

Forms for S1 discretionary places available for collection tomorrow

Parents of Primary Six (P6) students participating in the 2018/2020 Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System will receive two application forms for Secondary One (S1) discretionary places (DPs) through their children's primary schools starting from tomorrow (December 5), a spokesman for the Education Bureau (EDB) said today (December 4).

Students not studying in primary schools participating in the SSPA System (including newly arrived children who are eligible for participating in DP) can obtain the application forms from the EDB's School Places Allocation Section.

"Parents wishing to apply for S1 DPs in government, aided, caput and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools participating in the SSPA System have to complete the application forms for their children and submit the forms with other necessary documents directly to the schools concerned during school office hours between January 2 and 16, 2020," the spokesman said.

"The schools to which parents apply for DPs are not restricted by districts. Parents are strongly advised to consider the schools in all respects, such as their educational philosophy, tradition, admission criteria, development and operation, as well as their children's abilities, inclinations and interests, so as to make a suitable school choice."

One of the two application forms carries Order of School Preference 1 and the other carries Order of School Preference 2. Order of School Preference 1 stands for the student's first choice school and Order of School Preference 2 stands for the student's second choice school.

Primary and secondary schools should not ask the students to disclose their order of preference. Applicants and their parents should not indicate their order of preference to the secondary schools.

In addition, parents should not submit applications to more than two schools participating in the SSPA. Otherwise, the DP applications of their children will be rendered void.

The spokesman reminded parents that the secondary schools concerned are required to make public their admission criteria and weightings, their number of S1 DPs for application as well as any documents required by them. Schools may arrange interviews, and would notify applicants of the interview arrangements.

"Students who are successful in the DP application will not be allocated a school place in central allocation (CA). Parents should, therefore, apply to the school(s) of their preference. The EDB will match students'

preferences against schools' Successful and Reserve Lists. If a student is successful in both schools to which he or she has applied, allocation will be based on the student's order of preference," he said.

Parents may refer to the Handbook for Application for Secondary 1 Discretionary Places for the list of government, aided and caput as well as Direct Subsidy Scheme schools accepting DP applications and the number of DPs for application. The Handbook will be distributed to primary schools and is available through the bureau's homepage (www.edb.gov.hk) and 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System on 2891 0088 tomorrow.

The spokesman also reminded parents of the New Notification Arrangements to be implemented from this SSPA cycle. Under the new arrangements, if students are included by participating secondary schools in their Successful Lists for Discretionary Places, their parents will receive notifications from the schools on March 31, 2020. The parents concerned do not need to reply to the schools if they would accept the DP offers or not.

He added, "For students notified as successful DP applicants by participating secondary schools who have also been successfully admitted by a non-participating Direct Subsidy Scheme (NDSS) secondary school, their parents should decide whether to accept the offer from the NDSS secondary school concerned as soon as possible. If the parents concerned decide to decline the offer from the NDSS secondary school, they should notify the NDSS secondary school concerned and retrieve the signed undertaking and the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form on or before April 7, 2020 in order to retain the DP offer obtained."

The allocation results of DP and CA will be released at the same time on July 7, 2020. If parents have enquiries about the DP application, they are advised to consult their children's primary schools or approach the secondary schools directly.

General enquiries may be directed to the EDB's School Places Allocation Section (Tel: 2832 7740 and 2832 7700; address: Office 2, 2/F, Manulife Financial Centre, 223 Wai Yip Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon).

LCQ16: Charging facilities for electric vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

It is learnt that an acute shortage of charging facilities for electric vehicles (EVs) has caused quite a number of people to give up the idea of purchasing EVs. Regarding charging facilities for EVs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the authorities indicated early this year that the relevant government departments were looking for suitable on-street car parking spaces to install charging facilities as a pilot, of the progress and implementation timetable of the measure;

(2) as the authorities indicated early this year that the relevant government departments were looking for suitable locations (which were not car parking spaces) to set up public quick charging stations for trial, of the locations that the authorities have considered so far, the progress of the studies carried out on the feasibility of the various locations, and the implementation timetable of the measure;

