

LCQ4: Raising the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Fernando Cheung and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

On the seventh of this month, the Government announced that starting from the first of next month, the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) would be changed from 60 to 65. As that measure has aroused grave concerns in the community and among Members of this Council, this Council passed on the seventeenth of this month an amendment proposed by me to a related motion, urging the Government to "shelve the tightening of eligibility age for elderly CSSA to 65". The Government announced on the eighteenth of this month that starting from the first of next month, an Employment Support Supplement (ESS) of \$1,060 would be provided monthly to able-bodied adult CSSA recipients aged between 60 and 64. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total amount of CSSA payments granted to elderly CSSA recipients aged between 60 and 64 in each of the past five years, and a breakdown of the number of such recipients by the following characteristics: educational attainment, years of stay on CSSA, the trades and positions in which they were previously employed, whether or not they had any record of work injuries, and current employability (including health conditions and types of jobs which are suitable for them to take up); whether it has assessed the reasons for the number of elderly CSSA recipients dropping continuously in the past five years;

(2) of the anticipated number of able-bodied adult CSSA recipients aged between 60 and 64 in the current year and each of the coming five years, and the total amount of ESS they will receive; given that the objective of ESS is to encourage the recipients to join the labour market, of the reasons for not granting the supplement to able-bodied adult CSSA recipients aged below 60; and

(3) of the respective names of the various supplements and special grants (e.g. grants covering costs of dental treatment and glasses) for which elderly CSSA recipients are eligible but able-bodied adult CSSA recipients are ineligible; in respect of each of those items, the number of recipients and expenditure in each of the past five years; the Government's justifications for deciding that starting from the first of next month, all of those elderly persons aged between 60 and 64 who cannot receive elderly CSSA may not receive such supplements and special grants?

Reply:

President,

In view of the improved life expectancy of the population of Hong Kong and the trend of extending the retirement age to 65, the Government announced in the Policy Address in January 2017 that the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) will be adjusted from 60 to 65. The relevant adjustment is one of the social security measures announced in the abovementioned Policy Address. Other measures include raising the asset limits for the Normal Old Age Living Allowance (OALA), introducing the Higher OALA, implementing the Fujian Scheme in addition to the Guangdong Scheme, etc. In this connection, the Higher OALA, which has been implemented for about six months since its launch in June 2018, has become the social security programme with the highest number of elderly recipients aged 65 or above. At present, around 480 000 elderly persons are receiving the higher allowance of \$3,485 per month. With about 60 000 Normal OALA (currently at \$2,600 per month) recipients, the OALA programme covers some 540 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above, involving an annual recurrent expenditure of about \$24 billion.

Regarding the adjustment of eligible age for elderly CSSA from February 1 this year, I would like to reiterate that persons aged between 60 and 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1 this year will be "grandfathered" and not be affected. The CSSA payments of persons with disabilities or persons in ill health will not be affected either. They will, regardless of age, continue to receive CSSA payments which are higher than those applicable to able-bodied adults. It is noteworthy that around 70 per cent of CSSA recipients aged between 55 and 59 are with disabilities or in ill-health.

As for the able-bodied recipients aged between 60 and 64 under the new arrangement (i.e. those who are not disabled, in ill-health or have not received elderly CSSA), they will continue to be entitled to the basic living protection as able-bodied adults under CSSA and receive the standard rates and special grants that are applicable to able-bodied adults (including rent allowance, water and sewage charge allowance, burial grant, child-care grants and school grants which are disbursed on a need basis). Furthermore, they will also benefit from the disregarded earnings (DE) arrangement, i.e. the recipients will have part of their monthly earnings from employment disregarded in the CSSA assessment. In other words, they will have extra income on top of their CSSA payments. Recipients will be entitled to the maximum DE level of \$2,500 if their employment earnings reach \$4,200. In addition, CSSA recipients are entitled to medical fee waiver for public healthcare.

