

## LCQ8: Making good use of Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund

Following is a question by the Ir Hon Chan Siu-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

The existing legislation requires that a contractor of any construction operations carried out in Hong Kong with a total value of \$3 million or above is liable to pay a levy at the rate of 0.15 per cent of the value of the construction operations concerned, and an operator of any quarry is also liable to pay a levy in respect of the quarry products extracted from or produced in one's quarry, at the rate of 0.15 per cent of the value of the quarry products concerned. Such levies provide a source of income for the Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund (the Fund) to pay compensation to persons who are entitled to compensation under the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 360). It is learnt that the accumulated surplus of the Fund is close to \$3 billion at present. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of new cases of pneumoconiosis (including silicosis and asbestosis) and mesothelioma recorded in the past three years, with a breakdown by name of disease; the new measures put in place by the authorities to reduce the number of cases of such diseases;
- (2) of the amounts of compensation disbursed by the Fund to patients suffering from the diseases mentioned in (1) in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by name of disease; and
- (3) given that with the increasing number of major infrastructure developments in Hong Kong (including the Northern Metropolis and the artificial islands in the Central Waters), the levies collected by the Fund will also increase correspondingly, whether the authorities have considered how to make good use of the surplus of the Fund, apart from using it for the liquidity needs of the Fund; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund Board (PCFB) administers the Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund. In accordance with the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance (PMCO), the Fund provides compensation for eligible pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma persons or their family members and pays expenses, etc as specified in the PMCO.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) Figures of new cases suffering from pneumoconiosis, including silicosis and asbestosis, and/or mesothelioma as determined according to the PMCO in the past three years are provided below:

Year	2020	2021	2022
Silicosis	88	67	79
Asbestosis	12	7 (Note 1)	3
Mesothelioma	12	20 (Note 1)	21

Note 1: One person was determined as suffering from both asbestosis and mesothelioma.

The PCFB has been committed to conducting and financing various educational and publicity programmes to enhance the awareness of the industry and the public on preventing pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma with a view to decreasing the number of cases of these diseases; and carries out reviews of relevant work from time to time.

(2) The amounts of compensation paid by the Fund to eligible pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma persons or their family members in the past three years are provided below:

Year	Amount of compensation (\$ million)
2020	209.1
2021	226.5
2022	222.7 (Note 2)

Note 2: The figure is subject to final auditing.

The items of compensation and amounts paid to eligible persons or their family members do not vary irrespective of whether the persons have contracted pneumoconiosis or mesothelioma. The PCFB does not maintain a breakdown of amounts of compensation paid by type of diseases.

(3) Purposes of the Fund are prescribed by the PMCO. The PCFB administers the Fund in accordance with the PMCO, to provide a range of compensation for eligible persons, and conducts and finances educational and publicity programmes relating to pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma. In addition, the PCFB also conducts and finances research programmes on prevention of pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma, and programmes for rehabilitation of persons suffering from these diseases. The PCFB will continue to proactively encourage the participation of and co-operation with different organisations to expand all kinds of services and strengthen the work on prevention, research and rehabilitation.