

LCQ1: Schools applying for all their Primary 3 students to participate in the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Last year, the Education Bureau (EDB) resumed the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), which was administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Approximately 10 per cent of Primary 3 students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary school are sampled to participate in TSA. In addition, schools may on their own apply to the HKEAA for all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA (full participation in TSA), and may request for their TSA school reports under such circumstances. The Secretary for Education indicated in March last year that the EDB would not ask about the relevant information. It has been reported that in variance with the practice adopted last year, the HKEAA refuses in this year to disclose the number of schools which applied for full participation in TSA. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of schools that applied for full participation in TSA last year and this year to date, and the total number of students involved, together with a breakdown by school type (i.e. aided, DSS, government and private primary schools);

(2) as the Chief Executive (CE) told the media on the 8th of this month that she would "request the various policy bureaux to be more proactive and positive when making arrangements for giving an account of important issues to the media" and that she was "very respectful of the media's function of overseeing the Government for the public", and there are views that the number of schools applying for full participation in TSA provides important reference information for formulating primary schools' curriculum, teaching arrangements and assessment system, whether the CE will require the EDB to gain an understanding from the HKEAA of the reasons for its refusal to disclose the relevant information, so that the EDB can give a full account of the implementation of the policy to the public; and

(3) whether it will require schools to consult all of their teachers and all of the parents of their students before they apply for full participation in TSA, so as to implement the policy objectives of "Led by Professionals" and "Listening to Views Directly" in the field of education, as advocated by the CE?

Reply:

President,

The Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) conducted over two years since 2015 a review, during which views of stakeholders, such as school sponsoring bodies, school heads, teachers and parents, were collected through various means and channels in full demonstration of the principles of "Led by Professionals" and "Listening to Views Directly". The Committee's report and recommendations included the arrangements for Primary 3 TSA in 2018 and beyond and the related enhancement measures. The Government accepted the recommendations in the report, and started handling Primary 3 TSA separately at the territory-wide and school levels with effect from 2018.

At the territory-wide level, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) samples around 10 per cent of students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme school for Primary 3 TSA each year. Students' assessment results are only counted as territory-wide data serving as useful information for the Education Bureau (EDB) in fine-tuning education policies and curriculum arrangements.

If schools consider that the school-level reports can help them understand the overall strengths and weaknesses of students as well as formulate targeted measures to facilitate students' learning, the HKEAA can arrange for full participation of their Primary 3 students in TSA. Respective schools will be provided with individual school reports. Since the EDB merely needs territory-wide data and does not see the number of schools arranging for full participation of students in Primary 3 TSA has any relationship with the primary school curriculum, learning and teaching as well as assessment system, the EDB would not request school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA, or enquire about the identities of participating schools.

Primary 3 TSA of 2018 was conducted in May and June last year. The relevant TSA Report was also uploaded to the HKEAA's website in mid-October last year.

Our reply to the Hon Ip Kin-yuen's various questions is as follows:

(1) and (2) As I pointed out earlier, Primary 3 TSA has been conducted on the basis of "no student names, no school names, no collection of reports and selection of participants by sampling" since 2018. As it is a low-stake assessment, the education sector and the public do not have to be over anxious. Schools arranging their Primary 3 students for full participation in Primary 3 TSA approach the HKEAA directly without any involvement of the EDB. Since this is entirely a school-based decision, and the number of participating schools is also not pertinent to the policy objective, the EDB has repeatedly reiterated that it will not enquire about or request school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA, or seek information about the identities of participating schools, and does not hold the information about the number and type of schools opted for full participation of their Primary 3 students in TSA in order to avoid being misconstrued as exerting pressure

on schools. We feel rather helpless about being sometimes alleged of refusing to disclose data that we do not possess and are not pertinent to policy implementation.

In the same vein, the HKEAA is solely adhering to the policy intent of the new arrangements for Primary 3 TSA in taking a prudent approach to handle the information of schools which opted for full participation of their Primary 3 students in TSA. If the number of such schools is disclosed, we cannot rule out that persons holding different views may come up with their own interpretations, thereby exerting undue pressure on schools (irrespective of whether the schools have participated in Primary 3 TSA by sampling or have opted for full participation), as was the case last year in which the government primary schools were accused as "taking the lead" when the majority of government primary schools had been reported for having opted for full participation in Primary 3 TSA.