The Government has announced that it will put in place, with effect from February 1 this year upon the adjustment of eligible age for elderly CSSA, the Employment Support Supplement under the CSSA Scheme especially designed for able-bodied adults aged between 60 and 64. Eligible recipients will be provided with a fixed rate of \$1,060 per month (i.e. the difference between

the monthly CSSA standard rates applicable to singleton able-bodied elderly and singleton able-bodied adult recipients). The supplement seeks to encourage able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 to join the labour market. It will also benefit employed able-bodied adult recipients in this age group to support them to remain in employment. The supplement will be adjusted annually according to the established mechanism. Moreover, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will provide suitable employment support to these persons under the "Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance" according to their situation and needs. The Labour Department (LD) has also enhanced the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, and renamed it as the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM) on September 1, 2018. Employers engaging mature job seekers aged 60 or above who have left the workforce or are unemployed would receive a monthly on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per employee for a period of six to 12 months under the EPEM.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The breakdown of the number of CSSA recipients aged between 60 and 64 by their education level, their duration of receiving CSSA and their categories of standard rates in the past five years is set out at Annex 1. The CSSA Scheme is a household-based programme. The SWD disburses standard rates, supplements and special grants to CSSA cases according to their respective number of family members as well as the needs of individual members. In this connection, the SWD does not maintain the total amount of CSSA payment disbursed to recipients aged between 60 and 64. It also does not maintain information on their employment and work injury records.

Meanwhile, there is a slight decrease in the number of elderly CSSA cases in the past five years. The figure at end-2018 (i.e. 142 364 cases) registered a 6 per cent decrease as compared with that in five years ago (i.e. 151 151 cases in early 2014). Indeed, the relevant figure has remained between 140 000 and 150 000 since 2003. Whether a person applies for or continues to receive CSSA involves a number of factors and considerations, including individual, family and socio-economic circumstances. It should be noted that the CSSA Scheme is only a part of the Government's cash assistance system. We have put in place various measures to cater for the different needs of needy persons. In particular, the expenditure on cash assistance programmes targeting at elderly group, i.e. persons aged 65 or above (i.e. the expenditure arising from the Old Age Allowance and the recently introduced Normal OALA and Higher OALA) has exceeded the overall expenditure on all age groups under the CSSA Scheme. Such expenditure will continue to increase significantly given the ageing population.

(2) The Government has reiterated that the adjustment of eligible age for elderly CSSA is not intended for reducing expenditure. Having regard to the views from the public and stakeholders (including members of the Legislative Council), the SWD will provide the Employment Support Supplement to able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 upon the implementation of the relevant arrangement on February 1 this year. Taking into account the job seeking and employment situation of the persons concerned, the supplement

aims to encourage them to join the labour market and remain in employment. In fact, the abovementioned EPEM administered by the LD has specifically provided higher on-the-job training allowance to employers of eligible persons aged 60 or above.

As I have pointed out earlier, whether a person applies for or continues to receive CSSA involves a number of individual, family and socio-economic considerations. The Government is unable to provide an accurate assessment on the number of able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 of and the expenditure under the Employment Support Supplement. In fact, the CSSA is a non-cash limited programme and all eligible persons in need would be provided with support.

As at end-November 2018, there were about 6 500 able-bodied CSSA recipients aged between 55 and 59. If they remain able-bodied and need to receive CSSA when they reach the age of 60 on or after February 1 this year, they will benefit from the Employment Support Supplement. CSSA able-bodied applicants aged between 60 and 64 who have not received elderly CSSA before February 1 this year are also eligible for this supplement.

(3) CSSA households are provided with different standard rates according to the number of household members and their circumstances to meet their different basic needs. Apart from the standard rates, the CSSA Scheme also provides eligible households with supplements and special grants. For example, able-bodied adult recipients are eligible for rent allowance, water and sewage charge allowance, burial grant, child-care grants and school grants according to their needs. Single parents are entitled to the Single Parent Supplement. Furthermore, the Government will provide the Employment Support Supplement to able-bodied adult recipients aged between 60 and 64 from February 1 this year. These supplements and special grants as well as items particularly applicable to recipients who are elderly, disabled or in ill health are set out at Annex 2.

However, as mentioned earlier, CSSA is payable on a household basis and the SWD does not maintain the respective number of recipients of and expenditure under each of the supplements and special grants.

