

LegCo Public Accounts Committee meeting

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The closed meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Accounts Committee originally scheduled for June 13 will be held at 3.30pm tomorrow (June 20) in Conference Room 5 of the LegCo Complex.

LC Urgent Q1: Use of force by police officers in demonstrations

Following is an urgent question by the Hon Au Nok-hin under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

On the 12th of this month, the Police used various kinds of weapons (including batons as well as pepper balls, bean bag rounds and rubber bullets which were discharged by arms) against demonstrators in the vicinity of Admiralty, and the injured persons included a driver of a press vehicle who was shot in the head and fell unconscious onto the ground, and a demonstrator who was shot in the eye. As seen on the television screen, some police officers aimed at the heads of unarmed demonstrators when they fired. There are comments querying that such acts were in violation of a requirement in Chapter 29 of the Police General Orders, which stipulates, among others, that the level of force to be used by police officers shall be minimal and reasonably required under the prevailing circumstances. Besides, on the day following the Government's announcement of the suspension of the relevant legislative amendment exercise, millions of members of the public still took to the streets to protest in a march. Given that large-scale demonstrations may be triggered at any moment, will the Government undertake that when a similar demonstration takes place again, police officers will not aim at the upper bodies of demonstrators anymore for firing bean bag rounds and rubber bullets, so as not to cause incidents of serious injuries?

Reply:

President:

In the morning of June 12 there was a peaceful assembly to be held

outside the Legislative Council (LegCo) Complex originally. At around 8 am, a large number of people in mask suddenly rushed out to Lung Wo Road, Tim Mei Avenue, Queensway and Harcourt Road in an organised manner, occupying the roads, blocking the traffic and disrupting social order. Some protesters even did threatening and provoking acts. As there were citizens being trapped inside a tunnel at Lung Wo Road, Police Negotiators were deployed, with the incident lasting for eight hours. The people affected could not use the toilet or drink water when they were trapped. At the same time, roads were congested and blocked, which nearly paralysed the traffic. Notwithstanding this, the Police maintained a high degree of tolerance.

Around 3pm, the situation at the LegCo Complex began to deteriorate, when protesters mainly at the front continuously charged towards the Police cordon line violently. The Police set up cordon line there mainly to safeguard the LegCo Complex and persons therein. The protestors who violently charged towards the Police hurled bricks at police officers, and attacked police officers with metal poles, mills barriers and wooden planks. The Police cordon line retreated all the way to the demonstration areas at the entrance of the LegCo Complex.

At that time, some of the protestors at the front ignored the Police's repeated advice and warning, and repeatedly charged towards the Police cordon line using violence in an organised manner. This posed serious threats to public safety and order, as well as endangered the personal safety or even lives of people at the scene (including other protesters, members of the media and police officers on duty). Having given warning several times and without any other choices, the Police used appropriate and necessary force to disperse the crowd and control the situation in order to protect the safety of their own and others.

Up to present, the Police have arrested a total of 32 people for offences including behaving in a disorderly manner in a public place, unlawful assembly, assaulting police officer, etc. A total of 22 police officers have sustained different degrees of injuries in the incident.

The Police have the responsibility to adopt lawful measures to maintain public safety, public order, as well as safeguard people's life and property. The Police shall, based on the circumstances at the scene, make assessments and exercise professional judgment to take appropriate actions, which include using necessary force in a bid to ensure public safety and public order.

The Police have established guidelines on the use of force. Police officers may use minimum force as appropriate only when such an action is absolutely necessary and there are no other means to accomplish the lawful duty. Police officers shall give verbal warning prior to the use of force as far as circumstances permit, while the person(s) involved shall be given every opportunity, where practicable, to obey police orders before force is used.

The Police have rigorous training with regard to the use of force.

Every newly recruited or serving police officer has to go through rigorous training on the use of force, so that they may fully understand how to use different levels of force in a safe and effective manner, including the use of verbal advice/verbal control, empty-hand control, pepper sprays, batons and other equipment, as a means to achieve the relevant lawful purposes.

