

LCQ21: Employees Retraining Board courses

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 4):

Question:

Training courses of the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) offered by the appointed Training Bodies (retraining courses) aim at assisting service targets in entering the employment market and continuously upgrading their skills. It has been reported that at present, the ERB had a balance of over \$13 billion but an annual deficit of about \$800 million to \$900 million, which has aroused public concern about issues such as the effectiveness and coverage of its courses, as well as the adequacy of its financial resources in the long run. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the overall placement rate of trainees who had completed retraining courses in each of the past three years, together with a breakdown by training course;
- (2) whether it knows if the ERB has followed up on a long-term basis the employment situation of trainees who have completed placement-tied courses and collected the relevant data (e.g. the average time taken to successfully secure employment, the proportion of trainees who have not successfully secured employment and the reasons for that); whether the ERB has provided trainees with the relevant employment advice; if the ERB has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as it is learnt that some people have repeatedly attended retraining courses for the purpose of applying for retraining allowance, leading to abuse and waste of resources, whether the Government has followed up in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) as there are views that the contents of some retraining courses are overlapping and outdated, whether the Government knows if the ERB will consider keeping abreast of the times and further enhancing the courses, as well as adding more relevant courses to tie in with the current market demand; if the ERB will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (5) whether the Government has assessed the effectiveness of retraining courses; as there are views pointing out that the enrolment rate of young people in retraining courses is relatively low, how the authorities promote and attract trainees of different age groups to enrol in such courses; and
- (6) given that the ERB currently has an annual deficit of about \$800 million to \$900 million, how the Government ensures its long-term financial

sustainability so that it can continue to provide retraining courses?

Reply:

President,

Since its establishment in 1992, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been playing an important part of the training strategy for the labour force. The 2024 Policy Address announced the reform of the ERB to enhance its role and positioning from providing employment-related training for low-skilled workers to devising skills-based training programmes and strategies for the entire workforce. Since January 2025, the ERB lifted the restriction on educational attainment of trainees and expanded the service targets to the entire workforce; increased the annual number of training places by at least 15 000; strengthened collaboration with higher education institutions and leading enterprises, etc; and enhanced career planning and job matching services, etc. In addition, the ERB is working out the details and timetable for medium- to long-term work, including how it could gauge and project future skills requirements, reposition itself and build a new branding, adjust its structure and staffing and amend the Employees Retraining Ordinance (the Ordinance). The ERB will submit its recommendations by the end of this year.

The ERB's operation is funded by the Employees Retraining Fund (ERF) under its administration. At present, the major sources of income of the ERF are investment return, Employees Retraining Levy (Levy) and course fees. In 2014, the Government injected \$15 billion into the ERF for generating investment income to finance the services and operation of the ERB. In addition, the Government injected \$2.5 billion into the ERF in 2020 to enable the ERB to implement the "Love Upgrading Special Scheme" and to meet the anticipated commitment arising from the increase in the statutory cap of monthly training allowance per trainee. On the Levy, all employers of workers imported under the labour importation schemes designated under the Ordinance are required to pay the Levy. The Levy is transferred to the ERF for the provision of training and retraining to local workers. In 2021-22 to 2023-24, the average annual Levy income was around \$59 million. The ERB has to optimise the use of the Government injection and strive to operate on a financially sustainable basis with due regard to cost effectiveness.

On the Member's question, in consultation with the ERB, my reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) At present, the ERB provides three main types of training courses, namely placement-tied courses, skills upgrading courses and generic skills courses. Of these, placement-tied courses are tailored for the unemployed to assist them in acquiring industry-specific vocational skills to enhance their employability.

Training bodies appointed by the ERB provide three to six-month placement follow-up services to all trainees who completed placement-tied courses (i.e. with an attendance rate of at least 80 per cent), such as

provision of job vacancy information, arrangement of placement counselling and recruitment activities, to help them enter the employment market. In light of the reform measures recommended in the 2024 review, the ERB has strengthened its career planning and job matching services, etc. The ERB will explore ways to enhance the level of its career planning and employment support services, thereby providing more comprehensive career development support for its service targets.

