

LCQ15: Procurement of equipment and ammunition by Police

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Question:

It has been reported that since as many as some 16 000 tear gas canisters (which include tear gas rounds and tear gas grenades) have been used by the Police to disperse crowds since June this year, members of the public are very concerned about the health impacts of tear gas. Also, Mainland-made tear gas canisters used in recent months by the Police reach a higher temperature during combustion when compared with those used in the past and they easily catch fire. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective quantities of (i) tear gas rounds, (ii) tear gas grenades and (iii) other arms and ammunition (please specify) made on the Mainland which were procured by the Police in the past 12 months, as well as the respective dates of the procurement;
- (2) of the standards and procedure adopted by the Police for selecting suppliers of arms and ammunition;
- (3) whether the Police, before procurement, have conducted tests on the safety and suitability of each type of the arms and ammunition; if so, of the findings of such tests conducted in the past 12 months;
- (4) whether the Police have provided training for police officers on the proper use of each type of the arms and ammunition made on the Mainland; if so, whether such training differs from the training in respect of the arms and ammunition procured elsewhere;
- (5) as the Government indicated earlier on that the Department of Health (DH) and the Hong Kong Poison Information Centre (HKPIC) of the Hospital Authority had found no literature nor scientific evidence on dioxins poisoning cases caused by the use of tear gas, whether DH, HKPIC and other relevant government departments have conducted empirical studies on the toxic chemicals released by the specific models of tear gas canisters used by the Police, and on the risks of dioxins poisoning and other health hazards caused by tear gas, taking into account the use of hundreds of such canisters on several occasions on a single day in the same densely populated urban area;
- (6) as the Government indicated earlier on that no abnormality has been detected in the monitoring results recorded by the various air quality and water quality monitoring stations since June this year, (i) whether the

Environmental Protection Department (EPD) knows the components of the tear gas released, and (ii) whether these components are covered in the respective parameters currently used in calculating the Air Quality Health Index and monitoring water quality, so that such components can be detected;

(7) as the Government claimed that tear gas was basically substance in the form of particulates and would disperse within localised areas, whether EPD will, by using the existing stationary air quality monitoring stations or other means, enhance the monitoring of air quality so as to detect any localised changes in air quality caused by the intense use of tear gas;

(8) given that there are reports of serious health problems suffered by journalists and nearby residents after inhaling the tear gas in locations where there was intense use of tear gas canisters, what actions the Government has taken in response to such reports;

(9) whether the Government will consider expeditiously putting in place a health surveillance system on the whole population to detect any unusual health reports that may relate to inhaling tear gas; if so, of the details;

(10) whether the Police's relevant guidelines and training on the use of tear gas canisters specify the circumstances under which or the kinds of environment in which tear gas should not be used; and

(11) as the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has issued guidelines to its employees and cleansing service contractors on cleansing residues of tear gas, whether the Government can provide a copy of such guidelines?

Reply:

President,

Members of the public enjoy the freedoms of expression, speech and assembly, but must exercise these freedoms in a lawful manner. According to section 10 of the Police Force Ordinance (PFO) (Cap 232), it is the statutory duty of the Police to maintain public safety and public order. Since June 9 this year, more than 1 000 protests, processions and public meetings have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into serious illegal acts of violence. When public order and public safety are severely threatened by situations such as illegal blockage of roads, paralysed traffic, unlawful assemblies and violent charging of police cordon lines, the Police must take appropriate actions to maintain law and order and safeguard public peace. If the public express their views in a peaceful and lawful manner, there would be no need for the Police to use any force.

The Police have strict guidelines on the use of force. Police officers will only use appropriate force when it is necessary. Police officers will, as far as circumstances permit, give various forms of warning before using force, and give the persons the opportunity to obey police orders.

All the use of force by the Police are conscious decisions made having

regard to actual circumstances and needs with due considerations. Tear gas serves to create a safe distance between police officers and protesters, so as to avoid close confrontation and to reduce the chance of injury to both parties as far as practicable, while dispersing the crowd and controlling the violent scenes.