During the operation on June 12, as some protestors charged towards police cordon line at the front using violence and hurled bricks, metal poles, wooden planks and mills barriers at police officers, under such life-threatening situation, police officers used force to disperse the crowd and control the situation with the aid of appropriate equipment. During the operation, the weapons used by the Police included batons, pepper sprays, tear sprays, bean bag rounds, rubber bullets and tear gases. All these are non-lethal weapons comparable to those used by the enforcement agencies of overseas countries for dealing with similar violent situations.

If there is any dissatisfaction with the Police operation, the Complaints Against Police Office will conduct a fair and just investigation upon receipt of the complaint. The result of the investigation will be reviewed by the statutory Independent Police Complaints Council. As such, it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual cases. However, with regard to the use of weapons, the Police have clear guidelines and sufficient training. When firearms are used, in accordance with the Police's guidelines, the centre body mass will be aimed, so as to effectively stop the attack.

On June 12 in Admiralty and its vicinity, we could all see on TV that some protestors launched violent attacks, disrupting the peace of society and charging police cordon line. It is the duty of the Police to stop such behaviours to safeguard people's life and property.

Our people have the freedom of assembly and speech. Participants of public events should, when expressing their views, be peaceful and orderly, and abide by the law. This is in line with the common good of the society. However, when violence occurs, it is the Police's duty to take lawful measures to ensure public order and public safety.

Thank you, President.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 is 105.4 (down 0.1 against yesterday's index).

LCQ19: Projects to improve pedestrian and traffic networks in Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Some residents in Kowloon East have pointed out that a number of projects, implemented by the Energizing Kowloon East Office since its establishment to improve the pedestrian and traffic networks in an attempt to ameliorate the situation of traffic congestion, air pollution and competition between pedestrians and vehicles for road space in Kwun Tong and the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA), are ineffective. As at early this year, Kowloon East had over 2.6 million square metres of commercial floor area, which was expected to increase to 7 million square metres in future. By then, the working population in Kwun Tong and KBBA will inevitably increase rapidly, driving an even greater demand for road space. Currently on weekdays, roads in the vicinity of Kwun Tong Road and Hoi Yuen Road are clogged with pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the periods when people commute to and from work. The situation will only worsen when the working population in the district increases substantially in future. In view of the above, I raised a question on June 7, 2017 suggesting that the Government should model on the Mong Kok footbridge system and construct a footbridge system in Kowloon East connecting the MTR Kwun Tong Station, Hoi Yuen Road, Shing Yip Street and Kwun Tong waterfront, so as to divert the pedestrian flows on the ground and facilitate pedestrian circulation in the district. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in the reply to my question that it would study the feasibility of constructing a footbridge at Hoi Yuen Road of Kwun Tong, of the progress of the study; in view of the convoluted walking route to the waterfront via the MTR Kwun Tong Station at present and the strong demand of pedestrians for the footbridge, whether the Government will expedite the study;

(2) as the Government has introduced an incentive, by way of land premium waiver since 2017, to encourage landowners in the business areas of Kowloon East to apply for constructing footbridges at their own cost, of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the Government so far; the number of footbridges that will be completed in the coming three years; if only a few applications have been received, whether the Government has evaluated the causes for the lukewarm response for the initiative and considered the construction of pedestrian link bridges by the Government instead, so as to avert the situation that the pedestrian link network cannot

be completed due to complicated title disputes involved in individual projects; and

(3) whether it has assessed the increase and the rate of increase in the resident and business population in Kai Tak Action Area, Kwun Tong Action Area and Kowloon Bay Action Area in the coming five years; in the light of the additional traffic demand to be generated by the population growth and the comments of some members of the public that the construction of the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS) to connect those Action Areas will effectively alleviate the current pressure on road traffic and facilitate the development of Kowloon East, whether the Government will expedite the feasibility study for EFLS, and decide and announce expeditiously if EFLS will be constructed?

