

LCQ8: Arrangement of police officers' overtime work

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

According to the Guidelines on Control and Administration of Overtime issued by the Civil Service Bureau in 2000, civil servants may undertake overtime (OT) work only when it is strictly unavoidable, and each officer may work OT for a maximum of 60 hours only in a month. In addition, time-off should be the normal recompense for OT work. However, when it is, or is likely to be, impractical for the department to arrange time-off for the officer concerned within one month from the date when OT work is performed, the department may grant him Overtime Allowance (OTA). It has been reported that since the eruption of the "anti-extradition to China" movement in June this year, police officers have been granted substantial amounts of OTA and the ceiling on the OT hours for which they may work has been raised to 120 hours in a month. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of a breakdown of the number of police officers who were engaged in crowd management work from June to November this year by number of OT hours they claimed each month (set out in Table 1);

Table 1

Number of OT hours	Number of persons					
	June	July	August	September	October	November
1-20						
21-40						
41-60						
61-80						
81-100						
101-119						
120						

(2) regarding police officers engaged in crowd management work from June to November this year who belonged to (i) a rank below Chief Inspector of Police and (ii) the rank of Chief Inspector of Police, of the respective total amounts of OTA they received and the respective numbers of persons receiving OTA each month, with a breakdown of such numbers of persons by the group to which the amount of allowance received per person belonged (each group

spanning \$10 000) in tables of the same format as Table 2;

Table 2

Rank: _____

OTA (\$)	Number of persons					
	June	July	August	September	October	November
1-10 000						
10 001-20 000						
...						

(3) whether police officers engaged in crowd management work who belong to the rank of (i) Superintendent of Police or (ii) Directorate Officers of the Police Force are eligible for OTA; if so, of the respective total amounts of OTA they received and the respective numbers of persons receiving OTA each month from June to November this year, with a breakdown of the numbers of persons by the group to which the amount of allowance received per person belonged (each group spanning \$10 000) in tables of the same format as Table 2;

(4) of the total amount of OTA granted to police officers from June to November this year;

(5) how the mechanisms for the application for and the vetting and approval of OTA for police officers operate; of the measures in place to guard against false claims of OT work, and to ascertain that the relevant work is "strictly unavoidable"; and

(6) of the objective factors based on which (i) it determines whether it is practical to arrange time-off for the police officers who have performed OT work within the following month, and (ii) it made the decision to raise the ceiling for the OT hours that police officers may work to 120 hours in a month?

Reply:

President,

Since early June this year, more than 900 protests, processions and public meetings have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into illegal acts of violence. Such violent acts include wantonly blocking roads, paralysing traffic, hurling petrol bombs and bricks at various locations, setting fires, intentionally vandalising and burning shops and MTR and Light Rail facilities, and madly assaulting people with different views. These acts have seriously jeopardised public safety and public order. In performing their duties to maintain public safety and public order, police officers have faced serious threats to their personal safety.

The Police have a statutory duty to maintain public safety and public

order. When unlawful acts take place, the Police must take appropriate enforcement actions to maintain public order, and safeguard the lives and properties of the public.

Frontline police officers have remained steadfast in their duties during the ongoing conflicts in the past few months. While handling massive and unlawful violent acts in various districts, they have also maintained regular police duties and public services in the territory. The Police have flexibly deployed internal manpower and resources to cope with operational needs in a timely manner.

Having consulted the Civil Service Bureau, we provide a consolidated reply to the Hon Jeremy Tam's question below:

(1) to (4) In the demonstrations over the past months, processions and public meetings turned into illegal acts of violence. Overtime (OT) work of police officers may only be undertaken when it is strictly unavoidable, and is subject to the Civil Service Regulations (CSR) as well as the stringent control under the relevant internal regulations of the Police. According to CSR, OT work will normally be compensated by time off in lieu. Where the granting of time off is, or is likely to be, impracticable within 30 days of the date on which OT work is performed, payment of Disciplined Services Overtime Allowance to eligible officers may be approved. According to the existing CSR, only those in ranks whose scale maxima are on or below Point 48 of the Police Pay Scale (i.e. the maximum pay point of Chief Inspector of Police) are eligible for Disciplined Services Overtime Allowance.

The Police will, having regard to operational needs, deploy manpower as appropriate, and permit officers to take time off or receive OT allowance according to individual needs and work situation.