Our reply to various parts of the question raised by Hon Dennis Kwok is as follows:

(1) to (4) and (10) It has been a practice of the Police, having regard to their operational needs, to conduct market researches and field tests on various types of equipment and ammunitions manufactured worldwide in accordance with the established policies and the Stores and Procurement Regulations (SPR), in order to ensure that the equipment and ammunitions procured will meet the safety standard. According to SPR, the controlling officer of the Police (i.e. the Commissioner of Police) shall make the procurement decisions under his purview to ensure that the procurement exercises are conducted in strict compliance with SPR. The tear gas procured by the Police has passed the safety tests for ensuring that the stability and safety of such ammunitions comply with relevant specifications.

As the procurement details of the equipment used by the Police involve operational deployment, it would be inappropriate to disclose such details as it would affect the Police's operational capability. The Police will continue the safe use of tear gas in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines and internal ones.

To ensure that officers can enhance their action capabilities and meet the actual operational needs, the Police have continuously reviewed police officers' equipment, procured appropriate equipment and ammunitions in accordance with the established policies, procedures and guidelines and provided relevant training to police officers.

The Police have stringent rules and guidelines on the use of force and firearms. Every newly recruited and serving police officer has to go through rigorous training on the use of force, so that they may fully understand different legitimate uses of force in a safe and effective manner to achieve relevant lawful purposes. On the use of tear gas, every police officer who has to handle tear gas is required to receive relevant training, so as to fully understand the use of tear gas safely and effectively, and to ensure that they can discharge their duties in a professional manner.

(5), (8) & (9) On the health effects of tear gas, the Department of Health (DH) has uploaded health information on tear gas to the website of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) for general public's reference. Please refer to the Annex for the relevant health information. In general, health effects of tear gas depend on a number of factors such as the specific chemical composition of the tear gas, duration and dose of exposure, exposure route, health conditions of the individuals and the physical environment during exposure. Individuals who had been exposed to tear gas with persistent symptoms should consult healthcare professionals.

According to the Hospital Authority (HA), there were cases where people attended the accident and emergency (A&E) departments of the HA due to discomfort after exposure to tear gas. Those who were exposed to tear gas generally experienced mild respiratory and skin irritation, and there was no serious health impact reported. Most of them could be immediately discharged after rinsing and receiving treatment at the A&E departments. Decontamination facilities are available at all 18 A&E departments of the HA for treating patients who have been exposed to biochemical/hazardous substances. Healthcare personnel are also experienced in treating these cases.

The DH and Hong Kong Poison Information Centre of the HA have reviewed relevant medical literature and scientific evidence but have found no literature or scientific evidence on dioxin poisoning cases caused by the use of tear gas.

We will continue to proactively study and understand the relevant situations from the public health perspective, and will continue to engage experts from relevant fields in the process. We aim to provide the public with accurate information through more extensive communication and explanations.

We note that the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has sent water and soil samples collected at various locations (including locations where tear gas was launched) on campus for the analysis of the presence of dioxins and other contaminants. As we understand from the press release of CUHK, the results of the analysis showed that the amount of contaminants in the soil and water samples were well within the safety standards, and therefore "the health hazard of these contaminants from the soil and water are negligible".

(6) & (7) Tear gas contains 2-chlorobenzalmalononitrile, commonly known as CS. As CS is not a substance that is often found in air or water, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) does not include it as a parameter when calculating the Air Quality Health Index or the Water Quality Index. However, because tear gas is released into the air as particles, the particulate matter (PM) data recorded at the air monitoring station near the area where the tear gas is launched can reflect the impact of the tear gas on the entire area. The EPD has analysed all the PM data recorded at the air quality monitoring stations near the areas where tear gas was launched since June this year. The analysis was done by comparing the PM levels recorded at the monitoring station during the period when tear gas was launched and the period before, as well as comparing the data with those recorded at other monitoring stations where no tear gas was launched. According to the analysis, the EPD did not find any anomalies in the PM levels recorded at the monitoring stations near the areas where tear gas was launched. This indicates that the use of tear gas would not increase the PM concentrations significantly in the concerned area. On the other hand, there were instances showing that when arson activities took place near a monitoring station, the PM concentrations recorded at the station increased to high level for several hours which was almost double the normal levels for that day. This reflects

that arson activities will significantly affect the air quality in the vicinity.