(3) whether the authorities will encourage, through the provision of rates concession, commercial car park operators to install charging facilities in their car parks; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given that under section 20 of the Electricity (Wiring) Regulations (Cap. 406E), if a low voltage fixed electrical installation located in a general premises has an approved loading exceeding 100A, single or three phase, the owner of the installation shall arrange to have the installation inspected, tested and certified at least once every five years, and that the Government will allocate \$2 billion for launching a pilot scheme to subsidise the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure in car parks of private residential buildings, whether the Government will accord priority to contacting the owners' corporations or managers of buildings the communal electrical installation therein for which the said inspections will soon be conducted, so as to encourage them to install EV charging-enabling infrastructure in their car parks in tandem with the conduct of the aforesaid inspection; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along adopted a multi-pronged approach to promote the steady development and gradual popularisation of electric vehicles (EVs) in Hong Kong.

My responses to the question raised by the Hon Kenneth Leung are as follows:

(1) Provision of on-street parking spaces is mainly to cater for short-term parking needs, and such spaces are usually installed with parking meters to accelerate the turnover of parking spaces for use by more drivers. Taking into account the power supply and space constraints, potential impact on nearby traffic as well as related considerations such as other drivers' parking needs, the Government has to look for suitable on-street parking

spaces to install charging facilities. Ten-odd possible sites have initially been identified for such installation and their feasibility is under detailed study. When these sites are confirmed to be suitable for installing on-street charging facilities, the Government will draw up an implementation timetable and commence a pilot scheme.

(2) A quick charger (charger with a power output of at least 50 kilowatts) can provide 50 to 100 kilometres of driving range for small EVs (such as electric private cars (e-PCs) and electric taxis) in 15 to 30 minutes. To enable e-PC owners to top up their batteries quickly to meet occasional needs during their trips, and to pave the way for promoting the development of electric taxis, the Government is looking for suitable sites to set up public quick charging stations for trial. In October 2019, a consultant was engaged to identify suitable sites across the territory, and a complete list of such is expected to be ready by the end of 2020 to facilitate the formulation of a comprehensive plan for developing a network of quick charging stations. When searching for trial sites to set up quick charging stations, the Government will consider the impact on nearby traffic flow and explore the possibility of co-locating quick charging stations with other government facilities so as to reduce costs and optimise land use.

(3) As regards the charging arrangements for e-PCs, it has always been the Government's policy direction that e-PC owners should perform daily charging of their e-PCs at their homes, workplaces or other suitable places. Public charging facilities, mainly supplementary in nature, are set up for EV owners to top up the batteries of their EVs at times of occasional needs during their trips.

Given the policy direction mentioned above, the Government's priority is to facilitate and encourage the installation of charging facilities in private buildings when planning for the development of charging facilities for e-PCs. For new private buildings, the Government has, since April 2011, encouraged developers to provide EV charging-enabling infrastructure (including the provision of sufficient power supply as well as cabling and conduits for all parking spaces) in private car parks of new buildings (including commercial and residential buildings) through granting of concessions on gross floor area (GFA) so that future owners of these parking spaces may install EV chargers for daily charging. According to the information of the Buildings Department, from April 2011 to March 2019, over 80 per cent of parking spaces in the newly approved developments, involving about 490 car parks and around 57 000 parking spaces, will be equipped with EV charging-enabling infrastructure.

For existing private residential buildings, the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address announced to set aside \$2 billion to implement a pilot subsidy scheme to promote installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure in car parks of existing private residential buildings (the pilot subsidy scheme) to subsidise car parks of existing private residential buildings to install EV charging-enabling infrastructure, thereby helping resolve problems encountered when installing the charging facilities in these buildings.

With regard to the public charging network, the Government and the

private sector have all along been enhancing the installation of public charging facilities. As at September 2019, there are 2 506 public chargers across all 18 districts with 857 in government car parks and the remaining 1 649 installed by private sectors. The Government has allocated \$120 million to install additional medium chargers in government car parks that are open to the public. It is expected that over 1 000 public chargers will be added by 2022, increasing the total number of public chargers in government car parks to around 1 800.