In 2019-20, a provision of around \$20.2 billion was made under Subhead 000 Operational expenses for salaries, allowances and other operating expenses of the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF). In accordance with the established practice, the amount of OT allowance paid by HKPF in the 2019-20 financial year will be reflected in the relevant revised estimate.

(5) and (6) OT work arrangement and compensation of police officers are regulated by relevant provisions of CSR and Civil Service Bureau Circular No. 18/2000 (the Circular). HKPF has put in place stringent control and approval procedures over OT work. Supervisors will follow the requirements of relevant internal orders and criteria in considering OT work applications.

Under CSR, Heads of Departments should set a ceiling for the OT hours which an officer may undertake within a month. The ceiling is normally set at 60 hours in a month. The Circular also stipulates that departments have the flexibility to require officers to work OT which will exceed the above ceiling in exceptional or emergency situations or circumstances of genuine need.

In view of the prevailing operational needs, HKPF has adjusted the

ceiling for the OT hours which the police officer concerned may undertake within a month according to the established procedures of the Circular.

LCQ22: Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living

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 (December 11):

Question:

The Innovation and Technology Bureau launched the \$500 million Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living (ITFBL) on May 31, 2017 to encourage and fund the use of innovation and technology (I&T) by the various sectors in the community in developing I&T application projects that bring more convenience, comfort and safety to the daily living of members of the public, or address the needs of specific community groups. It has been reported that up to September this year, the authorities processed a total of 86 applications for ITFBL and approved only 25 of them, representing a success rate of mere 29 per cent. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of enquiries on ITFBL received by the authorities so far; the content and category of the I&T projects involved in the various enquiries and applications;

(2) of the following information on the ITFBL applications for which funding has been granted: (i) the total amount of grant and the average amount of grant for each application, (ii) the average time taken for vetting and approval of each application, (iii) the target beneficiary group(s) of each application and the number of people expected to benefit, and (iv) the number of applications that are also granted funding by the Public Sector Trial Scheme under the Innovation and Technology Fund;

(3) whether it has conducted studies on the major factors accounting for the low success rate of ITFBL applications;

(4) whether the authorities will (i) enhance or adjust the mode of operation, eligibility criteria for application, scope of coverage, etc of ITFBL, and (ii) review annually the implementation of ITFBL; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether the authorities will draw up performance indicators for assessing the effectiveness of ITFBL in promoting digital inclusion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) given that ITFBL generally only accepts applications from the following categories of organisations: non-governmental organisations subvented by the Social Welfare Department, public bodies, professional bodies, trade associations and social service organisations exempted from tax, whether the authorities will consider relaxing the coverage of the organisations eligible for application; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) launched the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living (FBL) on May 31, 2017 to encourage different organisations to transform innovative ideas into deliverables that can benefit society, thereby promoting an innovation and technology (I&T) culture and improving people's quality of living.

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

(1) As at end November 2019, the FBL Secretariat (the Secretariat) has received a total of more than 300 written and 1 400 telephone enquiries which are mainly related to eligibility criteria, application procedures and assessment criteria.

Over the same period, the Secretariat has received a total of 112 applications covering various themes, including daily living, education, health, safety, mobility, etc. The project deliverables are mainly in the form of mobile applications, services, products and software, etc.

(2) So far, 25 applications have been approved. The total grant exceeded \$83 million, with an average of about \$3.35 million for each project. It took an average of about 14 weeks for the Secretariat to process an application. The actual time required for processing each application depends on the complexity of the project and the completeness of the information and documents submitted by the applicant. The target beneficiary groups and estimated number of beneficiaries of each approved project are at Annex.

The FBL funding generally covers the expenditure for the implementation and application of the project deliverables in the target groups for a period of two years. Therefore, there is no need for successful applicants to apply for funding from the Public Sector Trial Scheme.

(3) A project is required to meet the various assessment criteria of the FBL, including benefits to be brought to the target groups, I&T content, feasibility and sustainability, etc so as to ensure the proper use of public funds. Some unsuccessful applications were due to insignificant benefits to be brought or inadequate I&T content. We shall enhance information dissemination and publicity so as to let the applicants have a better understanding of the requirements of the FBL.

(4) & (6) The Secretariat conducted a comprehensive review in the first half of 2019 on different aspects of the FBL, including eligibility criteria,

application procedures, assessment mechanism, level of funding, implementation and monitoring of projects, etc. After consulting the FBL Assessment Panel, enhancement measures were introduced in August 2019. These include extending the eligibility criteria to cover social service organisations exempted from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112) to encourage more organisations to submit applications, and simplifying the requirement on progress reports to ease the administrative burden of funded organisations.