Manager of unlicensed guesthouse fined

A man was fined \$8,000 at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (January 30) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that in November 2017, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected a suspected unlicensed guesthouse on Nathan Road in Mong Kok. During the inspection, the

OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented a room in the guesthouse on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's records, the guesthouse did not possess a licence under the Ordinance on the day of inspection. The man responsible for managing the premises was charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and will lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaeng@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

TAC briefed on follow-up actions in relation to Report of the Independent Review Committee on Franchised Bus Service and free-flow tolling system for tunnels

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed by the Government today (January 30) on the follow-up actions in relation to the recommendations put forward in the Report of the Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service (IRC), as well as the plan to implement a free-flow tolling system (FFTS) at Tseung Kwan O – Lam Tin Tunnel (TKO-LTT) and other government tolled tunnels and roads.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "The IRC put forward a total of 45 recommendations under 16 areas. TAC Members noted that the Government will, in collaboration with the franchised bus operators and other relevant stakeholders, proactively pursue the recommendations with a view to enhancing the operation safety of franchised buses. Members welcomed the measures to further enhance the safety of franchised buses with a view to sustaining the safe and reliable franchised bus service in Hong Kong."

Following the fatal traffic incident involving a franchised bus on Tai Po Road in February last year, the Chief Executive set up the IRC to comprehensively review the operation and monitoring of franchised buses. The IRC commenced its work in late March last year and submitted a report to the Chief Executive on December 31 in the same year.

The Transport Department (TD) will, in conjunction with the franchised bus operators and relevant experts, proactively implement a series of measures to strengthen the safe operation of franchised bus services. The Working Group on the Enhancement of Safety of Franchised Bus, set up by the TD in March last year, has been turned into a permanent set-up so as to provide a common forum for the Government, franchised bus operators and relevant experts to continue to discuss, study, implement and promote various measures to enhance bus safety.

The TAC also noted at the meeting that, as one of the major smart mobility initiatives under the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong, the Government will develop an application of in-vehicle units (IVUs) to allow motorists to pay tunnel tolls without stopping at toll booths.

"Members welcomed the Government's plan to implement FFTSs at other government tolled tunnels and roads by phases, after implementing the system at TKO-LTT upon its target commissioning in late 2021. A FFTS allows vehicle to pay tolls more efficiently by avoiding the need for them to stop at toll booths for manual toll payments, thereby making traffic flow smoother. Toll booths at toll plaza could also be removed, potentially freeing up space for improving existing bus stops. Members also believe that IVUs will lay an important foundation for pursuing smart mobility in Hong Kong. Apart from using them in FFTS, IVUs could facilitate the collection of real-time traffic data for traffic management and big data analysis, and serve other functions such as payment of parking fees by remote means," Professor Cheung said.

The proposed FFTS will read IVUs affixed to vehicles by radio frequency identification supplemented by automatic number plate recognition. To enable toll payment by FFTS at TKO-LTT upon its commissioning, the TD plans to commence issuing IVUs to registered vehicle owners in the third quarter of 2020, including issuing the first IVU for each registered vehicle free-of-charge.

LCQ15: Developing Kowloon East

â€‹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 (January 30):

Question:

â€œSome members of the public have relayed that the emergence of various problems in a number of major infrastructure projects in recent years has greatly undermined their confidence in the Government's proper implementation of infrastructure projects. For instances, the proposals for the Redevelopment of Hong Kong Stadium as well as the construction of the Kai Tak Sports Park and the Hong Kong Palace Museum had been the subjects of incessant controversies before final decisions were made; the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Shatin to Central Link projects experienced situations of serious cost overruns, delays or poor workmanship during the construction stage; the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal has remained practically deserted since its commissioning and failed to bring about the expected benefits; it is doubtful if the recently commissioned Central-Wan Chai Bypass, which cost \$36 billion and took nine years to construct, is effective in alleviating the traffic congestion on the northern part of Hong Kong Island. Some members of the public have queried that the projects introduced by the Government are "good for nothing" and they are even worried that the same mistakes will be made to the projects under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. As such, they have made it clear that they will object to the implementation of any new major infrastructure project. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) when it will make public (i) the findings of the detailed feasibility study on and (ii) the way forward for the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS);

(2) whether the Government, when studying EFLS in the past years, concurrently conducted studies on reclamation at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter, with a view to increasing land supply in Kowloon East and resolving the problem of insufficient ancillary transport facilities for the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal;

(3) given that the first batch of residential flats built under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision will not be completed for intake until 2032 the earliest, but some studies have pointed out that by conducting reclamation along the waters between the Kai Tak Approach Channel located on the north-eastern part of the Kai Tak runway and Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter, more than 85 hectares of land can be provided from 2024 to 2027, which will be sufficient for the construction of 70 000 residential flats, whether, before taking forward the reclamation plans relating to the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, the Government will "take the short cut" by proceeding with the reclamation works at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter which are smaller in scale, faster to complete and less costly, so as to demonstrate the Government's ability to implement highly efficient and cost-effective infrastructure projects, thereby restoring the confidence of the public in the Government's proper implementation of infrastructure projects; and