The employment decisions of trainees are affected by multiple factors such as the prevailing market situation, family factors and personal plans. In the past three years (2022-23 to 2024-25), the overall placement rates of ERB's placement-tied courses were above 80 per cent. The ERB is unable to breakdown the placement rate by training courses as the number of such courses is substantial.

(3) At present, retraining allowance will be provided for full-time placement-tied courses with duration of seven days or more to subsidise trainees' expenses for transport and meals during the period for attending the courses, with a view to encouraging and supporting citizens in receiving training. Trainees in placement-tied courses are required to pass the interviews conducted by training bodies to ascertain their intention to engage in employment. Only trainees who attain an attendance rate of at least 80 per cent are eligible to apply for retraining allowance. In addition, trainees can enrol in no more than two placement-tied courses within one year, and they are not allowed to apply for the same course, or course at a similar or lower level of competency in the same discipline as the course previously enrolled.

The ERB keeps under review the arrangement for disbursement of retraining allowance and implements enhancements in a timely manner to ensure the effective use of training resources. Starting from April 1 this year, the ERB has tightened the number of times a trainee can apply for retraining allowance each year, from a maximum of two times within one year and four times within three years to no more than once a year, to ensure effective use of the ERB's resources and that more citizens have access to training opportunities.

(4) The ERB closely observes the latest developments in the local employment market. To ensure that training courses meet the market demand, the ERB, during course development, conducts market research and demand analysis, consults stakeholders of various sectors such as employer associations, trade unions, the ERB's relevant industry consultation networks, industry experts and technical advisors. This is to ensure that the training courses meet the market needs and complement the industry's training needs. The ERB also conducts regular reviews of courses and make adjustments as needed after rolling out the courses.

In terms of medium- to long-term measures, the ERB will strengthen its research capabilities to grasp the trends for prevailing and future skills demands and the manpower needs of different industries (including emerging sectors). The ERB will formulate an appropriate training framework to guide

its training bodies to develop suitable courses to meet the upskilling needs of people with different backgrounds and educational attainments. The ERB will also strengthen collaboration with higher education institutions and leading enterprises to offer more and a wider diversity of courses on skills upgrading.

(5) The full Board of the ERB and its Quality Assurance and Review Committee are responsible for monitoring the performance indicators and overall performance level of training courses, and undertaking reviews when necessary. The ERB has established performance indicators covering such areas as utilisation of training places, trainees' completion of training and placement. Taking the most recent year (2023-24) as an example, all performance indicators were met.

Apart from training courses for the general public, the ERB also provides dedicated youth programmes for young people aged 15 to 29 to assist them in acquiring vocational skills training and placement services. In the past three years (2022-23 to 2024-25), the number of intakes aged 15 to 29 was around 6 per cent of the total number of intakes of ERB courses. The number of intakes of the dedicated youth programmes was also on the rise.

The ERB convenes regular meetings of the "Focus Group on Training for Youth" with representatives of employers, youth concern groups, social service sector, training bodies and the relevant government departments to review the dedicated youth programmes. The ERB also collects information on the employment and further studies of the graduates of placement-tied courses, to ensure that the courses align with the latest development and cater for the needs of the youth. The reformed ERB will continue to explore development of more skills-based and a wider diversity of courses to meet the upskilling needs of people with different backgrounds and educational attainments (including the youth).

(6) As of March 31, 2024, the ERF's balance was around \$13.5 billion. In 2021-22 to 2023-24, the ERF recorded deficits of around \$970 million, \$880 million and \$930 million respectively. During the same period, the incomes of the ERF was around \$610 million, \$730 million and \$640 million respectively, with interest income being the major income source; the ERB's expenditure was around \$1.59 billion, \$1.6 billion and \$1.57 billion respectively, with training courses and programme expenses being the major expenditure. The ERB will continue to closely monitor its financial position and report regularly to the full Board and its Finance and Administration Committee.

The medium- to long-term work recommended in the comprehensive review comprises reforming the ERB's functions, organisational structure and operating mode and consolidation of training resources. These involve amendments to the Ordinance and resources deployment. The ERB is further studying the medium- to long-term reform work with a view to submitting its recommendations to the Government by the end of this year. The Government will then study the follow-up work with the ERB and jointly implement the reform.