(11) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has issued guidelines to its employees and cleansing service contractors, which contain points to note on cleaning chemical residues and personal protective equipment. Cleansing workers should wear masks, rubber gloves, and rubber aprons at work. They should also put on N95 (or equivalent) respirators, goggles and hats as deemed necessary. If the affected public places are suspected of having chemical residues, tools such as high pressure water jet and pressure washer surface cleaner should not be used to avoid stirring up the residual materials. Also, when operating street washing vehicles, the staff should turn off the auxiliary engines of the vehicles or adjust the water pressure level of the nozzles to the minimum to avoid dispersion of the residual materials. Cleansing workers should report discovery of dangerous goods or chemical waste at work to FEHD, which will then refer the cases to relevant departments. FEHD also conducts routine and surprise inspections to check on its cleansing service contractors' performance.

[CE opens Construction Innovation Expo 2019 \(with photos\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, officiated at the grand opening ceremony of the Construction Innovation Expo 2019 (CIExpo) at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (December 18).

The Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, and the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Mr Yi Jun, also officiated at the ceremony.

Jointly organised by the Development Bureau and the Construction Industry Council (CIC), and supported by the Centre of Science and Technology Industrial Development of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, this year's CIExpo features four key themes, namely, Offsite Construction, Robotics and Automation, Digital Solutions, as well as Advanced Technologies and Materials, attracting over 10,000 visitors from more than 220 local and overseas organisations from 15 countries and regions.

Addressing the grand opening ceremony, Mrs Lam said Hong Kong is an ideal place for holding the CIExpo given its formidable strengths in infrastructure development, highlighting that Hong Kong's infrastructure development was ranked third earlier this year by the World Economic Forum in its Global Competitiveness Report.

"Our Government's annual capital works expenditure will hit about US\$13

billion in the next few years. Total construction output, covering both the public and private sectors, will triple that, contributing about 10 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product," she said.

To alleviate challenges faced by the construction industry, Mrs Lam said the Government's Construction Innovation and Technology Fund, worth some US\$130 million, aims to help engineering and related companies, particularly small and medium enterprises, kick-start their investment in hardware, software and the essential training that demands. Over 500 applications have been approved, covering a wide range of initiatives.

"Construction 2.0", a government-industry collaboration focusing on innovation, professionalisation and revitalisation, has also been launched to help industry cope with the huge demand for housing, land, healthcare services and community infrastructure.

She also said that the Government is actively adopting modular integrated construction (MiC) in government building projects, while building information modelling (BIM) technology is also being employed in major capital-works initiatives to boost project management.

"The adoption of technology has created opportunities for cross-boundary collaboration, notably within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Innovation and technology (I&T) is one of the key areas for the Greater Bay Area development. We see the potential of Hong Kong in playing a key role in this aspect, hence we have been investing heavily in I&T and related industries," Mrs Lam said, adding that some US\$13 billion has been applied to I&T initiatives and programmes over the past two and a half years, including infrastructure investment in a new Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop.

During the three-day CIExpo, about 40 experts, academics, government officials and entrepreneurs from local and overseas engineering backgrounds will speak at various conferences on BIM, MiC, design for manufacture and assembly, robotics and automation, as well as the Building Asia Forum.

Technical tours have also been arranged to local innovative buildings, including the MiC Display Centre, the CIC Zero Carbon Park, the CIC BIM Space, the Happy Valley Underground Stormwater Storage Tank, the Hong Kong West Drainage Tunnel Project, revitalisation projects at Shanghai Street and Lee Tung Street as well as the sludge treatment facility T·Park.