On the other hand, in order to provide clearer information to applicants, the Secretariat has amended certain parts of the application form, application guide and fund agreement so that applicants can have a better understanding of the requirements regarding the submission of information, the items covered by the project expenditure, the provisions in the fund agreement, etc.

(5) The FBL aims at bringing more convenience, comfort and safety to people's daily living, or addressing the needs of specific community groups. Applicants need to set out the performance indicators, including the target number of beneficiaries, number of downloads (if the project is a mobile application), implementation timetable, etc. The Secretariat will assess and monitor each project in accordance with the relevant indicators.

LCQ7: Pneumococcal vaccination

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Kwok Ka-ki and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Government has been providing, under the Government Vaccination Programme and the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, free or subsidised administration of 23 valent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine to elderly persons since 2009, and free administration of 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) to elderly persons "with high-risk conditions" (e.g. suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, liver or kidney diseases) since 2017. However, pneumonia was ranked the second killer disease in Hong Kong for seven consecutive years from 2012 to 2018, and the number of deaths caused by pneumonia even hit a record high of 8 437 in 2018. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of deaths, from January to November this year, of elderly persons aged 65 or above caused by complications of pneumonia after the infection of influenza and, among such cases, the number of those in which the elderly persons concerned had not received any pneumococcal vaccination;

(2) of the uptake rate of free PCV13 among elderly persons "with high-risk conditions", and the respective uptake rates of elderly persons suffering from various chronic diseases, in each year from 2017 to 2019 (up to November); and

(3) as the number of deaths caused by pneumonia has remained persistently high, of the authorities' new measures to tackle the high number of deaths caused by pneumonia, and whether they will consider providing all elderly persons aged 65 or above with free administration of PCV13, which has a higher efficacy?

Reply:

President,

Pneumonia can be caused by various pathogens (including bacteria, viruses and fungi), for example influenza virus, parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, respiratory syncytial virus, human metapneumovirus, rhinovirus, pneumococcus, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, etc. There were some 8 000 deaths caused by pneumonia in 2018, including cases caused by various pathogens. In general, pathogens that can cause pneumonia spread mainly through droplets from coughing or sneezing of infected persons, or direct contact with the patients' respiratory secretions. Maintaining good personal hygiene (including performing hand hygiene frequently) and environmental hygiene at all times is an effective way to prevent infection.

Pneumococcal vaccination is another safe and effective means to prevent pneumococcal infection, whereas influenza vaccination can lower the risk of influenza complications (including pneumonia), hospitalisation and mortality among elders. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has been closely monitoring and examining the latest scientific evidence, recommendations of the World Health Organization, experiences from overseas health authorities and local epidemiological data, with a view to reviewing the recommendations on the use of vaccines. In consultation with the DH, the reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) As at November 27, 2019, the CHP recorded a total of 437 deaths involving persons aged 65 or above with laboratory confirmation of influenza. The causes of death in these cases could be pneumonia, other acute medical conditions/complications or underlying chronic diseases. The CHP does not maintain statistics on deaths caused by complications of pneumonia. According to the CHP, among these cases, 217 persons had no records of pneumococcal vaccination under the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) or the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS).

(2) Since 2009, the Government has been providing, under the GVP (including Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme) and the VSS, one dose of free or subsidised 23-valent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (23vPPV) for each eligible elder aged 65 or above who has never received pneumococcal

vaccination before. By making reference to the SCVPD's recommendations in July 2016, the CHP also started to provide an additional dose of free or subsidised 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) for elders aged 65 or above with high-risk conditions (Note) since October 2017 to enhance their protection against pneumococcal infection. Eligible elders may receive one dose of PCV13, followed by another dose of 23vPPV one year after. For eligible elders who have already received one dose of 23vPPV, they may receive a mop-up dose of PCV13 one year after. For those without high-risk conditions and who have never received pneumococcal vaccination before, the SCVPD recommends that they should receive either one dose of PCV13 or one dose of 23vPPV.

Since the implementation of the vaccination scheme in 2009 (as at December 1, 2019), some 440 000 and 280 000 elders (including those with high-risk conditions such as diabetes mellitus) received 23vPPV and PCV13 respectively.

