under ITF have all along been on the low side. For example, in the three financial years from 2016-17 to 2018-19, the respective success rates of applications for the Innovation and Technology Support Programme, Enterprise Support Scheme, Technology Start-up Support Scheme for Universities, Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme, and Midstream Research Programme for Universities were 40 per cent, 33 per cent, 39 per cent, 12 per cent and 14 per cent only. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has examined the reasons why the success rates of applications for the various funding schemes under ITF have all along been on the low side; if so, of the outcome; of the measures put in place to assist the rejected applicants in understanding the essential elements for a successful application;

(2) whether it has collected the applicants' views on the various funding schemes; if so, of the details and whether it has implemented improvement measures in the light of the views so collected; if improvement measures have been put in place, of the details; if it has not collected any views, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it has taken the initiative to review if the criteria for vetting and approval of the applications for the various funding schemes are too stringent and suitably relaxed such criteria, with a view to raising the success rates of applications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the Government will, in the coming year, recruit additional manpower to step up ITF's work, including (i) assisting applicants in submitting applications, and (ii) stepping up the publicity on the various funding schemes' contents and application requirements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Through the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), the Government has been funding projects that contribute to the technology upgrading of the manufacturing and services industries and promote innovation and technology (I&T). At present, the ITF has 16 funding schemes which cover different scopes, including supporting research and development (R&D), facilitating technology adoption, nurturing technology talent, supporting technology start-ups, and fostering an I&T culture.

The reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (3) The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) has been closely

monitoring the implementation of the various funding schemes under the ITF and reviewing their effectiveness and modus operandi from time to time.

The Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), Enterprise Support Scheme, Midstream Research Programme for Universities and Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme are four of the funding schemes under the ITF which fund the conduct of R&D projects. In 2018-19, the success rates of the four schemes ranged from around 16 per cent to 47 per cent.

Generally, the success rate of the research funding schemes under the ITF has been higher than that of many other similar research funding schemes of elsewhere. For example, the success rate of research funding of the European Research Council was around 13 per cent in 2019, while that of the National Institutes of Health of the United States was 10.3 per cent to 34.8 per cent in 2018 and that of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment of New Zealand was around 17 per cent in 2019.

To ensure the proper use of public funds, we have established fair and reasonable assessment criteria for the funding schemes and conducted assessment in accordance with the relevant criteria. Various factors, including the project's I&T component, the viability of the project's technical proposal, whether the project coordinator and his/her research team possess the technical ability to implement the project, whether the project estimated expenditure is reasonable, the chance of commercialisation of the project outcomes or the plan for conducting downstream research, whether the technologies to be developed in the project dovetail with relevant Government policies or bring benefits to the community at large, as well as the intellectual property arrangements of the project, are considered in the assessment of R&D projects. Only projects that meet the criteria on all the above areas will be funded.

As for the assessment process, each application will be preliminarily screened and assessed according to the relevant assessment criteria by the relevant teams of the ITC based on its technology area. Where necessary, the ITC will arrange external local and/or overseas experts in the relevant technology fields to assess individual applications. As the secretariat of the ITF, the ITC will collate the relevant information and comments, and pass all applications to the assessment panel for assessment. The assessment panel is divided into various subgroups by the different technology areas. Comprising representatives from the academia, industry and relevant government departments, the assessment panel will decide whether to recommend funding support for an application and if yes, the funding amount for the final approval by the Commissioner for Innovation and Technology.

As for the Technology Start-up Support Scheme for Universities, applicant enterprises are required to submit applications to their universities. Applications reviewed and recommended by the selection committees of the universities will be submitted to the ITC for assessment and approval. In the past few years, the number of applications recommended by the universities' selection committees accounted for about 39 per cent of

the total number of applications received by the universities.

To facilitate the submission of applications under various schemes, the ITC has uploaded samples of completed application forms on the ITF website (www.itf.gov.hk) for applicants' reference. For unsuccessful applications, the ITC will list in the letter the reason(s) for rejection and the comments of the assessment panel. Applicants may also call the secretariat for details, to facilitate resubmission of their applications after amending the proposals with reference to the relevant comments. In addition, the ITC has implemented various enhancement measures to assist applicants in submitting applications. For instance, after the ITC has enhanced the application form and guidelines for the Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS) and strengthened communication with applicant enterprises, the success rate of the Scheme increased from less than 20 per cent in the early days after the Scheme was launched to 47 per cent in each of the last three financial years (April 2017 to the end of January 2020).

Apart from the R&D funding schemes, the ITF also has other funding schemes for supporting technology adoption, talent training, etc., which have relatively high success rates. For example, the Technology Voucher Programme (TVP), which funds enterprises to use technological services or solutions to enhance competitiveness and upgrade or transform their business processes, has a success rate of 91 per cent to date. The success rate of training grant applications under the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme (RTTP), which funds staff of local enterprises to receive advanced technology training, reaches 99 per cent. As for the Researcher Programme and Postdoctoral Hub, which provide funding support for eligible enterprises or organisations to recruit R&D talent, the success rates are 99 per cent and 100 per cent respectively.

(2) The ITC from time to time enhances various funding schemes taking into account the views of stakeholders. For example, we launched the Partnership Research Programme (PRP) in January 2019, which consolidates the former University-Industry Collaboration Programme and the collaborative stream of the ITSP to fund local R&D Centres, universities and other designated local public research institutes to conduct collaborative projects with private enterprises. The consolidated PRP adopts more flexible arrangements than before to encourage more collaborative R&D projects.