We understand that the new arrangements for Primary 3 TSA adopted since 2018 are a matter of concern to Members of this Council, parents, the public and the media, and the Government has the responsibility to explain its policies to the public. Therefore, in last year, shortly after accepting the Committee's recommendations set out in the review report on Primary 3 TSA, the EDB arranged a briefing session for the media on the same day, and gave an account on the new arrangements to the Legislative Council as quickly as possible, with a view to enabling the public to apprehend that the sampling requirement for Primary 3 TSA and school-based decisions would be handled separately. This was done purely out of respect for the communication with Members of this Council and the media.

We will continue to strengthen communication with Members of this Council and the media on important matters of concern, strive to explain in detail the related policies and their operation, and make our best efforts to provide the information requested and respond to the questions raised as far as practicable.

(3) At present, under the school-based management principle, the School Management Committees (SMC)/Incorporated Management Committees (IMC) of government or public sector schools have put in place a well-established mechanism to communicate with stakeholders and seek their views on the handling of daily school matters of various scales, as well as riding on the backgrounds and experience of SMC/IMC members in the education sector, to make decisions that are in the best interests of students. Whether individual schools will arrange for all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA is a school-based decision, and that should be deliberated professionally by SMCs/IMCs in accordance with their well-established decision-making mechanism.

If individual parents or teachers have any concerns, as in other matters under the purview of school-based management, they could approach the school to express their views. We will continue to keep in view the implementation of school-based assessment through various channels, including inspections, school visits and daily contacts with schools, etc.

The arrangements for Primary 3 TSA have been greatly enhanced. While we do not request schools to opt for full participation in Primary 3 TSA, we neither endorse any measures which would negatively label schools opting for full participation in Primary 3 TSA. I appeal to members of the community to refrain from exerting pressure on schools on this matter, but to allow room for schools to make school-based decisions professionally to cater for the learning needs of students.

The EDB will, as always, closely monitor the implementation of Primary 3 TSA, maintain communication with schools and stakeholders at hand, explore further room for continued enhancement, and inform the public of the implementation of our policies in a timely manner.

Thank you, President.

LCQ9: Appointment of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

The Government announced by a notice published in the Gazette on December 29, 2017 that the Chief Executive (CE) had, on the same date, appointed a Principal Government Counsel of the Department of Justice (DoJ) as the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) (with the following remark in the notice: Acting as Law Officer). Later on, the Government announced by a notice published in the Gazette on January 11, 2019 that CE had appointed the said person as DPP on June 29, 2018. Regarding the appointment of DPP, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the criteria and procedure for the selection of DPP by DoJ;
- (2) as the aforesaid person was officially promoted to DPP on June 29, 2018, of the reasons why not until more than half a year later (i.e. January 11, 2019) did the Government publish the appointment concerned in the Gazette; and
- (3) of the respective durations of the acting appointments (if any) in respect of the successive DPPs since July 1, 1997?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), the consolidated reply is set out as follows:

(1) The selection criteria for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) included professional competence, integrity, knowledge and experience in criminal law and prosecution work, judgement, leadership, communication skills and vision, etc. Following the established appointment procedures for civil servants, the selection procedures comprised setting up a selection board and formulating the selection criteria, etc. Moreover, the Public Service Commission (PSC) was consulted on the recommendations put forward by the selection board as required.

(2) Mr David Leung, SC, was appointed as DPP after the conduct of a promotion-cum-open recruitment exercise in late 2017. The appointment was announced and gazetted on December 29, 2017, and Mr Leung commenced acting as DPP for six months from the same date. Following the completion of the acting period and relevant administrative procedures on appointments in the civil service, the CSB approved in late December 2018 Mr Leung's promotion to Law Officer (Directorate (Legal) Pay Scale 6) with effect from June 29, 2018 (i.e. completing an acting period of six months). The arrangement was subsequently gazetted on January 11, 2019.

(3) Officers recommended for promotion to Head of Department (HoD) ranks through internal promotion are normally required to go through an acting process before substantive promotion, so as to ensure that they are fully competent of discharging the duties and responsibilities at HoD level. Recommendations on promotion to HoD ranks including acting arrangements are made by promotion boards having regard to all relevant factors and approved by the CSB as the appointment authority taking into account the advice tendered by the PSC.

Apart from promotion, open recruitment exercises were also conducted concurrently in the past to identify suitable candidates for the post of DPP. Where a person is recommended through an open recruitment exercise, acting arrangement does not apply.