Reply:

President,

Kowloon East (including the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA), the Kwun Tong Business Area (KTBA) and the Kowloon Bay Business Area (KBBA)) is transforming into the second Core Business District (CBD2). Government departments concerned will continue to work on various fronts to improve the pedestrian environment and traffic in KTBA and KBBA to cater for the developments in the district.

The Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO) of the Development Bureau promotes the concept of Walkable Kowloon East in the two Business Areas through short-term measures such as providing pedestrian crossings and traffic signals, widening footpaths, providing roadside loading and unloading areas and improving junction arrangements to improve the pedestrian environment and traffic. The EKEO is also taking forward various medium and long-term improvement schemes in collaboration with relevant government departments, which include provision of three footbridges near MTR Kowloon Bay Station (i.e. footbridges near MTR Kowloon Bay Station Exits A and B and footbridge across Wai Yip Street near Siu Yip Street). In tandem, an investigation study is in progress to enhance walkability near MTR Ngau Tau Kok Station. The plan is to provide two pedestrian subways connecting to the area near Hoi Bun Road Park. The EKEO is also exploring the possibility of providing travelators along some road sections of Lai Yip Street and Sheung Yee Road.

On the traffic aspect, the Government is proactively taking forward transport infrastructure projects, including Route 6 (i.e. Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel and Central Kowloon Route under construction, and Trunk Road T2 and Cha Kwo Ling Tunnel pending funding approval by the Legislative Council) would provide relief to the traffic loads on the existing key road links in Kowloon East (including Kwun Tong Bypass and Kwun Tong Road). The Government will also leverage the future development of the two Action Areas in Kowloon East to improve the traffic condition. Proposals include a new through road extending from Kei Yip Lane in the Kwun Tong Action Area (KTAA) to divert traffic away from the Wai Yip Street/Hoi Yuen Road roundabout, conversion of the roundabout to a traffic signal controlled junction to

rationalise the traffic flows, and widening of Sheung Yee Road and modification of Hoi Bun Road/Cheung Yip Street junction in the vicinity of the Kowloon Bay Action Area (KBAA) to increase traffic capacity. In addition, the Police has stepped up enforcement actions against illegal parking to help ease the traffic flows.

Having consulted the views of relevant departments, the consolidated responses to the various parts of the question are as follows:

(1) Hoi Yuen Road is a major pedestrian corridor in KTBA. Formulation of pedestrian environment improvement measures thereat must take into account existing activities. The Government is widening the footpaths on both sides of Hoi Yuen Road in phases to improve the existing congestion situation on the footpaths. The Planning and Engineering Study on Kwun Tong Action Area – Feasibility Study recommends constructing a footbridge across Wai Yip Street to connect Hoi Yuen Road to KTAA and the promenade along with the proposed junction improvement scheme at Hoi Yuen Road/Wai Yip Street. On exploring the feasibility of constructing a footbridge along Hoi Yuen Road to connect MTR Kwun Tong Station and Wai Yip Street, after examining the actual site conditions, the footbridge proposal would affect the emergency vehicular access for buildings on both sides of Hoi Yuen Road and is therefore not feasible.

Moreover, the Kwun Tong "Government, Institution or Community" composite development project is studying whether to use an elevated pedestrian platform to connect MTR Kwun Tong Station and the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment Project. A commercial site and a proposed footbridge at King Yip Street near the composite development project, the Tsui Ping River Garden which has been completed for use, and the revitalisation of Tsui Ping River project (including streetscape enhancement on streets linking Hoi Yuen Road and Tsui Ping River) pending funding approval by the Legislative Council will form a green river corridor connecting MTR Kwun Tong Station and the Kwun Tong Promenade, thereby help divert pedestrians away from Hoi Yuen Road and cater for the developments in the Business Area.