(4) whether it has assessed if conducting reclamation works at Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter will breach the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531); if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, and given some experts' criticisms that the Ordinance was enacted without prior

detailed analysis and public consultation, comprises unclear provisions and has gravely hindered the development of Hong Kong, whether the Government will consider amending the Ordinance with a view to commencing the works concerned as soon as possible to provide more residential sites?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been implementing major infrastructure and public works projects in an appropriate and orderly manner with a view to improving people's quality of living, enhancing the long-term competitiveness and promoting the economic development of Hong Kong. Notwithstanding that there have been instances of cost overruns and delays in the delivering of certain mega projects in recent years due to unforeseeable circumstances that arose in the course of project implementation, we have maintained consistently good performance in cost estimation for projects under the Capital Works Programme as a whole (Note).

In view of the rising aspirations from the general public for better performance of public works projects in recent years, we established in June 2016 the Project Cost Management Office (PCMO) under the Works Branch of the Development Bureau to take forward various cost management initiatives for public works projects and promote cost management in the private construction sector. Subsequently, the Chief Executive announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the Government will upgrade the PCMO and expand its establishment and functions. We will therefore establish the Project Strategy and Governance Office for implementing strategic initiatives and enhancing capabilities in cost surveillance and project governance, so as to enhance the cost-effectiveness of major infrastructure and public works projects (including those public works projects under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision), minimise risks of cost overrun and delays with a view to coping with Hong Kong's long-term development and meeting our people's needs.

With respect to the Kai Tak Development (KTD), the Government has been taking forward the implementation of various infrastructure projects in phases to cope with the new population intake and various development needs in the district with a view to realizing the planning theme of transforming the KTD into a heritage, green, sports and tourism hub.

Our responses to the four parts of the question raised by Hon Paul Tse, having taken into account the inputs of relevant departments, are as follows:

(1) The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) is conducting the second stage of the detailed feasibility study for the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS), which is to explore the EFLS scheme, including its network coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. and conduct associated technical and financial assessments to ascertain its feasibility. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will consider the way forward for the EFLS project.

(2) to (4) The Government started planning for the future development of the former Kai Tak Airport site in the early 1990s. In 2001, the Government completed the Comprehensive Feasibility Study for the Revised Scheme of South East Kowloon Development, which proposed a total development area of 460 ha with about 133 ha from reclamation including the northern part of the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter (KTTS). In light of the judgment handed down by the Court of Final Appeal regarding the interpretation of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) in January 2004, the Government launched the Kai Tak Planning Review in mid-2004 with a view to examining the planning and engineering works of the former Kai Tak Airport site and preparing a new development proposal based on the 'zero reclamation' principle. Three stages of public engagement were conducted between 2004 and 2006. Subsequently, recommendations of the Kai Tak Planning Review were incorporated into the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) in November 2006, which were approved by the Chief Executive in Council in November 2007. The approved Kai Tak OZP No. S/K22/6 currently in force is mainly based on the OZP exhibited in 2006 which does not involve any reclamation proposal and has gone through several rounds of public participation. Neither is there proposal of reclaiming the KTTS for the purpose of increasing land supply in Hong Kong under the studies for the EFLS.

In fact, the KTTS is part of a busy working harbour, as well as a good place for water recreation. The Government is now promoting the development of the typhoon shelter in accordance with such a direction and on the basis of the existing Kai Tak OZP. For instance, the Government is undertaking the "Planning and Engineering Study on Kwun Tong Action Area – Feasibility Study". The study area comprises the Kwun Tong Action Area, the KTTS and part of the Kai Tak Approach Channel. The study proposes water body co-use initiatives to provide venues in the typhoon shelter for secondary contact water-based recreational activities (e.g. rowing) during non-typhoon days. The concerned reclamation proposal will affect the direction of promoting water body co-use. Besides, the KTTS is the second largest typhoon shelter within the Victoria Harbour. If the KTTS is to be released for other development purposes, the overall supply of sheltered berthing spaces in Hong Kong would decrease, which will render the overall supply of sheltered berthing spaces insufficient to address the demand of local vessels in future. Hence, if reclamation is to be conducted at the KTTS, site(s) must be identified in advance for planning of new typhoon shelters or sheltered anchorages, so as to ensure that there will be sufficient safe berthing spaces for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather.