Since July 1, 1997, a total of three DPPs, namely Mr Ian Charles McWalters, SC, Mr Kevin Paul Zervos, SC, and Mr David Leung, SC, were substantively promoted after acting for three or six months. Besides, Mr Grenville Cross, SC, was directly and substantively promoted when succeeding as DPP in October 1997. Moreover, Mr Keith Yeung, SC, was appointed as DPP in September 2013 after an open recruitment exercise, in which case the acting arrangement did not apply.

As recruitment and promotion involve different arrangements and procedures, it is inappropriate to compare the respective durations of the acting appointments in respect of the DPPs.

LC: CS presents Government Minute in response to Report of Public Accounts Committee No. 70A

Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in presenting the Government Minute in response to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee No. 70 in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

President,

Laid on the table today is the Government Minute (GM) responding to Report No. 70A of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

When presenting Report No. 70A on November 14, 2018 to the Legislative Council (LegCo), the Chairman of PAC offered comments on two chapters in the Director of Audit's Report No. 70, namely, "Management of restored landfills" and "Sha Tin Section of Route 8".

I sincerely welcome PAC's Report and am grateful for the time and effort that the Chairman and Members of PAC devoted to investigating these subjects. The Government accepts PAC's various recommendations and sets out in detail the specific responses of the relevant bureaux/departments in the GM. Today, I would like to highlight the key measures that the Government has taken in the two important policy areas and the progress.

Management of restored landfills

Regarding "Management of restored landfills", as pointed out by the Chairman of PAC, there are many site constraints in the 13 closed landfills in Hong Kong. Before we could further develop the sites, various technical difficulties such as ground settlement and continuous generation of landfill gas have to be overcome. Nonetheless, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) would seriously follow up on the recommendations of PAC with a view to developing the closed landfills for recreational or other suitable afteruse under these constraints.

In 2016, EPD thoroughly reviewed the monitoring system and promptly implemented numerous improvement measures, including stepping up the frequency of irregular inspections, strengthening the training of EPD's on-site staff to enhance their technical knowledge and alertness, and arranging the installation of additional monitoring equipment to more closely monitor the operation of the waste facilities, etc. As regards the monitoring of the contractors of restored landfills, EPD accepts the recommendations made by PAC and will take appropriate follow-up action, including expediting the progress of installing advanced equipment at various restored landfill sites with leachate treatment plants, with a view to automating the monitoring work and detecting cases of non-compliance in a more timely manner; continuous

supervision of the contractors' operation on restoration facilities and their compliance with relevant statutory and contractual requirements; and reviewing the feasibility of including non-compliance with the relevant statutory environmental requirements under the demerit point system of the design-build-operate contracts for the restoration and management of closed landfills in future, etc.

For the Restored Landfill Revitalisation Funding Scheme (the Funding Scheme), EPD is working closely with the two organisations selected under Batch 1 of the Funding Scheme with a view to taking forward the revitalisation projects as soon as possible. EPD will also review Batch 1 of the Funding Scheme to formulate necessary improvement measures to enhance the operation of subsequent batches of the Funding Scheme.

In response to PAC Chairman's recommendations on Kwai Chung Park, Jordan Valley Park and Wan Po Road Pet Garden, relevant bureaux and departments have promptly followed up on the recommendations. I would like to briefly update the progress as follows.

Kwai Chung Park

The Kwai Chung Park (the Park) covers a very large area of over 25 hectares surrounded by slopes on restored landfills, which is unique in Hong Kong and much different from other open space projects. Over the past years, progress was mainly impeded by complicated site conditions, technical constraints and competing priorities for comprehensive development. While there was no shortfall of open space in Kwai Tsing District as a whole according to the recommendations of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has spared no effort to press ahead with the planning work for the Park to the extent possible under the prevailing mechanism. To show the Government's commitment to develop the Park, the Kwai Chung Park project was included in the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities as announced in the 2017 Policy Address. The Home Affairs Bureau issued the revised Project Definition Statement on May 18, 2018. The Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) has taken immediate action afterwards and submitted the Technical Feasibility Statement to the Development Bureau (DEVB) in November 2018 for approval. LCSD and relevant bureaux and departments will make the best efforts to implement the Kwai Chung Park project to meet the Five-Year Plan. The aim is to finish the preparatory work such as detailed design and consultation with the Kwai Tsing District Council on the design, etc., and seek funding approval from the LegCo in the legislative year 2020-2021 for commencement of works by end-2021.

Jordan Valley Park

ArchSD has shared its experience in the construction of the Jordan Valley Park with relevant organisations with a view to enhancing the management of works projects at restored landfills in future.