Meanwhile, the private sector has kept providing new public chargers in response to the charging demand from e-PCs in the market. The number of public chargers provided by the private sector has been significantly increased from 536 in 2013 to 1 649 at present. With the continued growth in the number of e-PCs, it is expected that the private sector will continue to provide more public chargers to meet market demand.

For commercial buildings, as mentioned above, the Government has, since April 2011, encouraged developers to provide EV charging-enabling infrastructure in private car parks of new buildings (including the commercial ones) through granting of GFA concessions. The two power companies, at the same time, have been providing technical advice to EV owners or business establishments and rendering service to connect power supply for installation of charging facilities at parking spaces of EV owners or in car parks of commercial buildings. In recent years, several private companies have been providing EV owners or business establishments with one-stop EV charging services, including installation of charging facilities at EV owners' parking spaces and provision of free and/or paid charging services to tenants and customers at specified locations in car parks of commercial buildings.

The Government's priority in the next few years is to spearhead the above mentioned pilot subsidy scheme to assist car parks of existing private residential buildings to install EV charging-enabling infrastructure, and encourage developers to provide EV charging-enabling infrastructure in private car parks of new buildings (including commercial ones) through the current granting of GFA concessions. While the Government has no plan to offer other subsidy schemes (such as rates concession) to encourage commercial car park operators to install charging facilities in their car parks, we will keep in view the development of charging facilities in the market and review the relevant policies and measures in due course.

(4) The Environmental Protection Department is working out the implementation details of the pilot subsidy scheme. In respect of facilitating participation of eligible applicants in the scheme, the department would consider applicants' requests to, as far as practicable, arrange the approved installation works for charging-enabling infrastructure to tie in with the inspection programme of electrical installations in the premises concerned.

LCQ 15: Administration of justice

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

Regarding the administration of justice in respect of cases relating to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that a serving judge had earlier on signed a joint public petition in opposition to the proposed legislative amendments and some judges had anonymously expressed to the media their views on the proposed legislative amendments, but the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal merely issued an advice to the judge who had signed the joint petition, whether it knows the measures currently put in place by the Judiciary to (i) ensure that judges comply with the Guide to Judicial Conduct issued by the Judiciary (especially paragraph 76 which provides that judges should refrain from association with political activities), and (ii) deal with breaches of the Guide by judges;

(2) as Articles 82 and 92 of the Basic Law provide that judges from other common law jurisdictions may be invited/recruited to hear cases (including cases of the Court of Final Appeal), whether it knows the mechanism put in place by the Judiciary to ensure that such judges uphold neutrality when hearing cases involving national security and interests;

(3) given that the number of arrestees in relation to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments has exceeded 4 000 so far, whether the Government will discuss with the Judiciary, by reference to relevant overseas practices, the setting up of a special riot court dedicated to hearing such cases, in order to avoid the building up of a backlog of prosecutions listed for hearings by the court; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that the arrestees in relation to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, when admitted to bail by the court, were required to pay an amount of bail ranging from several hundred dollars to several tens of thousand dollars, whether the Government knows the criteria generally adopted by judges for determining the level of the amount of bail;

(5) of the respective numbers of legal aid applications (i) received and (ii) approved by the Legal Aid Department in the past six months in respect of cases relating to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, and the total amount of money involved; the criteria adopted by the Department for vetting and approval of such

applications; and

(6) as it is learnt that some demonstrators, who had been arrested in relation to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, had breached the bail conditions while admitted to bail by the court, but they continued to be released on bail, whether it knows the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Judiciary and the Legal Aid Department (LAD), the Government's reply to the Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is as follows:

(1) As stated by the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), generally speaking, having regard to the independence and impartiality of the Judiciary, judges should refrain from expressing comments on political and other controversial issues. In particular, judges should avoid expressing views on legal issues which may come before the courts. The Chief Justice has reminded all the judges of the importance of the foregoing and will take such further action where appropriate.