(2) To enhance walkability and connectivity, the 2016 Policy Address announced a policy initiative, waiving the land premium payable for lease modification for provision of pedestrian links (including footbridges and subways). Kowloon East is the pilot area. From February 2017, landowners in KBBA may submit lease modification applications to the District Lands Office/Kowloon East for constructing pedestrian links at their own costs in accordance with the planned pedestrian network. As for KTBA, the Outline Development Plan showing the planned pedestrian network was promulgated in January 2019, landowners in the area may also submit applications in the same way.

The Government has received three applications in Kowloon East. The first application proposes to connect seven commercial buildings in KBBA which would make pedestrian movements between MTR Kowloon Bay Station and KBBA more convenient. The second application proposes to construct a footbridge to strengthen the connection between Ngau Tau Kok and the East Kowloon Cultural Centre. The third application proposes to construct two

footbridges to enhance the connectivity between the KTDA and the vicinity of Kowloonbay International Trade and Exhibition Centre. The Government could assess the completion time of the relevant footbridges exactly only after the landowners have submitted the detailed design of the relevant footbridges and completion of the gazetting procedures under the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370). The Government is also conducting a mid-term review on the abovementioned policy initiative to evaluate its effectiveness.

(3) For the next five years, the residential and worker population of KTDA, KTBA and KBBA are estimated to increase as follows:

Area	Estimated residential population			Estimated worker population		
	2019	2024	Increase	2019	2024	Increase
KTDA	49 200	72 400	+23 200 (+47%)	14 500	27 700	+13 200 (+91%)
KTBA	—			172 300	196 600	+24 300 (+14%)
KBBA	—			87 800	102 400	+14 600 (+17%)

The Civil Engineering and Development Department is conducting the second stage of the detailed feasibility study of the proposed Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) in Kowloon East with a view to formulating a scheme that could meet the relevant statutory and technical requirements (including fire services and the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance), as well as coming up with a scheme which is generally acceptable to the stakeholders and cost-effective to the general public. The second stage of the Study mainly includes the coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. of the proposed system. The Government will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently (including considerations of patronage assessment and fare estimate, etc.), so as to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed EFLS. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project. The precise implementation programme is not available at this stage.

LCQ8: Tourism Federation of Cities in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

To enhance tourism exchanges and co-operation within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Greater Bay Area), the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR) Government and the tourism departments of the other 10 cities in the Greater Bay Area established the Tourism Federation of Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Federation) and signed the Agreement on the Tourism Federation of Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in December 2017. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the goals, mission and work schedule of the Federation, and the mode of co-operation and division of work among the various member cities;

(2) of the expenditure involved in the work undertaken by the Federation on developing and promoting tourism in the Greater Bay Area since its establishment, and the effectiveness of the work; and

(3) of the future work priorities of the Federation; among them, the specific work for which the HKSAR Government is responsible, and the manpower and financial resources it will allocate for such work?

Reply:

President,

The Tourism Federation of Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Federation) was jointly established by the tourism departments of the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions as well as the nine Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) in December 2017. The Federation's advisory unit and secretariat are the national Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangdong Province respectively. The Federation's first Annual Meeting was held in April 2018 in Guangzhou. The Government has all along been actively leveraging the platform of the Federation to deepen co-operation with other cities in the Greater Bay Area in areas of tourism exchange and promotion, as well as strengthening market regulation.

As the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area announced in February 2019 expressly supports Hong Kong in developing into an international tourism hub, a core demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism, as well as a diverse tourism platform, the Government will actively grasp such opportunities to promote the overall tourism development within the Greater Bay Area for mutual benefits.

As such, the Commissioner for Tourism, as the rotating Chairman of the Federation's second Annual Meeting, convened the second Annual Meeting of the Federation on June 12, 2019 in Hong Kong to discuss with the tourism departments of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the nine Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area in further enhancing tourism co-operation in various areas, including pursuing more facilitating measures for overseas tourists travelling within the Greater Bay Area, strengthening co-operation in market regulation and publicity and promotion, and supporting the trade in developing more multi-destination tourism products, etc.

The work in relation to the Federation falls under the charge of the Tourism Commission. Relevant staffing and expenses are subsumed within the latter's establishment and provision, and can hardly be separately quantified.