Wan Po Road Pet Garden

Drawing on the experience of Wan Po Road Pet Garden project, if the Home Affairs Department is to take up in future any works project in restored landfills, it will implement appropriate measures to address the potential risk of unusual ground settlement at the sites.

Sha Tin Section of Route 8

Regarding "Sha Tin Section of Route 8", Works departments have all along carried out monitoring and management of consultants' performance in strict compliance with the relevant government circulars and handbooks including the Engineering and Associated Consultants Selection Board Handbook and the Architectural and Associated Consultants Selection Board Handbook. Works departments will continue to regularly evaluate the consultants' performance and report to the bureaux in accordance with the relevant requirements. If the performance of a consultant is found to be unsatisfactory, the Government will take appropriate regulatory action including suspension from tendering for consultancy agreements for public works projects. The Government will also review the relevant circulars and handbooks in a timely manner to facilitate effective administration, and continue to discharge its duties, ensuring that the professional services provided by the consultants are up to the standards.

As regards the Sha Tin Section of Route 8 works project, there is certainly room for improvement on the part of the Government in the vetting and monitoring of the consultants' performance. After learning a lesson from this experience, the Government updated the Project Administration Handbook for Civil Engineering Works in August 2018, requiring the consultants of all works departments to consult the works department concerned before issuing official replies to tenderers. At the same time, Highways Department has also updated internal guidelines to improve the process of checking of contract clauses and drawings, in order to increase the accuracy of checking. Apart from checking the tender documents, works departments have to conduct careful checking and pre-tender cross-checking procedures in the preparation of Bills of Quantities, and to use the Building Information Modelling technology for checking where appropriate.

We understand that the Audit Commission and PAC have expressed serious concern over contract negotiation process involved in Contract A. Currently, the Government has put in place a comprehensive monitoring mechanism for vetting and approving works departments' solutions to contractual settlements, including extra-contractual settlements. Even if the Approved Project Estimates are not exceeded in the solutions, works departments are required to follow the prevailing government guidelines/requirements and seek approval from the relevant delegated authorities. Furthermore, works departments should provide copies of approved settlements to the Audit Commission for reference. If the situation warrants, the Audit Commission will conduct audits and, where necessary, report the cases to PAC. DEVB considers that the aforesaid monitoring and reporting mechanism has been working well, and will continue to monitor its operation in order to conduct a review in a timely manner.

President, I would like to sincerely thank the Chairman and all Members

of PAC again for their efforts and guidance. Relevant bureaux and departments will strictly follow their responses in the GM and implement the improvement measures as soon as possible to ensure the proper use of public funds.

Thank you, President.

LCQ16: Licensing regime for property management companies and property management practitioners

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

The period for the public consultation conducted by the Property Management Services Authority on proposals regarding the licensing regime for property management companies and property management practitioners under the Property Management Services Ordinance (Cap. 626) ended on the 18th of this month. Regarding the licensing regime, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is provided in section 7(5) and (8) of Cap. 626 that where a property contains 1 500 or more than 1 500 flats as defined by section 2 of the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344), and the property is managed by an owners' organisation of the property on its own (i.e. without engaging any property management company or property management practitioner), the owners' organisation concerned is required to obtain a licence under Cap. 626, whether the Government knows the current number of this type of properties, with a breakdown by type of owners' organisations (i.e. owners' corporations (OCs), owners' committees and other forms of organisations) managing the property;

(2) whether those contractors currently providing cleansing and horticultural services for properties will be required to obtain a licence upon implementation of the licensing regime;

(3) whether it will, by making reference to the Contractors' Performance Rating scheme for registered lift and escalator contractors implemented by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, introduce a similar performance rating scheme for licensed property management companies/practitioners; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will consult the property management services sector, OCs and the Panel on Home Affairs of this Council on the proposed subsidiary legislation on the licencing regime before commencing the relevant legislative procedure?

Reply:

President,

The Property Management Services Ordinance (Cap. 626) (PMSO) was enacted by the Legislative Council (LegCo) on May 26, 2016. It aims to establish the Property Management Services Authority (PMSA), which regulates and controls the provision of property management services by licensing property management companies (PMCs) and property management practitioners (PMPs) and sets the professional requirements respectively for PMCs and PMPs, with a view to enhancing the professionalism and service quality. According to section 6 of the PMSO, no person may, without a PMC licence, act as a PMC, and no person may, without a PMP licence, act as a PMP.