LCQ14: Hong Kong as an international arbitration hub

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Question:

One of the main policy objectives of the Department of Justice is to enhance Hong Kong's status as a leading centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular as an international arbitration hub. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows, in each of the past five years, the respective numbers of arbitration cases which were (i) seated in Hong Kong, (ii) heard in Hong Kong although not seated here, and (iii) provided only with secretarial support or services by the Hong Kong office of an arbitration institution; among such cases, the number of those which were international in nature; how such figures compare with those of Singapore and the causes for the differences;

(2) of the total Gross Value Added of arbitration activities in Hong Kong (including the induced contribution) in each of the past five years, and its percentage in the legal sector's Gross Domestic Product in that year;

(3) of the revenue brought by arbitration activities in each of the past five years, and its percentage in the Government's recurrent revenue in that year; and

(4) whether it has assessed the impacts of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (especially the measures involving sanctions set out therein) enacted by the United States last month on Hong Kong as an international arbitration hub; if it has assessed, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Arbitration is a dispute resolution mechanism consented to by the parties, the advantages of arbitration being its confidential nature, its upholding of the principle of parties' autonomy, the flexibility in its procedure, and the enforceability of its awards in the over 160 Contracting States to the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitration Awards (New York Convention).

A strong legal system (including a comprehensive legal infrastructure for arbitration) is conducive to attracting foreign direct investment for places around the world. To this end, it is one of the major long-term policy objectives of the Department of Justice (DoJ) in recent years to commit to the development and promotion of Hong Kong as a leading international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region, which objective complements Hong Kong's position as an international business and financial centre. In order to promote Hong Kong's legal services comprehensively, the DoJ has added the new policy objective of "deal-making" since 2018 and endeavours to enhance Hong Kong's position as a deal-making and dispute resolution hub.

Under "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong enjoys unique double advantages in providing international arbitration services.

First, pursuant to the constitutional safeguards laid down in the Basic Law, Hong Kong has a sound legal system and a rule of law tradition, as well as an independent judiciary. Hong Kong adopts the common law system, which is more familiar to the international commercial and trade community. Furthermore, Hong Kong has experienced dispute resolution talents and rich dispute resolution culture.

Second, there is national support for the development of Hong Kong as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the region. In the chapter dedicated to Hong Kong and Macao under the national "13th Five-Year Plan", the Central Government has clearly voiced its support for Hong Kong to develop as an international legal and dispute resolution services

centre in the Asia-Pacific region. Similarly, the key developments mentioned in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area published in February 2019 included the development of Hong Kong as a major international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the support for Hong Kong to develop as a service centre for resolving investment and commercial disputes in projects relating to the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, Hong Kong should seize the opportunities generated by the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development, in order to constantly enhance its competitiveness.

A consolidated reply of the DoJ to the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Leung is as follows:

(1) to (3) Due to the features stated below, public information and statistics concerning arbitration activities in Hong Kong are very limited. The DoJ, therefore, does not have official figures requested in parts (1) to (3) of the question.

(a) A distinctive feature of arbitration is its confidential nature. In order to better safeguard the confidentiality of arbitrations, the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) restricts parties from publishing, disclosing or communicating any information relating to the arbitral proceedings or the award, unless where the parties agreed otherwise, where a party needs to protect or pursue own legal right or interest, or where a party discloses information relating to the arbitration when enforcing or challenging the award.

(b) The Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) currently in force has come into operation since 2011 and is based on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration (Model Law). It superseded the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 341) and unified the legal frameworks of domestic arbitrations and international arbitrations. Since the commencement of the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609), the distinctions between the prescribed regimes of "domestic arbitration" and "international arbitration" has ceased to exist in the arbitration-related legal framework in Hong Kong.

(c) Arbitral proceedings can be classified into the two main categories of institutional arbitration and ad hoc arbitration. Institutional arbitrations are administered by arbitral institutions (for example, the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC)) in accordance with, generally, the arbitration rules of the arbitral institution which administers the arbitral proceedings. Ad hoc arbitrations are wholly "administered" by the arbitrator(s) and the parties, in accordance with readily available arbitration rules (for example, the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules) or rules tailor-made by the arbitral tribunal based on the nature of the case. In ad hoc arbitrations, if no party makes application to the court for enforcement or setting aside of arbitral award, any third party to the parties to the proceedings will not have knowledge of the arbitral proceedings having been conducted.

In fact, the early development of arbitration in Hong Kong focused on ad hoc arbitration. Before the establishment of the HKIAC in 1985, a vast majority of the parties who chose Hong Kong as the seat of arbitration would have opted for ad hoc arbitration. It was only in September 2008 that the HKIAC for the first time published its Administered Arbitration Rules.