The DH does not keep breakdown by chronic diseases among elders who have received pneumococcal vaccination. The overall number of elders who have received pneumococcal vaccination and their uptake rates from 2017 to 2019 are detailed in Annex.

(3) Since various vaccination schemes have been launched by the Government since 2009 to provide free or subsidised 23vPPV for elders aged 65 or above, the arrangement is in line with the SCVPD's latest recommendations.

The SCVPD is responsible for reviewing and formulating public health strategies for the prevention and control of vaccine-preventable diseases in the light of changing epidemiology and advances in medical science. On pneumococcal vaccines, the SCVPD and its Working Group on Pneumococcal Vaccination review the local epidemiology and scientific evidence on a regular basis and put forward recommendations on pneumococcal vaccination. According to the recommendations announced by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States in November 2019, all persons aged 65 or above should receive one dose of 23vPPV, and those aged 65 or above without high risk factors generally need not receive an additional dose of PCV13. For persons aged 65 or above without immunocompromised conditions, cerebrospinal fluid leak or cochlear implant and who have never received PCV13 before, whether there is a need for them to receive an additional dose of PCV13 depends on shared clinical decisions. The SCVPD will hold meetings on a timely basis to examine overseas health authorities' recommendations on pneumococcal vaccination for elders and the latest scientific evidence. The Government will also review the coverage of the pneumococcal vaccination schemes for elders in Hong Kong, having regard to the SCVPD's recommendations and other public health considerations.

The CHP disseminates health messages through various means on the prevention of communicable diseases and maintenance of personal and environmental hygiene to the public and stakeholders. It also encourages elders through these messages to receive pneumococcal and influenza

vaccination. The DH has also organised a number of briefing sessions for healthcare personnel, residential care homes, elderly centres and relevant organisations to promote the importance of vaccination and explain to them the detailed arrangements of the vaccination schemes.

Note:

Under the GVP 2019/20, persons with high-risk conditions set out below are eligible for receiving pneumococcal vaccination:

(a) history of invasive pneumococcal disease, cerebrospinal fluid leakage or cochlear implant;

(b) chronic cardiovascular (except hypertension without complications), lung, liver or kidney diseases;

(c) metabolic diseases including diabetes mellitus or obesity (Body Mass Index 30 or above);

(d) immunocompromised states related to weakened immune system (due to conditions such as asplenia, Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or cancer/steroid treatment); and

(e) chronic neurological conditions that can compromise respiratory functions or the handling of respiratory secretions, increase the risk of aspiration or result in a lack of self-care ability.

LCQ19: Qualifications Framework

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Qualifications Framework (QF), launched in 2008 by the Education Bureau (EDB), defines clear and objective standards applicable to the qualifications in the academic, vocational and professional as well as continuing education sectors. To dovetail with the implementation of QF, EDB has set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) which are tasked with drawing up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs) for the relevant sectors. SCSs set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas in order to assist in the formulation of training programmes to enable employees to obtain recognition under QF. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that ITAC of the retail banking industry has received the assistance of The Hong Kong Institute of Bankers in drawing up its SCSs, whether the Government knows if ITACs of other industries have also received the assistance from the professional bodies and related organisations of the relevant sectors in drawing up their respective SCSs; if it knows, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that EDB signed in June this year a Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province to strengthen the collaboration on QF between the two places, and that Hong Kong and Guangdong will set up a working group to develop a mechanism for co-operation, communication and coordination, of the details of the relevant work and the progress made so far; and

(3) given that EDB has completed the referencing/comparability projects of Hong Kong's QF with the QFs of a number of regions (such as Europe, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand), whether the Government has drawn up a work plan and timetable for the co-operation in QF between Hong Kong and the Mainland?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the Hon Chan's question is as follows:

(1) We have set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), which provide a platform for stakeholders to implement the Qualifications Framework (QF) and to exchange views on the training needs and manpower developments of industries. The ITACs comprise representatives from employers, employees, trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions of the industries to ensure that different stakeholders can participate in the implementation of the QF.

When the ITACs draw up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS), their members who represent different sectors of the industries will participate in the work. During the process, the ITACs will also consult different stakeholders of the industries (including relevant professional bodies) to ensure that the SCS so drawn up meet the needs of the industries. For example, the Arboriculture and Horticulture (A&H) ITAC just published the SCS for the industry this month, and the ITAC members representing the trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions, etc. participated in the drawing up of the SCS. Moreover, that ITAC consulted the industry on the draft SCS in July and August this year, and invited representatives from the trade associations, professional bodies, trade unions, and training providers, etc. to attend the consultation session and listened to their views.