(2) Judges at all levels of courts, including non-permanent judges from other common law jurisdictions (CLNPJs), take judicial oaths on assumption of office in accordance with Article 104 of the Basic Law and the Oaths and Declarations Ordinance (Cap 11). In taking the judicial oath, judges swear that they will uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), bear allegiance to the HKSAR of the PRC, serve the HKSAR conscientiously, dutifully, in full accordance with the law, honestly and with integrity, safeguard the law and administer justice without fear or favour, self-interest or deceit. Accordingly, it is important to emphasise that CLNPJs when sitting in the CFA are functioning as Hong Kong judges and will only deal with cases strictly in accordance with the law of Hong Kong.

(3) In response to the upsurge in the number of court cases arising from recent events opposing the proposed legislative amendments, the Chief Justice has publicly stated that the Judiciary will strive to deal with cases expeditiously and efficiently as far as practicable while at the same time ensuring that they are handled fairly and strictly in accordance with the law. In fact, in response to some recent cases where a large number of defendants were brought before the Magistrates' courts, the courts have been exercising flexibility to continue with court hearings beyond the normal court hours until late evenings on a need basis.

In anticipation of the upsurge in the number of cases arising from the recent events, the Chief Justice has tasked the Court Leaders of various levels of courts to explore all possible means to achieve the objective of handling the cases as expeditiously as possible. As the operation of the judicial system requires the support of many other stakeholders, including

the legal profession, the Department of Justice, law enforcement agencies, Correctional Services Department, LAD and other organisations such as the Duty Lawyer Service, etc., any changes in the court and hearing arrangements may have an impact on them. The Judiciary has stated that all relevant stakeholders will be closely consulted in the process.

(4) and (6) According to the Judiciary, when a criminal charge is laid against a defendant, the case will first be brought up in a Magistrates' Court. In the majority of cases, at the first appearance, the prosecution will ask for no plea to be taken, i.e. the court is requested not to ask the defendant to plead whether he or she is guilty or not guilty to the charge. When the case cannot be disposed of at the first appearance and is adjourned for further hearings, the question of bail will arise. The magistrate will deal with bail strictly in accordance with the legal requirements under Part IA of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap 221). Briefly, under sections 9D(1) and 9G(1), the magistrate shall grant bail to a defendant unless it appears to the magistrate that there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant would fail to surrender to custody as the magistrate may appoint; or commit an offence while on bail; or interfere with a witness or pervert or obstruct the course of justice. In deciding on whether bail should be granted, the magistrate would take into account all relevant factors including those listed in section 9G(2).

The Judiciary has also indicated that the magistrate would take into account the position and arguments of the prosecution and the defence, and all relevant materials placed before the court by the parties. Each case has to be considered on its own merits as to whether bail would be granted; and if so, on what terms.

The granting of bail and the imposition of any bail conditions, including any bail amounts, are judicial decisions which are made on a case-by-case basis. If the prosecution or the defendant is dissatisfied with the magistrate's decision on bail including its conditions, they may apply to the Court of First Instance of the High Court for review or variation. The Court of First Instance will likewise consider and decide such an application in accordance with the legal requirements under Part IA of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance.

(5) As at November 21, 2019, statistics on applications for legal aid in criminal cases relating to events opposing the proposed legislative amendments are as follows:

Applications for legal aid in criminal cases received	legal aid certificates granted	Expenses incurred*
21	13	Not applicable

*LAD does not maintain separate statistics on expenses of criminal cases relating to events opposing the proposed legislative amendments.

LAD will continue to process all legal aid applications, including applications relating to events opposing the proposed legislative amendments, in accordance with the Legal Aid Ordinance (Cap 91) and the Legal Aid in Criminal Cases Rules (Cap 221D). To qualify for legal aid, a person must satisfy both the statutory means test and merits test. LAD will carefully monitor all cases to ensure the proper use of public funds.