(d) Apart from parties' autonomy in terms of the arbitration rules, flexibility in the arbitral proceedings is also showcased in the parties' choice of arbitrator and representation. The Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) does not impose any requirement with respect to the professional qualification of arbitrators and representation, such that arbitrators and representation in arbitral proceedings conducted in Hong Kong are not necessarily Hong Kong practising solicitors or barristers. In fact, depending on the complexity and technicality of the case, parties from different sectors may consider appointing relevant professionals concerning the issues in dispute in the case to discharge the role of arbitrator.

We notice that, although the HKIAC publishes statistics concerning its arbitration and dispute resolution services, such statistics could not cover all arbitration cases conducted in Hong Kong, which include arbitration cases administered by other arbitral institutions, ad hoc arbitration cases, arbitration cases not seated in Hong Kong but heard in Hong Kong only, etc. For the above reasons, the statistics can only partially reflect the position of arbitration activities in Hong Kong.

According to information made public by the HKIAC, we have tabulated the total number of new cases (including arbitrations, mediations and domain name disputes), overall arbitration cases, the percentage share of international arbitrations (i.e. at least one party was not from Hong Kong) out of the number of arbitration cases, the top five geographical origins or nationalities of the parties (apart from Hong Kong) and the total amount in dispute in the past five years (i.e. from 2014 to 2018) as follows.

	Total new cases (including arbitrations, mediations and domain name disputes)	Overall arbitration cases	Percentage share of international arbitrations out of the number of arbitration cases (i.e. at least one party was not from Hong Kong)	Top five geographical origins or nationalities of the parties (apart from Hong Kong)	Total amount in dispute
2014	477	252	Statistics not available	1. Mainland China 2. United States 3. Singapore 4. United Kingdom 5. British Virgin Islands	Approximately US\$2.8 billion

2015	520	271	Statistics not available	1. Mainland China 2. British Virgin Islands 3. Macao / Singapore 4. Australia 5. United Kingdom / United States	Approximately US\$6.2 billion
2016	460	262	78.4%	1. Mainland China 2. British Virgin Islands 3. Singapore 4. United States 5. Korea	Approximately US\$2.5 billion
2017	532	297	73.1%	1. Mainland China 2. Singapore 3. British Virgin Islands 4. Cayman Islands 5. United States	Approximately US\$5.0 billion
2018	520	265	71.7%	1. Mainland China 2. British Virgin Islands 3. United States 4. Cayman Islands 5. Singapore	Approximately US\$6.3 billion

(Source: Statistics published in the HKIAC's Annual Reports and case statistics)

Although the HKIAC has not yet published the statistics for 2019, the DoJ is given to understand that there has been an increase in the number of arbitration cases this year when compared with last year.

The DoJ is mindful of the dedicated efforts of neighbouring regions, including Singapore, Malaysia, Korea as well as Mainland cities (for example, Shanghai, Shenzhen), to promote international arbitration services in recent years, which have posed serious challenges to Hong Kong. In the face of keen competition within the region, there is an urgent need for us to enhance the promotional work and policy initiatives, in order to capitalise on Hong Kong's intrinsic strengths, including the opportunities generated by the national Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of Hong Kong's arbitration services as well as other dispute resolution services options.

The DoJ has in recent years adopted various initiatives, fine-tuning the arbitration-related legal framework, attracting international dispute resolution institutions to set up offices in Hong Kong, and hosting large-scale international conferences relating to legal and dispute resolution services in Hong Kong. The Inclusive Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Office set up in early 2019 will continue to co-ordinate the promotional work related to arbitration and other dispute resolution measures within the DoJ.

In order to keep abreast of the latest developments in international arbitration, the DoJ has made amendments to the Arbitration Ordinance from

time to time in recent years, in order to clarify that disputes over intellectual property rights can be settled through arbitration and that third party funding of arbitration is permitted under the laws of Hong Kong. The relevant legislative amendments respectively came into operation in 2018 and in early 2019.