In addition, the Government has enhanced the TVP thrice since its launch. Apart from turning the TVP into a regular funding programme under the ITF, we have relaxed the eligibility criteria to cover all non-listed enterprises regardless of their scale and years of operation (including enterprises registered in Hong Kong under the Business Registration Ordinance and companies incorporated and registered in Hong Kong under the Companies Ordinance but exempted from business registration) and statutory bodies established in Hong Kong. Such enterprises/organisations would be eligible to apply if they are not receiving recurrent subventions from the Government. Also, we have raised the Government's funding ratio in each approved project from two-thirds to three-quarters, increased the funding ceiling for each applicant enterprise/organisation by two times from \$200,000 in the beginning

to \$600,000, and doubled the maximum number of approved projects per applicant from three to six. On the other hand, we will merge the Researcher Programme and Postdoctoral Hub from July 2020 to increase the flexibility for eligible enterprises/organisations in recruiting R&D personnel. In addition, with a view to easing the cash flow commitment of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups in commencing projects, we have launched the arrangements for disbursing partial funding in advance for approved projects under the TVP, the ESS, the RTTP and Patent Application Grant.

(4) To assist applicants in submitting applications, we provide comprehensive information, such as the application guidelines for the various schemes, samples of completed application forms and information on approved ITF projects, on the ITF website for public reference. In order to provide the public with a more convenient channel to enquire about the ITF funding schemes, the ITC set up a one-stop hotline in mid-2018 (Tel: 3655 5678). The hotline currently processes an average of around 150 telephone enquiries each month.

On the other hand, the Government has, since October 2019, consolidated the services of various SME support organisations, including the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs (SUCCESS) under the Trade and Industry Department, the SME Centre of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the SME One of the Hong Kong Productivity Council, and the TecONE of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, and launched the four-in-one integrated services to provide enterprises with comprehensive information of various government funding schemes (including ITF funding schemes) as well as consultation services, etc.

Moreover, officers of the ITC would arrange meetings with individual applicant organisations/enterprises on a need basis to assist them in submitting applications. We will also continue to enhance the online application system of the ITF to facilitate the submission of applications by organisations/enterprises. As for publicity, we will continue to promote the various funding schemes through such means as briefing sessions, leaflets/booklets/videos, etc. The relevant work will continue to be handled by the existing manpower and resources of the ITC.

LCQ20: Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2017 Policy Address the setting up of a Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology (Steering Committee) to be chaired by her personally to examine and steer measures under the eight areas of innovation and technology as well as the smart city projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in November 2017 that 'the Steering Committee is a high-level, inter-departmental Government internal committee with membership comprising the majority of the Government Secretaries as well as the relevant department heads', of the current membership of the Steering Committee;

(2) of the number of meetings held by the Steering Committee since its establishment and set out, in a table by meeting date, the agenda items, attendance list, outcome and follow-up actions of each meeting;

(3) as it is learnt that the Singapore established the National Research Foundation (NRF) as early as in 2006 which sets the direction for research and development (R&D) for the nation by formulating an overarching strategy in every five years, and NRF has launched a number of funding schemes that align with its strategy and has provided guidelines to the funding bodies under the various government ministries on the ways to allocate funds, whether the Steering Committee will commence work in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as a think tank has suggested that the Steering Committee should, upon making reference to the practice of Singapore and the United Kingdom, establish an overarching department responsible for steering R&D, so as to more effectively co-ordinate and optimise the use of R&D funding by the various Government departments, whether the Steering Committee will consider the suggestion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and how the Government takes forward the relevant work?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology (Steering Committee) chaired by the Chief Executive was established in December 2017, with an aim to take forward the development of innovation and technology (I&T) in Hong Kong, to steer collaboration and participation across bureaux and departments with effect from the most senior level and ensure that the resources requirement will be met in a timely manner.

Members of the Steering Committee include two Secretaries of Departments, ten Directors of Bureau and six Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments. The membership is at Annex. Since its establishment, the Steering Committee has convened a total of seven meetings, with discussion items including:

- (i) Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong (Blueprint);
- (ii) Technology Talent Admission Scheme;
- (iii) Open Data Policy;
- (iv) Faster Payment System developed by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority;
- (v) development of biomedical technology;
- (vi) launch of 5G wireless network;
- (vii) Hospital Authority's Big Data Analytics Platform;
- (viii) pro-innovation government procurement policy;
- (ix) 'iAM Smart' one-stop personalised digital service platform;
- (x) Common Spatial Data Infrastructure;
- (xi) popular science education; and
- (xii) the Government's Electronic Recordkeeping System.

The policies and measures mentioned above have all been launched or had their implementation timetable announced. Apart from the two regular agenda items, namely reviewing the progress in I&T in eight major areas and the Blueprint, the Steering Committee also provides policy steer and monitors progress of implementing individual I&T initiatives and measures.

(3) and (4) We are aware of a recent research report which recommended establishing an overarching research and development (R&D) department to co-ordinate and enhance the use of R&D funds from various Government departments.

At present, various government funding schemes have different policy objectives and background. Their different characteristics, objectives, funding criteria, and application time can cater for different applicants. For example, generally speaking, a significant share (over 80 per cent) of the Innovation and Technology Fund is used to fund enterprise-led projects, which, apart from research projects, include other non-research projects such as recruiting researchers, fostering technology adoption, and promoting technology culture. Only a small portion subsidises research projects initiated by universities. The funding considerations for these two categories of projects are not the same and it may not be appropriate for them to be administered by a single department. In fact, university researchers are used to applying for funding from different departments. That said, in response to the relevant recommendations from the Task Force on Review of Research Policy and Funding, a common researcher identity, namely the Open Research Contributor ID (ORCID), has been adopted for the grants applications to the Research Grants Council, and an inter-departmental liaison group comprising agencies administering research funding schemes has been established within the Government. The liaison group has regular exchanges on research directions, research policies, and funding matters so as to strengthen and improve co-ordination between different funding departments.