As mentioned above, the Government is taking steps to implement the KTD in accordance with the approved Kai Tak OZP, and there is currently no plan to carry out major reclamation works in any part of the KTTS, which forms part of the Victoria Harbour. There is also no intention to make amendment to the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (Cap. 531) in the meantime.

Regarding the public transport for the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT), the Transport Department (TD) has been closely monitoring the relevant passenger demand and reviewed the public transport service level from time to time. At present, there are daily franchised bus, green minibus and ferry

services plying between the terminal and other areas. The TD will continue to carry out such work with a view to enhancing the public transport service level of the KTCT as and when necessary.

Besides, CEDD is at present carrying out improvement works to a number of vehicular accesses (via Cheung Yip Street at its junction with Hoi Bun Road through a route of single two-lane roads comprising Shing Cheong Road at the former south apron, Kai Tak Bridge and Shing Fung Road at the former runway) to the KTCT. The said road improvement works involve the realignment and widening of the existing traffic route to a dual two-lane distributor road for completion in 2019. CEDD has also planned to commence construction of the Road D3 (Metro Park Section) in the first half of 2019 that will provide a direct traffic route within KTD linking the developments at the former south apron and former runway (including KTCT) with the former north apron (including the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link). The capacity of the road network serving the terminal will be substantially increased upon the progressive completion of the said road works.

Note: The Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council approved a total of about 580 Category A works projects with a total provision of \$890 billion in the past 10 years. Among them, about 70 projects required application to the FC for additional funding, which totalled around \$64.5 billion. In other words, additional funding was required in approximately 10 per cent of the projects and the amount represented some seven per cent of the total provision.

LCQ3: The boundary control point at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

â€‹The boundary control point (BCP) at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai (the new BCP) connecting Hong Kong and Shenzhen East is expected to be completed and commissioned within this year. By then, it will be more convenient for residents of Guangdong and Hong Kong to visit each other and cross-boundary freight transport. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest progress of the construction works for and the expected commissioning date of the new BCP; the respective maximum daily numbers of cross-boundary vehicle trips and passenger trips that can be handled by the

new BCP, as well as the expected impact of the commissioning of this BCP on the utilisation rates of the various existing land BCPs;

(2) whether it will set different restrictions for different classes of vehicles on using the new BCP; if so, of the details; and

(3) whether it has assessed the changes in the volume of vehicular flow and pedestrian flow as well as the demand for public transport services (e.g. feeder bus services) in the nearby areas after the commissioning of the new BCP; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

â€‹Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point (the new BCP) is one of the major co-operation projects among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao stated in the National 12th Five-Year Plan's dedicated chapter on Hong Kong and Macao. It is one of the key infrastructures to strengthen the cross-boundary transport connectivity within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), which can provide Hong Kong with more room for development, foster the flow of people and goods, and promote economic development and regional cooperation under the "one-hour living circle" in the Greater Bay Area. The new BCP will facilitate smooth and efficient people and cargo flows across the boundary, and will play an important strategic role in supporting Hong Kong's long-term economic growth.

â€‹Currently, all cross-boundary traffic going from the eastern New Territories to the eastern Shenzhen and Guangdong has to travel through busy local roads in Hong Kong and Shenzhen via the two existing boundary control points at Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok before joining the highway systems, affecting the convenience of people and cargo flows across the boundary. To address this problem, we are constructing an approximately 11km long dual two-lane connecting road (Connecting Road) on the Hong Kong side of the new BCP, to link the new BCP with the Fanling Highway interchange, via Sha Tau Kok Road, Ping Yeung and Lin Ma Hang Road interchanges, thereby improving the traffic in the North District, alleviating the busy traffic conditions in the area of Sha Tau Kok and Ta Kwu Ling, and facilitating long-term development of the North District. The new BCP on the Shenzhen side will connect with the Shenzhen Eastern Corridor to Longgang, whence to the eastern part of Guangdong Province via the Shenzhen-Huizhou Expressway (also known as Huizhou-Yantian Expressway) or the Shenzhen-Shantou Expressway, thereby providing a direct and efficient cross-boundary access between Hong Kong and eastern Shenzhen, Huizhou as well as eastern Guangdong, and greatly reducing the travelling time between Hong Kong/Shenzhen and eastern Guangdong.