In addition, the DoJ and the Supreme People's Court signed the Arrangement Concerning Mutual Assistance in Court-ordered Interim Measures in Aid of Arbitral Proceedings by the Courts of the Mainland and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Interim Measures Arrangement) in April 2019, which came into force on October 1. The signing of the Interim Measures Arrangement is a major breakthrough to the benefit of Hong Kong under "One Country, Two Systems", signifying that Hong Kong has become the first and, to date, the only jurisdiction outside the Mainland where, as a seat of arbitration, parties to arbitral proceedings administered by the designated arbitral institutions would be able to apply to the Mainland courts for interim measures in order to ensure that the arbitral proceedings can be carried out effectively. This has been well-received by the local profession which generally considers that the Interim Measures Arrangement will help enhance the attractiveness of Hong Kong as a seat of arbitration for Mainland-related disputes.

The DoJ understands that there have already been successful applications for interim measures made to the Mainland courts by parties to arbitral proceedings applicable under the Interim Measures Arrangement. Besides, in light of the Interim Measures Arrangement, the International Chamber of Commerce has published a Practice Note to the effect that arbitration cases seated in Hong Kong will be assigned to the Secretariat of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce – Asia Office (ICCICA – Asia Office) based in Hong Kong for administration. The DoJ anticipates that the Interim Measures Arrangement will continue to bring further opportunities for business expansion to Hong Kong's arbitration and dispute resolution sector.

In addition to the HKIAC, the DoJ has constantly been making efforts in attracting internationally renowned arbitral institutions to set up regional office or branch institution in Hong Kong, including offices already established in Hong Kong, namely, the ICCICA – Asia Office, the Hong Kong Arbitration Center of the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission and the Hong Kong Arbitration Center of the China Maritime Arbitration Commission.

In order to build Hong Kong into an international capacity-building hub, the DoJ has in recent years successfully co-organised many large-scale international conferences and events in Hong Kong together with international intergovernmental organisations and/or local legal and dispute resolution services sector, for example, the forum held in September 2018 to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the New York Convention, the Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform Conference held in February 2019, the Third UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit held in November 2019, etc. The DoJ is also actively participating in the work of the UNCITRAL Working Group III in studying reforms of the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism. The above

measures will deepen the understanding of issues in international law amongst Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services sector and its contribution to developments in international law, so as to enhance the quality and international standing of Hong Kong's international legal and arbitration services.

Going forward, the DoJ will continue to actively put forward new policy initiatives, for example, procuring the establishment of a regional arbitration centre in Hong Kong by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, the detailed arrangements of which is expected to be finalised in 2020; on the other hand, in order to provide more flexible fee structure options to parties in arbitration, the Law Reform Commission has formed a sub-committee to study the topic of outcome-related fee structure for arbitration.

(4) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government strongly opposes the enactment of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (Act) as the law of the United States. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has clearly indicated that the signing and giving of the force of law to the Act constituted grave intervention in the affairs of Hong Kong, gross interference with the internal affairs of China and serious violations of international law and basic principles in international relations.

The uncertainty caused by the Act will inevitably affect the confidence of international investors and companies in Hong Kong. Having said that, as aforementioned, Hong Kong's legal system remains robust under "One Country, Two Systems". The DoJ will continue to exchange views and collaborate with the local and international communities with a view to consolidating different parties' confidence in Hong Kong's legal system and rule of law. The DoJ will also focus our efforts on promoting Hong Kong's international legal and arbitration services. We believe that, in the long run, the intrinsic strengths of Hong Kong, together with the advantages enjoyed by Hong Kong's dispute resolution services pursuant to the ground-breaking initiatives of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development and the Interim Measures Arrangement, etc., will help Hong Kong's dispute resolution services such as international arbitration, etc. to continue to thrive.

CSSA caseload for November 2019

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in November showed a drop of 419 cases, representing a decrease of 0.2 per cent compared with that of October, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (December 18).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of November stood at 220 356 (see attached table), with a total of 311 385 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 1.5 per cent to 3 045 cases. Single parent cases fell by 0.5 per cent to 23 739 cases while old age cases were down by 0.4 per cent to 136 491 cases.

Unemployment cases rose by 0.9 per cent to 12 391 cases. Ill-health cases edged up by 0.6 per cent to 23 788 cases while permanent disability cases increased slightly by 0.3 per cent to 16 863 cases.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, December 18, 2019 is 106.5 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).