LCQ2: Development of fintech

Following is a question by the Hon Robert Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (June 4):

Question:

It is learnt that there are currently over 1 100 fintech companies in Hong Kong, including eight licensed digital banks, four virtual insurers and 10 virtual asset trading platforms. Regarding the development of fintech, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the plans in place to assist licensed fintech companies in expanding their operations and developing products, such as assisting them in expanding their service scope to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, promoting the asset-under-management size and turnover of Exchange Traded Funds on Virtual Asset (VA), enhancing the international competitiveness and attractiveness of VA-related products, as well as developing more futures and options products for VAs, etc;
- (2) whether it will urge the regulators to allow institutional and retail investors to participate in more VA transactions of different types and currencies and relax the eligibility requirements for professional investors, as well as include VAs as assets under the Securities and Futures (Financial Resources) Rules, so as to facilitate the development of the VA market; and
- (3) how the Government will formulate enhancement measures in the three aspects of regulatory statute, tax concessions as well as publicity and promotion, so as to further attract large-scale international fintech companies to establish presence in Hong Kong, and of the plans in place to assist the financial services industry in introducing fintech in order to enhance operational efficiency and reduce costs, thereby promoting the upgrading and transformation of the industry?

Reply:

President,

As an international financial centre with a robust regulatory environment and abundant business opportunities, Hong Kong is an ideal location for promoting the development of fintech. The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) and the financial regulators maintain close communication with the industry to understand their development needs, with a view to formulating appropriate measures to facilitate the development of fintech.

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

(1) To facilitate the continuous and vibrant development of fintech enterprises in Hong Kong, we have adopted a multi-pronged strategy including enhancing Hong Kong's financial infrastructure, building a vibrant fintech ecosystem, nurturing fintech talents, and strengthening our connection and co-operation with the industry in the Mainland and overseas, with a view to creating and providing a conducive environment, thereby promoting fintech innovation and application.

On advancing investment products related to virtual assets (VAs), the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) authorised the first batch of VA futures exchange traded funds (ETFs) for retail investor trading in December 2022, Asia's first batch of VA spot ETFs in April 2024, as well as Asia's first VA futures inverse product in July 2024. These products have broadened the product diversity of the Hong Kong market, further enhancing Hong Kong's position as Asia's leading ETF market.

Besides, in February 2025, the SFC promulgated the "ASPIRe" roadmap, aspiring to strengthening the security, innovation and growth of the market in Hong Kong. One of the focuses of the roadmap is to expand the range of VA products and services, so as to fulfil the need of various types of investors under the prerequisite of investor protection, while enhancing the international competitiveness and attractiveness of Hong Kong's VA market.

The specific measures of the roadmap includes allowing staking services involving VA within systems with sufficient protection measures, to enable for investors to earn additional returns. In this regard, the SFC provided regulatory guidance respectively to licensed VATPs (virtual asset trading platform) on their provision of staking services, and to SFC-authorised funds with exposure to VA (VA Funds) on their engagement in staking. On April 10, 2025, the SFC allowed two licensed VATPs to provide staking services to clients through the imposition of relevant licensing conditions, which was followed by two SFC-authorised VA spot ETFs updating their fund documents in April and May 2025 for their engagement in staking activities.

The SFC is also considering introducing VA derivatives trading for professional investors and will put in place robust risk management measures. These measures will further enrich the product options available in the Hong Kong market while ensuring that transactions are conducted in an orderly, transparent and safe manner.

In light of the latest development of the VA market, the FSTB will promulgate the second Policy Statement on development of VA, articulating the next-step policy vision and direction, including exploring how to leverage the advantages of traditional financial services and innovative technologies in the area of VAs, enhance security and flexibility of real economy activities, and encourage local and international companies to explore the innovation and application of VA technologies.

As for assisting fintech companies in expanding business, the Invest

Hong Kong works closely with industry players to conduct publicity and promotion in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, including participating in major fintech events in the region, as well as connecting with local government departments, regulators, industry associations and innovation and technology parks, with a view to promoting advantages of Hong Kong fintech companies and further expanding into the Mainland market.