The new BCP will be the seventh land-based control points on the Shenzhen-Hong Kong boundary, and will have direct access facilities for both passengers and vehicles. The public may take public transport, private cars or walk through the pedestrian subway to reach the new BCP for immigration clearance. Apart from the Departure Hall and the Arrival Hall, there will be

a Public Transport Interchange, pick up/drop off areas for private cars and a public car park with 415 parking spaces inside the Passenger Terminal Building. Besides, there will be a pedestrian subway linking the new BCP with the adjacent Lin Ma Hang Road so that the public can directly access the Passenger Terminal Building on foot. The new BCP is designed to handle 17 850 vehicle trips and 30 000 passenger trips daily, and will help re-distribute the cross-boundary traffic amongst the land-based control points in the east, alleviating the busy conditions in the existing control points.

Having consulted relevant policy bureaux and departments, I provide a consolidated reply to the three parts of the Hon Yiu Si-wing's question as follows:

(1) The construction project for the new BCP comprises various major items of works, including reprovisioning of Chuk Yuen Village and the border patrol road, improvement of Shenzhen River, site formation, construction of the Connecting Road, the new BCP buildings and associated facilities. Regarding the latest works progress, reprovisioning of Chuk Yuen Village was basically completed in 2012, while the reprovisioning of border patrol road and improvement of Shenzhen River were completed in 2015 and 2017 respectively. Meanwhile, construction of the Connecting Road is about 97 per cent complete, and is in the final testing and commissioning stage; construction of the New BCP buildings is about 85 per cent complete, and the subsequent equipment installation and testing and commissioning works have already commenced. We strive to complete the construction of the new BCP this year, while the commissioning schedule for the new BCP will be confirmed through ongoing coordination between the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The latest progress of the major items of works under the new BCP project is shown in Annex 1.

The design daily handling capacity of the new BCP is 30 000 passengers and 17 850 vehicles. When the new BCP is commissioned, it will help redistribute the cross-boundary traffic among the control points in the east, and enhance the overall handling capacity of the control points in the east. According to the projections made during the planning stage, we forecast that at the early stage after commissioning the new BCP, the daily passenger and vehicular flows through the new BCP will be about 17 500 and 7 700 respectively. For the two nearby existing control points (i.e. Sha Tau Kok and Man Kam To), the total daily passenger and vehicular flows will be lowered by about 18 per cent and 26 per cent respectively, benefited from the traffic redistribution.

(2) The new BCP is designed and constructed according to the idea of "direct access to people and vehicles". Apart from taking the local public transport services, like franchised buses, green minibuses and taxis, the public can also access the new BCP by private cars. As regards cross-boundary traffic, the governments of Hong Kong and Guangdong are now dealing with the quota arrangement for different categories of cross-boundary vehicles to travel between Hong Kong and Guangdong via the new BCP, including cross-boundary coaches, hire cars, private cars and goods vehicles, so as to meet the different traffic demands of passengers and goods delivery trade.

(3) At the investigation and detailed design stages of the new BCP project, we conducted traffic impact assessments to assess the traffic and transport impacts of the new BCP on the nearby road network. As the new BCP project will provide the new Connecting Road to connect the new BCP with the Fanling Highway, it is anticipated that after commissioning of the new Connecting Road, most of the vehicles travelling between Hong Kong and Guangdong through the New BCP will not use the existing road network in the North District. Therefore, commissioning of the new BCP will not cause significant impact on the traffic in North District. Besides, it is anticipated that part of the existing traffic along Sha Tau Kok Road will be diverted to the new Connecting Road for access to Fanling Highway, thus improving the traffic conditions along Sha Tau Kok Road.

Having considered various factors like the new BCP's geographical location, road and public transport networks, and new demands for public transport services, we have planned appropriate public transport services to facilitate the public's use of the new BCP conveniently, upon its commissioning. Local public transport services under planning include three franchised bus routes (via Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Sha Tin, Tai Po, Sheung Shui and Fanling areas), one green minibuss route (to and from Sheung Shui MTR Station), coach services for group tourists, and taxi (including urban and New Territories taxis) services. Besides, to ensure that the operators for the three franchised bus routes can handle not only the anticipated demand but also a sudden surge in demand, the Transport Department will take into account the capability of the operators in handling sudden surge in demand when selecting the operators.