(2) and (3) The intention to develop the nation's QF was announced in the National 13th Five-Year Plan in 2016. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to playing an active role during the setting up of the nation's QF.

Over the years, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the QF Secretariat have shared our experience of developing and implementing the QF with various organisations and parties on the Mainland. We have also been in close liaison with the Mainland authorities to facilitate qualifications recognition in

different industries. In 2011, the QF Secretariat signed a letter of intent with the Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) and set up a working group to explore the development of common vocational competency standards and mutual recognition of vocational qualifications.

At present, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the OSTA conduct examinations on the occupational skills of the electrical maintenance industry, and actively promote the development of "One Examination, Multiple Certification" arrangement for the beauty and hairdressing industries. Under the arrangement, candidates need to pass one common examination for them to have their qualifications recognised by Hong Kong, the Mainland, and international professional organisations. Moreover, for the Chinese catering industry, the Chinese Culinary Institute under the VTC and the OSTA jointly administer the assessment under the "One Trade Test, Two Certificates" arrangement. Under this arrangement, candidates who pass written tests of both the VTC and the National Occupational Qualification, together with a common practical assessment, may have their qualifications recognised in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

The planning and development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area provide more opportunities for the HKSAR Government to explore with the Guangdong Province the feasible approaches and options in the recognition of qualifications. As stated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area promulgated by the Central Government in February 2019, the higher education institutions of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao are encouraged to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In May 2019, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government signed the 2019 Work Plan of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation to follow up on, among others, the initiative of encouraging the higher education institutions of Guangdong and Hong Kong to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In June this year, the EDB also signed the Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province. The letter of intent covers the co-operation in the QF between Guangdong and Hong Kong, the exploration of mutual recognition of credits in different categories of education and training in the Greater Bay Area, and the promotion of talent exchange in the Greater Bay Area. The EDB, the QF Secretariat, and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications will continue to co-operate with the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to foster collaboration between the two places on the QF and to facilitate qualifications recognition in more industries.

LCQ17: Sexual violence allegations

Following is a question by the Professor Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

An online questionnaire survey on sexual violence in the movement of opposition to the proposed legislative amendments (the movement) was conducted from August to September this year. Sixty-seven respondents indicated that they had been subject to sexual violence (including sexual intercourses under threats or intimidation, threatened or attempted sexual assaults, touching of sensitive body parts, provocation and insults by remarks with sexual connotations). Besides, the respondents indicated that their reasons for not reporting such mishaps to the Police included that: they considered letting the Police handle their cases to be ineffective, they worried that the Police would conversely charge them with other offences, they lost confidence in the Police's capability in enforcing the law, they lacked the personal information of the perpetrators, and the perpetrators were in fact police officers or other law enforcement officers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of sexual violence cases relating to the movement received by the Police since June this year; the details of the Police's current procedure for handling such type of cases (including reporting the case to the Police, conducting medical examination, collecting evidence and conducting investigations);

(2) as a female demonstrator openly alleged some time ago that police officers had inflicted sexual violence on her during her detention, whether the Police will take the initiative to investigate such type of allegations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as it is learnt that at present, most police officers tasked with handling demonstrations neither wear warrant cards nor display their police identification numbers on their uniforms and even cover their faces while on duty, whether such practices of the police officers comply with the relevant requirements in the Police General Orders and the Hong Kong Police Force Procedures Manual; if not, of the follow-up actions; and

(4) as the findings of the aforesaid survey have shown that quite a number of members of the public have lost confidence in the fairness of the Police's law enforcement, and that there are allegations that the perpetrators of sexual violence are in fact police officers, whether the Government will consider afresh the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate such allegations?

Reply:

President,

Sexual violence is a serious allegation. The complainant shall formally provide the Police with information, so that the Police may conduct a full investigation. This would not only protect the interests of the victim but also ensure that the complainee will not be falsely accused, which is fair to both the complainant and the complainee. Both parties shall bear the legal responsibilities and be protected.

