

LCQ18: Ascertaining the identity of journalists during public events

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

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Question:

At present, there is no official organisation in Hong Kong responsible for issuing press cards centrally. Various media organisations or associations issue press cards on their own, making it difficult for people to ascertain whether the cardholders are journalists. It has been reported that some people wearing press cards acted illegally (such as obstructing the Police's law enforcement operations, and even attempting to rescue persons who were being arrested by police officers) during the public meetings and processions held in recent months. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the total number of press cards issued by various media organisations or associations in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by name of organisation or association;

(2) whether it knows the mechanism adopted by various media organisations or associations for issuing press cards, including the professional requirements to be met and the ethical standards to be complied with by the applicants, as well as the related disciplinary mechanism;

(3) of the measures (such as holding discussions on news covering arrangements with the media organisations or associations that issue press cards) put in place to prevent demonstrators from concealing their identity during public meetings and processions by disguising themselves as journalists, so as to wait for an opportunity to act illegally; and

(4) given that online news media (online media) are currently not subject to regulation, and anyone can claim themselves to be citizen journalists or journalists from certain online media, whether the Government will introduce legislation to give a definition of bona fide online media workers, to prevent demonstrators from concealing their identity during public meetings and processions by disguising themselves as online media workers, so as to wait for an opportunity to act illegally?

Reply:

President,

Generally speaking, mass news media organisations include printed newspapers, news magazines and news agencies registered under the

Registration of Local Newspapers Ordinance (Cap 268) as well as their affiliated or associated online platforms, radio organisations licensed under the Telecommunications Ordinance (Cap 106) and commercial television broadcasters licensed under the Broadcasting Ordinance (Cap 562).

Having consulted the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB), the Security Bureau and the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, a consolidated reply to Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is provided as follows:

(1) and (2) According to the CEDB, the numbers of press cards newly issued by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in the past three years are tabulated below:

Year	Number
2017	154
2018	123
2019	126

All RTHK reporters are required to strictly observe government regulations and departmental instructions as well as RTHK's Producers' Guidelines. Related disciplinary cases will be dealt with in accordance with the prevailing mechanism.

The Government does not possess the information related to the issuance of press identification by media organisations other than RTHK.

(3) Since early June last year, there have been over 1 200 demonstrations staged in Hong Kong, many of which ended up in illegal acts of serious violence, including criminal damage, arson, hurling of petrol bombs, etc. There has also been a case in which a person mingled himself with reporters and the crowd and slashed a police officer's neck at short distance, gravely wounding the officer. The personal safety of police officers on duty is under enormous threat. During their operations, the Police have from time to time encountered instances of reporter "impersonation", including fake reporter identification being seized, self-proclaimed reporters found to be not employed by the media organisations they claimed, people wearing outfits similar to those of reporters and immediate departure upon being questioned about reporter credentials. In the past, persons suspected of "impersonating" reporters engaged in acts inconsistent with the duties of reporters, and even attempted to obstruct police enforcement, participate in illegal and violent acts, snatch suspects from police officers, etc.

The Police have all along been respecting the media's work and, where operations are not affected, facilitating reporters as far as possible. However, persons suspected of "impersonating" reporters have obstructed police enforcement, disrupted order at the scene and disturbed the work of genuine professional reporters. To cope with the situation, the Police have formulated guidelines for their officers to ascertain the identity of

reporters with the credentials issued by media organisations. While covering public order events, reporters should bring along their reporter or company credentials for easy identification by police officers at the scene. They should also pay attention to and follow police instructions, and maintain appropriate distance with police officers. This will prevent obstruction of police enforcement operations and prevent personal injury.

The Police believe that genuine professional reporters would not engage in illegal acts while covering events, and hope that reporters would identify and discern whether people around them are genuinely reporting, thus avoiding acts with ulterior motives by people disguising as reporters.

(4) Press freedom is Hong Kong's core value protected by the Basic Law and is the fundamental right enjoyed by the people of Hong Kong. The Government is firmly committed to safeguarding and respecting press freedom, and providing a suitable environment in which the media could exert its function as the fourth estate.

The Chief Executive mentioned at the media session on October 19, 2019 that the Government respects the freedom of press and has no intention to screen media practitioners' qualifications for reporting. As always, the Government will continue to firmly safeguard press freedom, facilitate media reporting and uphold the core value of Hong Kong.

LCQ10: Public markets in Tin Shui Wai

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Cheng Chung-tai and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

The Government has planned to build a new public market on Tin Fuk Road at its section near Tin Shui Wai Station of the MTR West Rail Line. As it takes time to build the market, the Government will build a temporary market adjacent to Tin Sau Road Park in Tin Shui Wai North. Quite a number of residents in Tin Shui Wai North (including Tin Yat Estate, Tin Chak Estate and Tin Heng Estate) have pointed out that the site identified for the new market is located too far away from their residences. They therefore hope that the Government will retain, on a long-term basis, the existing Tin Sau Bazaar, and change the said temporary market to a permanent one, so as to facilitate their purchase of daily necessities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the long-term uses designated by the Government for the two sites on which Tin Sau Bazaar and the temporary market is/will be located; and

(2) whether it will consider retaining Tin Sau Bazaar on a long-term basis, and what factors it will take into account when making such a decision; of the circumstances under which the Government will consider changing the temporary market to a permanent one?

Reply:

President,

The new public market in Tin Shui Wai is located at a section of Tin Fuk Road between Tin Shing Road and Tin Yiu Road adjoining the Tin Shui Wai Mass Transit Railway Station. It is in the vicinity of a major transport hub in the district and is the main access point for local residents. Considering that it takes time to build a new market, the Government plans to provide a temporary market at the open space adjacent to Tin Sau Road Park to offer an additional choice for purchase of fresh food so that the public can benefit early.