According to the PMSO, the PMSA is responsible for the implementation of the licensing regime. In this regard, the PMSA conducted in November 2018 a two-month public consultation to collect public views on the proposed licensing regime.

With regard to the four parts of Hon Wan's question, my reply is as follows:

(1) The PMSO aims to regulate companies providing property management services, and the practitioners assuming a managerial or supervisory role in such companies in relation to the property management services provided by the companies. Performing the duties under the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) (BMO) and the Codes of Practices under the BMO, etc. by owners' corporations (OCs) does not equate to carrying on the business of providing property management services. Therefore, OCs (and the management committees of the OCs) are not PMCs, and the members of the management committees are not PMPs. They are not the target of regulation of the PMSO and are not required to be licensed.

As regards owners' organisations, the only exception is "self-managed" properties which contain 1 500 or more flats (i.e. the owners' organisations of the properties have not engaged any licensed PMCs and are providing property management services on their own). These owners' organisations will not be exempted (i.e. section 7(8) of the PMSO). Such arrangement is to respond to the concern raised by some members of the Bills Committee during the scrutiny of the PMSO, i.e. the management standard of the "self-managed" properties may not be satisfactory if the number of flats in such properties is very large, and there would be a need for certain level of regulation. On the basis of the preliminary understanding of the Home Affairs Department, there may only be very few such cases in Hong Kong.

(2) Pursuant to section 3 of the PMSO, the PMSA may, by regulation, prescribe

a service falling within a category of services set out in Schedule 1 to the PMSO as a "property management service". Whether an individual company is required to apply for a licence after the implementation of the licensing regime depends to a large extent on the specific definition and coverage of "property management service" under the subsidiary legislation for the licensing regime to be formulated by the PMSA.

According to section 7(2) of the PMSO, if a company carries on the business of providing "property management service", and such service falls neither within more than one category of services nor one type of services under a category of services, then such company will not be subject to the licensing regime. The practitioners providing the relevant service(s) in such company will also not be subject to the licensing regime. Moreover, practitioners in a company which carries on the business of providing more than one category of services (i.e. a PMC which is required to be licensed) will not be subject to the licensing regime, unless they assume a managerial or supervisory role in relation to the "property management services" provided by such company.

The PMSA conducted a public consultation early on regarding the details of the licensing regime (including how, pursuant to section 3 of the PMSO, to prescribe a service as a "property management service" that should be regulated). Among the different views collected during the consultation period, some opined that companies and practitioners providing cleaning and gardening services, etc. to a property at the same time should not be subject to the licensing regime, and, following the above, the PMSA should not put cleaning service and gardening service under two different categories of "property management services" or as two different types of services under the same category when prescribing "property management services".

The PMSA will take the relevant views and the actual circumstances of the industry operation into account when prescribing "property management services", with a view to balancing the development and regulatory needs of the industry.

(3) The PMSO provides for a single-tier licensing regime for PMCs and a two-tier licensing regime for PMPs. In order to ensure the quality of property management services, both PMCs and PMPs have to fulfil a set of criteria before they are granted a licence.

The licensing criteria of a PMC include the minimum number of directors and employees holding PMP licences and whether the company is suitable for holding a PMC licence (e.g. whether the company is in liquidation or subject to a winding-up order, whether there are past conviction records of relevant offences, the suitability of its directors, etc.).

As regards PMPs, the licensing criteria include academic qualifications, professional qualifications, years of working experience and the suitability of the person in holding a PMP licence (e.g. whether the individual is a mentally disordered person, whether there are conviction records for relevant offences, etc.). The professional requirements to be

complied by a licensed PMP (Tier 1) are more stringent than those by a licensed PMP (Tier 2). The former may describe himself/herself as a "registered professional property manager" whereas the latter a "licensed property management officer". Such a two-tier licensing regime encourages PMPs to pursue professional development in order to move to a higher tier, while continues to allow those with a lower level of qualifications to have access to the job market.

The PMSO empowers the PMSA to monitor the performance of licensed PMCs/PMPs through different means, including investigating complaints involving disciplinary offences, and conducting disciplinary actions against PMCs/PMPs which/who are in breach of the requirements under the PMSO and/or the codes of conduct drawn up by the PMSA, such as revocation or suspension of licences and other sanctions such as reprimands, warnings, fines, etc. In addition, to ensure consumers are fully informed in selecting PMCs, licensed PMCs are required to provide the PMSA with certain essential information (e.g. the property management portfolio, the number of licensed PMPs employed, etc.) so that the PMSA can upload the information to its website for public inspection.