LCQ12: Mainlanders studying in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

Recently, a wave of demonstrations and violence has swept through a number of universities in Hong Kong, with the more serious cases being that the campuses of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University were once occupied by rioters for several days, and turned into arsenals and battlefields. It is learnt that owing to worries about personal safety, quite a number of university students from the Mainland have been evacuated from the campuses with the assistance of the universities concerned and the Police and have returned to the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective numbers of Mainlanders studying in the various (i) universities, (ii) other tertiary institutions, (iii) secondary schools and (iv) primary schools in Hong Kong in the current academic/school year (set out in a table);

(2) whether it knows the number of cases, since June this year, in which the Mainlanders studying in Hong Kong dropped out and returned to the Mainland; whether it has estimated the final number of such cases in the current academic/school year;

(3) of the number of requests for assistance received since June this year by the Government from the Mainlanders studying in Hong Kong;

(4) of the immediate measures put in place by the Police and the Education Bureau to safeguard the personal safety of the Mainlanders studying in Hong Kong, as well as the support provided by the authorities concerned to them when they are unable to return to the campuses to attend classes or to stay at the dormitories; and

(5) of the impacts of this wave of dropouts among the Mainlanders on the education system of Hong Kong; the measures in place to alleviate such impacts, including persuading them to stay and study in Hong Kong, as well as restoring the confidence of those who have returned to the Mainland in the law and order of Hong Kong with a view to attracting them to return to Hong Kong to continue their studies?

Reply:

President,

Recently, some universities have been damaged or even occupied by masked protesters. Some even made and used weapons on campus, leaving university campuses in a devastated state and causing multiple injuries. A number of universities were thus forced to end the regular classes of this semester early. Violence is never a solution to problems; it only intensifies conflicts, deviates from the approach of resolving problems through rational analysis, and even causes casualties, infrastructural damage, and property loss. All people should express their views in a lawful, peaceful, and rational manner and seek consensus through dialogue.

As the university campuses have been subjected to various degrees of extensive damage, the universities concerned need time to assess the damage before restoration works begin. The violent incidents have caused the universities trauma and loss in various aspects. Apart from hardware facilities such as school buildings, the universities have lost valuable time for teaching and research, and even talent, which may even affect their international reputation. We hope that the education sector can, as soon as possible, restore calmness and gradually rebuild order and make arrangements for teaching and research work. The Education Bureau (EDB) will provide appropriate assistance and support, having regard to the needs and actual circumstances of various universities.

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

(1) The respective numbers of Mainland students studying in primary schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong are tabulated as follows:

Category of Schools/Institutions	Number of Mainland Students
Primary	950
Secondary	1 349
Post-secondary	38 087

Notes:

(1) The figures of primary and secondary schools include non-local Chinese students i.e. students with Chinese nationality (including those from

Mainland China, Macao, and Taiwan) studying in Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, international schools and private independent schools. These figures refer to the position as at mid-September 2018. The information obtained from the Student Enrolment Survey for the 2019/20 school year is being collated and is not available for the time being.

(2) The figures of post-secondary institutions, which include Mainland students and exchange students on full-time programmes, are provisional figures for the 2019/20 academic year.

(2) The EDB does not maintain statistics on the number of Mainland students studying in Hong Kong who have dropped out and returned to the Mainland. It should be noted that the decision to terminate one's studies is a matter of personal choice. The common reasons for such termination include taking up employment, family reasons, health reasons, changing schools/institutions, financial difficulties, and academic performance. The EDB will not speculate on the number of such cases.

(3) During the period from June 1 to November 22, 2019, the EDB did not receive any requests for assistance from Mainland students, whereas the Police states that they do not have the relevant statistical data.

(4) At the beginning of the current academic year, the EDB contacted the top echelons of the local universities and asked them to keep a close eye on the potential problem of non-local students or students with different political stances being bullied on campus, take timely measures to prevent bullying, and promote respect for different views.

In response to the violent incidents that took place at several universities in November, the universities have either cancelled all face-to-face classes since mid-November or ended the current semester early. Online teaching or other teaching resources have been used instead so that students need not return to the campus to attend classes. We are aware that some non-local students have left Hong Kong after the suspension of classes. As for those who remain in Hong Kong, appropriate support has been provided by the universities to those in need, for example, the setting up of designated units to arrange temporary accommodation for them in hostels outside the campus, the provision of 24-hour counselling support, and emergency loans. Peace has now been restored initially on campus, and individual universities have enhanced on-campus security arrangements, for example, by hiring additional security staff members and implementing access management, having regard to their actual needs. The universities will restore the campus facilities as soon as possible so as to provide a safe learning environment for all students and staff members.