(2) Currently, before including any VAs for trading, licensed VATP operators should perform all reasonable due diligence on these VAs, and ensure that these VAs continue to satisfy all criteria. Before providing any VA for retail trading, VATPs should take all reasonable steps to ensure the selected VAs are of high liquidity. The relevant requirements seek to provide sufficient protection for investors (especially retail investors). The SFC will continue to assess the potential risks of VAs in respect of volatility, liquidity, and market manipulation, etc, and keep a close watch of relevant international regulatory development, so as to review the aforementioned requirements. Further, in light of VAs' nature, characteristics and risks, we will continuously evaluate whether the requirements relating to prudential treatment of VA exposures are in line with those in other jurisdictions.

In respect of professional investors' qualifying criteria and minimum monetary threshold requirements, the SFC has conducted a review during 2019/20. The outcome of the review was that the current minimum monetary thresholds were simple and easy-to-interpret and appropriately reflected an investor's loss absorption ability, as well as being in line with those in comparable jurisdictions (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore and Australia). We will continue to evaluate whether the professional investor qualification requirements are in line with those in comparable jurisdictions.

It should be noted that with the International Organization of Securities Commissions' (IOSCO) publication of its Final Report with Policy Recommendations for Crypto and Digital Asset Markets in November 2023, the IOSCO recommends that regulatory frameworks should seek to achieve regulatory outcomes for investor protection and market integrity that are the same as, or consistent with, those required in traditional financial markets, which is an approach adopted by the SFC since as early as 2018.

(3) To attract more large-scale international fintech companies to establish presence in Hong Kong, the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES) offers one-stop services and special facilitation measures. On regulation, the OASES assists companies in understanding the licensing and regulatory framework of the relevant sectors and co-ordinates with the financial regulators when necessary to facilitate the licence applications. Regarding tax benefits, the OASES shares with companies information of applicable tax benefits and funding schemes and connects companies with the higher education institutions, research and development institutions and innovation and technology parks, with a view to expediting their business development in Hong Kong. Separately, we will further enhance the preferential tax regimes for funds, single family offices and carried interest, including the inclusion of VAs as qualifying transactions eligible

for tax concessions. As for publicity and promotion, the OASES actively engages overseas and the Mainland strategic enterprises to introduce the advantages and policies in relation to fintech in Hong Kong through organising regular duty visits and enterprise exchange activities, thereby attracting more high-potential fintech companies to Hong Kong.

The Government has been working closely with the financial regulators and industry players to actively promote the financial services sector to adopt fintech through multi-pronged measures. According to a survey in 2023, the adoption rate of generative AI in Hong Kong was the highest (38 per cent) among all markets and well above the global average (26 per cent). In October 2024, we issued a policy statement on the responsible application of AI in the financial market. Since the policy statement was issued, we have introduced various initiatives to assist the financial institutions in seizing the opportunities and adopting AI responsibly, including publishing practical guidelines, launching sandbox schemes, as well as organising seminars and talks.

The Government and financial regulators will continue to maintain close liaison with the industry and assess their needs for fintech, with a view to formulating the corresponding support measures for facilitating the development of new quality productive forces.

Thank you, President.

LCQ12: Application of artificial intelligence in primary and secondary school teaching

Following is a question by Professor the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 4):

Question:

The Steering Committee for Teaching in Basic Education under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE) has recently published the "Guidelines for artificial intelligence (AI) general education in primary and secondary schools (2025)" and the "Guidelines for the use of generative AI in primary and secondary schools (2025)", with the aim of regulating and promoting AI education across all key stages. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will follow the practice of MOE in formulating guidelines for

AI education and the use of generative AI in primary and secondary schools, so as to build a comprehensive AI general education system and set clear regulations for the use of generative AI in primary and secondary education for various learning stages;