As to whether the PMSA will introduce other administrative measures, such as the introduction of a performance rating system for licensed PMCs and/or PMPs, we have relayed such views to the PMSA for its consideration. We will urge the PMSA to take full consideration of such views when formulating the implementation details of the licensing regime.

(4) The PMSA is studying in detail the views collected during the public consultation with a view to refining the licensing regime, such that the regime can balance the development and regulatory needs of the industry. We will closely monitor the process of drafting the subsidiary legislation and implementation details by the PMSA. Together with the PMSA, we will fully communicate with stakeholders (i.e. the property management industry, OCs, LegCo, etc.) to explain and clarify the specific details so as to eliminate any misunderstanding. We look forward to the early implementation of the licensing regime so as to regulate the provision of property management services and enhance professionalism and service quality.

LCQ11: The Government's work on public relations and dissemination of press information

Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Some media workers have relayed that in recent years, the Government's approach for disseminating press information and arranging media coverage, and even the performance of government officials in responding to the public, have all fallen short of public expectations and have time and again aroused criticisms, causing a far-reaching impact on the freedom of the press as the "fourth estate". The examples given by them include that: (a) the Government did not invite the media to report the handover of the Mainland Port Area of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link on September 3 last year, (b) the Government, on several occasions, did not release until late at night the coupler inspection results obtained after opening up the platform slabs and diaphragm walls of the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link project, and (c) the Secretary for Justice displayed a poor attitude when responding to media enquiries about the case concerning the allegations of corruption and misconduct in public office against the Chief Executive of the last term. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current policies on and strategies for disseminating press information, liaising with the media, gauging public sentiments and measuring the pulse of society;

(2) of the specific measures in place to improve the immediacy of disseminating press information, media coverage arrangements, and the attitude of government officials in responding to the public; and

(3) whether it will, on an annual basis, conduct reviews of and make improvements to the Government's work on public relations and dissemination of press information, and submit the relevant reports to this Council, so as to manifest an open and transparent style of governance; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In its pursuit of "people-based" governance, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government formulates various policy initiatives that are aimed to be known, understood, supported and monitored by the public. We therefore attach great importance to information dissemination strategies and their implementation.

The reply to Hon Claudia Mo's question is as follows:

(1) The Government has all along been adopting a proactive and positive approach and adhering to the principles of openness and transparency. Policy bureaux and departments are required to disseminate information promptly when announcing major policies and measures. Appreciating the importance of allowing the media to have thorough understanding of government policies and measures, the Government actively arranges for the convenient and effective

dissemination of information.

In this regard, the Government disseminates information to the public through a variety of channels via the media, which include the issue of press releases, photos and videos; handling enquiries from the media and the public; organising media interviews; arranging government officials to attend radio and television public affairs programmes; and offering live broadcast of press conferences and briefings on government website and establishing a webcast archive for public access, etc.

The Information Services Department (ISD), together with the press officers at bureaux and departments, will pay close attention to feedback as reflected by the media so that officers responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies and measures can learn about the public opinions on their work as soon as possible.

(2) The Government attaches great importance to media feedback on our work of information dissemination. As the Chief Executive earlier pointed out in public, there was room for improvement in the dissemination of information of certain recent individual cases. The Chief Executive has instructed all bureaux and departments to be more proactive in facilitating the media in covering the announcement of major issues.

The Chief Executive had pointed out that in realising its pledge to accord importance to media work, the Government has to provide facilitation. To this end, the current-term Government has enhanced measures to assist the work of the media, including the admission of online media to government events and allowing more time for the media to raise questions by extending press conference durations. In addition, the ISD will continue to make use of the internet in disseminating government information. Through releasing government news on multi-media platforms under "news.gov.hk", the public can access the website via mobile phones and other mobile devices. The "news.gov.hk" website fully utilises social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Sina Weibo and WeChat, etc., in disseminating updated information, features, photos and videos to all sectors of the community.

(3) The Government disseminates information to the public through the media and has maintained close and frequent contact with members of the media. The Government exchanges with professional news organisations from time to time to listen to their views on the overall public relations and information dissemination work of the Government. As for individual dissemination arrangements, members of the media will reflect their views to relevant bureaux and departments immediately. The Government will continue to strive to enhance the accuracy, transparency and timeliness of information dissemination under public and media scrutiny.