Having consulted the Home Affairs Bureau and the Development Bureau, my reply to the question is as follows:

(1) The two sites where the Tin Sau Bazaar (the Bazaar) and the temporary market are located fall within the areas zoned "Open Space" ("O") on the approved Tin Shui Wai Outline Zoning Plan No. S/TSW/14 for serving the needs of local residents as well as the general public. The subject "O" zone has been largely developed as Tin Sau Road Park. The Government has no plan to change this long-term use at this stage.

(2) With the support of the relevant policy bureau, the Lands Department has leased the site of the Bazaar directly to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) since 2013 by way of a short term tenancy at nominal rent in accordance with the established procedures, for the latter to operate the Bazaar on a non-profit-making basis. The objective is to provide more shopping choices for local residents, develop the local economy and create local employment. TWGHs has recently submitted an application to extend the tenancy for another term of three years. The application is being processed in accordance with established procedures. TWGHs has indicated that the existing tenancy of the Bazaar would be continued on a quarterly basis until the application for the three-year term tenancy is approved.

As for the temporary market, we keep an open mind for its future arrangements and will consider its way forward taking into account the situation after the commissioning of the new public market in Tin Shui Wai.

LCQ8: Community development services

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

Introduced by the Government in the 1970s, the Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs) were implemented by non-governmental organisations in transient communities in which community facilities and welfare services were inadequate or non-existent. Since December 1995, the Government has, on grounds of the decrease in deprived communities, significantly reduced the number of NLCDP teams from the then 52 to the current 17 and it has not diverted the resources thus saved to district-based community development services. Moreover, according to the Policy Statement on Community Development drawn up by the Government in 2005, upon the termination of some NLCDPs, the resources thus saved will be deployed to finance other community projects having regard to community needs. Regarding the community development services subsidised and provided by the Government, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the annual and cumulative total amounts of reductions in the funding allocation for NLCDPs since the Government started to reduce NLCDP teams at the end of 1995 (set out in a table); among those savings, the respective annual amounts and the cumulative total amounts spent on (i) subsidising the Neighbourhood Mutual Help Programme and (ii) Care and Support Networking Team, and (iii) other service areas; and

(2) of the number of occasions on which the authorities held the NGO Forum on Community Development in the past five years, and the details thereof?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Home Affairs Department (HAD), a consolidated reply to the question raised by Hon Shiu Ka-chun is provided as follows:

(1) The Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs) were introduced in the 1970s by the Government to serve the deprived and transient communities where welfare services and community facilities were inadequate. As such, the target areas include temporary housing areas, squatter areas, boat squatters, cottage areas, etc.

Hong Kong has experienced significant improvement in the overall social welfare services and community building facilities since the 1970s. The context in which the need for NLCDPs was envisaged has likewise changed

significantly, as observed in the Director of Audit's Report No. 29 issued in October 1997. As a corollary, the Government reviewed the service needs and from 1997 to 2001 terminated or downsized NLCDPs with serving population falling below 3 000. There are currently 17 NLCDPs operated by eight non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and SWD do not maintain information on the resources released from NLCDPs terminated between 1997 and 2001.

The Government commissioned the Society for Community Organization to operate the Care and Support Networking Team with resources redeployed from an NLCDP that ceased service in 2003. A recurrent provision of about \$2.1 million is granted for its operation.

According to the Policy Statement on Community Development drawn up by the Government in 2005, upon termination of NLCDPs, resources released would be redeployed to finance other community projects having regard to community needs. Such projects would be consistent with the policy objectives of community development.

In this connection, HAD has implemented the Neighbourhood Mutual Help Programme (NMHP) since 2007-08 using resources released from three terminated NLCDPs. The resources released from the three terminated NLCDPs are about \$5.4 million per year.

(2) The Government attaches importance to communication with different stakeholders to exchange views on community development services through various channels, including the NGO Forum on Community Development, small group sessions, informal meetings, etc. The Government will continue to convene the NGO Forum on a need basis.

We do not maintain the number and details of the informal meetings. In the past five years, HAB organised three NGO Forums as detailed below:

Date	Venue	Major Agenda Item
October 5, 2015	Conference Room 1, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar	Resources released from terminated NLCDPs
March 7, 2016	Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar	Arrangement of NMHP projects to be launched in 2016-17
September 27, 2018	Conference Room 7, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar	Arrangement of NMHP projects to be launched in 2018-19

[EMSD announces latest sampling results for legionella at fresh water cooling towers](#)

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (January 8) announced that the department tested 82 water samples collected from cooling towers in 62 buildings in its routine inspections in December 2019. None of them was detected to have a total legionella count at or above the upper threshold, which is 1 000 colony-forming units per millilitre. The latest statistics are set out in Annex 1.

The EMSD also announced the locations of buildings which were served with nuisance notices during the preceding three-month period as the total legionella count was found in the fresh water cooling towers to be equal to or above the upper threshold. Details can be found in Annex 2. The EMSD publishes the latest statistics of the above information on a half-monthly basis on its website

(www.emsd.gov.hk/en/other_regulatory_services/cooling_towers/water_sampling/index.html).

The EMSD reminds the owners of fresh water cooling towers that they have the responsibility to design, operate and maintain cooling towers properly. They should arrange regular inspections, timely maintenance and periodic testing of the water quality in their cooling towers in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fresh Water Cooling Towers issued by the department to prevent the proliferation of legionella.

[Yellow fire danger warning](#)

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Yellow fire danger warning

The fire danger situation today (January 8) is yellow and the risk of fire is high. People are urged to prevent fires breaking out and hikers should also be vigilant.