- (2) in order to prevent students from becoming over-reliant on generative AI to the detriment of their independent thinking skills, whether the authorities will draw up guidelines on the use of generative AI for different learning stages, so as to provide teachers and parents with reference material for supervising students and their children's use of generative AI;
- (3) in order to effectively safeguard the privacy and data security of students, whether the authorities will require schools to adopt the Artificial Intelligence: Model Personal Data Protection Framework published by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, so as to provide primary and secondary school teachers and administrative staff with clear guidelines on the use of AI;
- (4) in order to support teachers in providing teaching and learning support plans tailored to students of different levels and abilities, whether the authorities will produce a large language model for all primary and secondary schools across the territory that can be used for teaching and learning purposes, as well as developing vertical applications; and
- (5) whether the authorities will draw up guidelines and provide technical support for primary and secondary schools to enhance their application of AI in school affairs, thereby encouraging the use of generative AI technologies to optimise school administration?

Reply:

President,

To align with the national strategy of building a leading country in education, keeping pace with global development trends, and nurturing talent for the advancement of innovation and technology (I&T) in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) is stepping up its efforts to promote digital education, including the application and education of artificial intelligence (AI). The EDB established the Steering Committee on Strategic Development of Digital Education in early 2025, making reference to the latest developments on the Mainland and relevant policies and experiences from other places, to provide recommendations on the goals, strategies and future directions for the implementation of digital education in Hong Kong. The EDB will organise the first Digital Education Week in July combining the International Summit on the Use of AI in Learning and Teaching Languages and Other Subjects and the Hong Kong Education City's annual event Learning & Teaching Expo, to promote in-depth exploration and application of AI and frontier technology.

Our consolidated reply to the written question raised by Professor the Hon William Wong is as follows:

Through ongoing curriculum and guide renewal, enriching learning and teaching resources, strengthening teacher training, optimising education ancillary infrastructure and promoting cross-sector collaboration, the EDB assists schools in harnessing AI and other I&T to enhance the digital literacy and the competence of both teachers and students on AI. The EDB places emphasis on developing students' values, attitudes, knowledge and skills, enabling them to use digital technology (including generative AI) effectively and ethically.

Curriculum and guides

At present, almost all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools have implemented enriched coding education and AI education at the upper primary level and the junior secondary level respectively. The Module on AI for Junior Secondary Level covers topics such as AI basics, AI ethics, societal impact and future of work, which enables teachers and students to learn about the appropriate application scenarios of AI, as well as relevant security topics including personal data privacy and data security. The EDB launched the updated "Information Literacy for Hong Kong Students" Learning Framework in 2024, with a new literacy area "recognise the ethical issues arising from the application of emerging and advanced information technologies" which includes subjects relating to laws and regulations, academic integrity and excessive dependence arising from I&T such as AI technologies, with an aim to develop students to become ethical users of information technology (IT).

In addition, the EDB has, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Journalism Education Foundation, launched the learning and teaching resources on Cyber Security and Technology Crime Information and Media and Information Literacy respectively, which include contents to strengthen the protection of personal privacy, enhance students' ability to discern the authenticity of information and promote the proper use of social media. These resources can guide students in the proper use of AI and nurture positive values and attitudes towards the application of innovative technologies.

We have always encouraged schools to make reference to good practices when applying IT and I&T (such as AI). The Artificial Intelligence: Model Personal Data Protection Framework issued by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, Hong Kong (PCPD), provides useful references on safeguarding personal data privacy and cyber security issues.

The EDB will make reference to the latest developments and experiences from local, the country and other places, update and optimise the curriculum and guides, adhere to the use of AI for good, and while improving efficiency and effectiveness, maintain the security of AI and technology education, and guard against challenges and risks related to laws and regulations, ethics, authenticity of information, and privacy protection.

Training

The EDB has continuously enhanced teacher training, these include the provision of AI-related professional development programmes with contents covering topics like the development of AI, the planning of applying AI in teaching and learning, the application of AI tools in different subjects, the safeguarding of data security, as well as the prevention of students from becoming over-reliant on generative AI to the detriment of their independent thinking skills. The training programmes are conducted in both online and offline modes to benefit a greater number of teachers. In addition, the EDB has co-organised a number of teacher training programmes with the PCPD, enabling schools to understand how to address data security risks and handle data breaches, as well as enhancing school personnel's awareness of data security.