The laws of Hong Kong apply to all places in the territory and nowhere is above the law. University campuses are not a safe haven for criminals, and offenders shall bear their criminal liabilities. The Police have the statutory duty to maintain public safety and public order, and must take appropriate actions to maintain law and order and safeguard public peace when situations severely threatening public order and public safety occur. The universities need to co-operate with the Police in carrying out their duties

in accordance with the law and dealing with illegal activities taking place on campus, so as to ensure the safety of the campuses as well as the teachers and students. The EDB will also stay in touch with the universities and provide them with appropriate assistance. In addition, the EDB and institutions have all along been calling upon students to stay away from scenes of confrontation to avoid injury.

The Government will make every effort to ensure the personal safety of members of the public (including non-local students studying in Hong Kong). If necessary, the universities should assist students in seeking assistance from law enforcement agencies.

(5) Attracting outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong to further internationalise the local higher education sector and broaden the global outlook of local students is of paramount importance to Hong Kong's future development.

The actual impact of demonstrations and violent incidents on non-local students' desire to pursue their studies or exchange programmes in Hong Kong in the future is yet to be further observed. In fact, the universities in Hong Kong have built a solid academic foundation and enjoyed a good international reputation after years of development. Therefore, in the long run, when calmness is gradually restored on campus, Hong Kong's higher education will still appeal to non-local students. The Government will closely monitor the situation and in due course explore ways to further assist universities in enhancing their internationalisation. Meanwhile, the University Grants Committee (UGC) will continue to implement the Funding Scheme for Enhancement of Internationalisation and Student Learning Experience in the 2019-22 Triennium under which additional resources will be provided to support the universities in providing a better learning experience for non-local students pursuing relevant programmes and fostering student integration. Our universities will continue to facilitate multi-cultural student integration and exchange through various measures and support services, such as orientation and familiarisation programmes, language enhancement programmes, student needs surveys, cultural exchange activities, social activities and gatherings, adjustment support, advice and counselling services, community services, mentoring and peer support schemes as well as academic and career advice.

The Chairmen of the Councils of the eight UGC-funded universities issued a joint statement on October 20, pointing out that universities should cherish a diversity of views and promote rational discussion, rather than being drawn into supporting any particular political position. The statement also stressed that any form of violent conduct, vulgar language or disrespectful behaviour has no place on university campuses, or indeed anywhere. It is a primary duty of all university stakeholders to respect university property. Defacing and damaging property is a criminal act which cannot be tolerated. The EDB considers that universities should act in accordance with the principles set out in the statement. University staff members and students should comply with university regulations and those who violate the regulations should be handled in accordance with the standing

mechanisms of universities. If a criminal case occurs in a university, it should be referred to the law enforcement agencies for handling. In handling the incident at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Police took a peaceful and flexible approach in resolving the standoff to restore the order and peace of the university campus. At the level of society as a whole, the Police will continue to stand fast at their posts, perform their duties faithfully and act according to the law, with a view to restoring Hong Kong's public order and the confidence of all individuals (including foreigners working and studying in Hong Kong) on the law and order of Hong Kong, so that Hong Kong will continue to be one of the safest and most stable cities in the world. We believe that so long as society and the universities return to harmony, order, rationality and inclusiveness, the confidence of various sectors of the community and students from around the world in our higher education sector can be restored.