As recently seen in the media, there are occasions when people claim that they have been sexually assaulted. Nevertheless, they are unwilling to contact the Police or provide information, making it impossible to verify the authenticity of these claims. It is an offence to provide false information or make a false report to the Police but a real victim will be duly protected by law. The Police also have a duty to protect the real victims' interests and rights.

The Government attaches importance to combating cases involving sexual offences. In each case, the Police will conduct full investigation, protect the victim's rights and safety, and alleviate the stress and psychological trauma faced by the victim when assisting in the investigation. The Police will handle all sexual violence cases with a serious and sensitive professional attitude. When investigating sexual violence cases, the Police will take various measures to ensure that the rights and safety of the victims are fully safeguarded. The Police have formulated a series of relevant procedures and guidelines.

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

(1) Since early June this year, more than 900 protests, processions and public assemblies have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into severe and illegal violent acts. As at November 28, the Police arrested more than 5 800 people in large-scale public order events, of which 939 have been charged. As for sexual offence cases, the Police do not maintain breakdown statistics on whether they are related to public events.

(2) As stated previously, sexual violence is a serious allegation, therefore the complainant should contact the Police and provide information to allow the Police's investigation and collection of evidence. The Police will follow up in a serious, fair and impartial manner. While we will not comment on individual cases, past experience shows that some alleged victims of sexual abuse never contacted the Police to provide information, some repeatedly revised the account of their alleged experience after making the allegation on the media, or some ceased to provide information to the Police after lodging their complaints through lawyers. We appeal to alleged victims of sexual violence to provide information to the Police. This would then be fair to both the complainant and the complainee. The Police will ensure that the victims' interests and rights are fully protected.

(3) At present, there are ways to identify every police officer regardless of the officer's post. In recent large-scale public order events, uniformed police officers on duty would display their unique identification numbers or identifiable operational call signs. When plainclothes police officers exercise police powers, they would identify themselves and produce warrant cards, or display identifiable operational call signs, as long as doing so would not be infeasible under operational circumstances.

Operational call signs are identifiable call signs for all police officers participating in an operation which enable effective identification of an officer. Operational call signs are as effective as unique identification numbers. Apart from enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Police in large-scale operations, this arrangement also strikes a reasonable balance between ensuring the identification of police officers by members of the public, and protecting their personal data from malicious disclosure on the other. This new mechanism applies to the current special operational period and does not contravene the Police General Orders or the Force Procedures Manual. The Police will continue to listen to the views from within and from members of the public and conduct a review in due course having regard to operational needs.

On the other hand, since June this year, rioters have charged police officers with extreme means. The level of violence has escalated over time and they even launched personal attacks against police officers. When police officers perform their duties, their personal safety and even lives come under severe threat. From June 9 to November 29, a total of 483 police officers were injured in operations, some of whom are still unable to return to work. To ensure the personal safety of police officers, the Police procured protective face masks for front-line officers to protect their face from being attacked by rioters. Earlier, a police officer was hit by metal beads in the mouth injuring his lips and teeth. Subsequently, after putting on a protective mask, a police officer was protected from being hit by beads in the face. The Police will use different equipment and protective gears based on operational needs to afford the maximum protection to the personal safety of front-line officers who are handling violent incidents, while enhancing their operational capabilities.

(4) There is a well-established two-tier statutory complaints against police mechanism. The first tier of the mechanism is the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO) of the Police which receives and investigates complaints. The second tier is the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) which is a statutory body. The two-tier complaint mechanism operates effectively under the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance (Cap 604), which provides a clear legal basis to ensure that every complaint against the Police will be handled in a fair and just manner.

Under the two-tier mechanism, when CAPO, which operates independently of other units of the Police, has completed the investigation of each reportable complaint, it will submit a detailed investigation report for the scrutiny of the independent IPCC. CAPO has set up a designated team comprising 26 members who did not take part in handling the unrest in the past few months. This

designated team is sparing no effort in following up the complaints in relation to the large-scale public order events which have taken place since June this year. If IPCC is of the view that there are deficiencies in CAPO's handling and investigation, it may request CAPO to provide clarification or relaunch the investigation. Meanwhile, IPCC may convey its views and recommendations to the Commissioner of Police and the Chief Executive in respect of any complaint.

The Government considers that having the statutory IPCC to handle complaints against police officers is a well-established and appropriate mechanism. Cases involving criminal elements (including sexual offences) will be handled by the Police's criminal investigation teams in an impartial manner. In handling criminal cases over the years, the Police have performed professionally and fairly.