In addition, we have continued to launch relevant parent training to help parents cultivate children's good habit in using IT in their daily life, including the proper use of generative AI for learning.

Education ancillary infrastructure

To optimise education ancillary infrastructure, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) has allocated \$500 million for the implementation of the e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme to develop quality e-learning ancillary facilities that meet the local learning and teaching needs through co-operation among schools, tertiary institutions, education and professional bodies, and business sectors. A total of over 20 projects have been funded under the Programme and have commenced in the beginning of the 2023/24 school year. The learning platforms and resources developed under these projects deploy I&T such as big data and AI to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness in a wide array of subjects/areas. As at end-March 2025, around 400 schools participated in the collaborative development projects, involving around 31 000 students. It is expected that the deliverables of the projects will be successively released in mid-2025 and uploaded to the Hong Kong Education City for subscription by schools. The QEF will also sponsor publicly-funded schools to use the deliverables of the projects to facilitate the sustainable development of the projects.

The EDB will continue to optimise the platform of Hong Kong Education City, make reference and utilise existing high-quality learning and teaching platforms, large language models and programmes in local, the country or other places, encourage the sharing of high-quality resources across sectors and schools, and explore how to further support learning and teaching in Hong Kong in a cost-effective manner.

Looking forward, under the leadership of the Steering Committee on Strategic Development of Digital Education, the EDB will continue to review the implementation and development of related support strategies on improving students' digital literacy and skills, strengthening relevant professional training for teachers, enhancing collaboration with different stakeholders and continuously optimising digital education ancillary infrastructure, to meet the needs of school development and student learning in the era of AI.

Man charged by Police National Security Department

The National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force (NSD) today (June 4) laid charges against a 35-year-old man with four counts of "bomb hoax".

NSD arrested the man for "conspiracy to commit terrorist activities" on June 2.

The case will be mentioned at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts this afternoon.

LCQ3: Leveraging technology to promote tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (June 4):

Question:

There are views pointing out that Hong Kong's efforts to digitalise tourism services have failed to keep pace with development. It is learnt that the Mainland, Macao, Korea and Singapore have all leveraged technology to promote their tourism industries. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Government earlier on announced the deployment of augmented reality (AR) technology for the City in Time tourism project in the Kowloon City District, what further plans the Government has in place to apply AR and virtual reality (VR) technologies to tourist attractions, particularly sites commemorating the War of Resistance and historical attractions, and set out in a table the attractions where these technologies have been introduced and the number of users to date;

(2) whether it will draw on the experiences of cities in Asia and the Mainland and make better use of the information available on the Hong Kong Tourism Board website to launch an all-in-one mobile travel application

providing services such as travel guides, attraction recommendations, real-time traffic information, and discounts on accommodation and dining, while also analysing visitors' behavioural patterns; if so, which government department or organisation will be responsible for designing, updating and maintaining the application, and of the implementation timetable; and

(3) as it is learnt that the Immigration Department (ImmD) currently does not collect data on travellers' arrival and departure patterns, their length of stay in Hong Kong, the provinces from which Mainland visitors came and the types of endorsement they held, etc, whether the Government will consider enhancing ImmD's systems to obtain more traveller information for analytical purposes?

Reply:

President,

With the advancement of information technology, smart tourism has become a new trend for visitors to plan their itineraries and to enhance visitors' experience. "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" proposed the establishment of an inter-departmental Working Group on Smart Tourism (the Working Group) to formulate and implement measures to promote smart tourism. The Working Group has completed the formulation of relevant strategies and measures, with details covering two strategic directions and 19 specific short, medium and long-term measures incorporated into the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 promulgated by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau in December 2024.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, our reply to the question raised by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok is as follows:

(1) The Government has kept promoting the use of technology by tourist attractions to enhance facilities and transmission of information with a view to providing visitors with a more diverse and enriching experience. Currently, many major attractions in Hong Kong have already adopted technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), interactive experiences and QR codes to facilitate visitors and enrich their experience. For example, Hong Kong Ocean Park has launched a new giant panda-themed attraction "Panda Wonders: An Illuminated Journey", where giant pandas make appearances as cartoon characters through 3D projection technology and visitors may interact and take photos with AR giant pandas; the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort makes use of AR technology to blend physical scenes with digital storytelling experiences to enhance visitors' interaction with Disney characters and immersive participation; the two museums in the West Kowloon Cultural District also incorporate AR and VR technologies into cultural and artistic activities, for instance, M+ interactive media room offers innovative VR and digital artworks, which are well received by visitors. Many exhibitions flexibly utilise elements such as VR, projection and interactive devices, such as the "FLASH! The Palace Museum – A Pop-Up Digital Experience" held at Tai Kwun in January 2025 which made use of these elements to vividly recreate the essence of the Palace Museum's

cultural treasures.

Besides, the "City in Time" project taken forward by the Tourism Commission and many museums under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, including the Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMH) and the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence (MWRCD), have adopted the AR or VR technologies. Further details are as follows:

The "City in Time" project makes use of AR and creative media art through mobile application to bring back to life the history of individual landmarks. Phase I of the project was completed in 2021 at 28 locations around Central, Jordan, the Peak, Sham Shui Po, Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei. Phase II of the project has been launched in stages from 2024 onwards and the project has now been extended to Lei Yue Mun and Tai Hang. Preparations are underway for expanding the project to Kowloon City in 2025. As at April 2025, the cumulative number of page views on the project website exceeded 152 000, while the cumulative number of downloads of the project's mobile application exceeded 31 000.

The HKMH is hosting "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: The Great Unity – Civilisation of the Qin and Han Dynasties in Shaanxi Province" exhibition, which features an interactive zone with AR exhibits to enhance visitors' understanding of the history and cultures of the Qin and Han dynasties. The HKMH recorded over 940 000 visitors in 2024-25.

The permanent and thematic exhibitions currently presented at the MWRCD give an account of the history of Japan's aggression against China and Hong Kong's participation in the War of Resistance, as well as the missions and contributions of guerrillas after the fall of Hong Kong. The MWRCD complements the exhibitions with interactive installations, videos and oral history from veterans, and employs technologies such as VR in events from time to time, allowing visitors to engage with history through various media. The MWRCD recorded over 160 000 visitors in 2024-25.

(2) The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has been striving to advance Hong Kong to be a smart tourism destination. In terms of information dissemination, the Discover Hong Kong platform of the HKTB currently adopts a web application (Web App). In fact, Web Apps have developed into a new trend in recent years. Compared to mobile applications (Mobile App), which require downloading, updating, and occupy storage space, Web Apps are more convenient to users as visitors can simply access them through the web browser of their mobile phones. In addition, the HKTB constantly enhances and enriches the content of the Discover Hong Kong, providing visitors with comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date travel information. For example, riding on the recent Tuen Ng Festival long weekend of the Mainland, the HKTB featured dedicated pages on the Discover Hong Kong, consolidating useful travel information such as citywide events, exclusive offers, transportation updates and operating hours of attractions to attract and help visitors travel to Hong Kong.

The HKTB is currently developing a "Live Travel Map" and kick-starting the preliminary development of "Smart Itinerary Planner" on the Discover Hong

Kong, to assist visitors in obtaining real-time travel information in different parts of Hong Kong and provide them with personalised itinerary suggestions.

(3) The Immigration Department (ImmD) controls all entries into and exits from Hong Kong, examining passengers arriving and departing by land, sea and air. The visitor statistics collected and maintained by the ImmD during daily immigration control operations are also provided to relevant Government departments and organisations in support of their statistical and research work. For instance, the visitor statistics that the ImmD currently provides to the HKTB on a regular basis include: foreign visitor statistics by nationality, mode of entry/exit, gender, age, and length of stay, arrival statistics of Mainland visitors by type of endorsement/travel document and mode of entry/exit etc. In addition, during specific festive periods, the ImmD also provides, at the HKTB's request, relevant information on departing visitors' age, gender, nationality and arrival time on a daily basis.

The ImmD does not maintain statistics on provinces that Mainland visitors were from as mentioned in the question.

Thank you, President.