LCQ5: Use of elderly health care vouchers on the Mainland

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

Regarding the use of elderly health care vouchers (HCVs) on the Mainland by the elderly of Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that with effect from October 2015, eligible elderly people of Hong Kong may use HCVs to pay for the fees of outpatient medical care services provided by designated clinics/departments of the University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital, of the number of person-times for which the elderly of Hong Kong used HCVs in that hospital and the total amount of fees involved each year;

(2) whether, in the past three years, it discussed the extension of the scope of application of HCVs on the Mainland with the relevant Mainland departments, healthcare services organisations of the two places as well as local medical professional groups; if so, of the latest progress, and whether an implementation timetable is in place; and

(3) whether it will consider allowing the elderly of Hong Kong to use HCVs on the Mainland to pay for the medical fees relating to disease prevention and rehabilitation treatment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government implements the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (the Scheme) to subsidise eligible Hong Kong elders to use private primary healthcare services. The Scheme aims to enhance primary healthcare for the elderly and provide them with healthcare choices in addition to public services, so that the elderly can have better access to medical care services that best suit their health needs from their chosen service providers. The Government launched a Pilot Scheme in October 2015 to enable voucher users to use vouchers to pay for the fees of outpatient medical care services provided by designated clinics/ departments of the University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH). Same as the arrangement in Hong Kong, elders can use vouchers at the HKU-SZH to receive preventive, curative and rehabilitative services. At present, each eligible Hong Kong elder aged 65 or above is provided with an annual voucher amount of \$2,000, which can be used for eligible services in Hong Kong and at the HKU-SZH.

My consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin is as follows:

To facilitate Hong Kong elders who reside in areas near Shenzhen to receive outpatient medical care services in Shenzhen, the Government launched the Pilot Scheme in 2015 to enable Hong Kong elders to use vouchers to pay for outpatient medical care services provided by designated Outpatient Medical Centres and Medical Service Departments of the HKU-SZH. We chose to implement the Pilot Scheme at the HKU-SZH in view that the hospital adopts the “Hong Kong management model” and that its healthcare service quality and clinical governance structure are similar to those of Hong Kong, thus making it easier for Hong Kong elders to adapt and accept.

Breaking down by year, the cumulative number of elders who have used vouchers at the HKU-SZH from 2015 to 2019 (up to October 2019) was 500, 1 200, 2 100, 3 400 and 4 400 respectively. As regards the annual amount of vouchers claimed, it was around HK\$540,000, HK\$1.47 million, HK\$1.85 million, HK\$3.49 million and HK\$3.21 million from 2015 to 2019 (up to October 2019) respectively, totalling around HK\$10.57 million.

The HKU-SZH conducted an opinion survey on the use of vouchers at the hospital. According to a report published by it in October last year, the Pilot Scheme was well-received. Out of the 384 elders interviewed, 92% was satisfied or very satisfied with the services received at the HKU-SZH paid for by vouchers under the Pilot Scheme. 73% of the elders interviewed indicated that their reason for choosing the HKU-SZH was the “Hong Kong management model” that it adopts. The review of the Scheme completed by the Department of Health (DH) earlier this year also made reference to the above survey results. In view that the Pilot Scheme’s operation was smooth and the feedback received was positive, and that the number of elders using vouchers at the HKU-SZH continued to increase, the Government regularised the Pilot Scheme on June 26, 2019 to provide greater certainty for Hong Kong elders to

continue to use vouchers at the HKU-SZH.

We review the overall operation of the Scheme from time to time and maintain dialogue with relevant stakeholders. With regards to the coverage of vouchers, in view that the policy objectives of the Scheme are to enhance primary healthcare services for the elderly, provide them with additional choices in the private sector and promote the concept of family doctors, we consider that vouchers should continue only to be used for outpatient medical care services, and should not be extended to areas such as inpatient services, day surgery procedures or buying health insurance, etc.

We have considered whether there are suitable medical institutions for extending the use of vouchers on the Mainland. We need to consider the quality of healthcare, clinical governance structure, administrative procedures, financial arrangement, operating environment and employee skills of the institution concerned, as well as the views of other stakeholders (including healthcare professionals and patients in Hong Kong). We are also particularly concerned about how to monitor voucher use. Since the relevant laws and codes of practice of Hong Kong are not applicable to medical institutions and healthcare professionals in places outside of Hong Kong, if there is non-compliance with the requirements of the Scheme and the institution(s) or individual(s) concerned have no connection with Hong Kong, it would be very difficult for the DH to follow-up and assist the elders. At this stage, the Government has no arrangements in relation to further extending the use of vouchers on the Mainland.