

LCQ15: Manpower situation of transport industry

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

Some public light bus (PLB) trade organisations have relayed that they are unable to recruit sufficient PLB drivers. As a result, the succession and ageing problems of the drivers (whose current average age is 69) have become increasingly serious, and more than 10 per cent of PLBs are left idle due to a lack of drivers, thereby affecting PLB services. Regarding the shortage of PLB drivers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of holders of valid PLB driving licences and, among them, the number of those who were new holders of the driving licence, at the end of each of the past five years, with a tabulated breakdown of such numbers by the age group (i.e. 29 or below, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69, 70 to 79 and 80 or above) to which the holders belonged at that time;

(2) whether it will provide subsidies for the fees of PLB driving courses, PLB driving tests and the pre-service course for PLB drivers, so as to attract new blood for the industry;

(3) of the measures taken by the Government in the past three years to assist PLB operators in recruiting drivers, as well as the details and effectiveness of each of such measures; and

(4) whether it will consider, as a short-term measure to address the problem of manpower shortage of drivers, allowing the PLB trade to import, at salaries not lower than those of local PLB drivers, drivers from outside Hong Kong to drive green minibuses; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been highly concerned about the manpower situation of the transport industry, including the public light bus (PLB) trade, and has been striving to assist the trade in improving the working environment and remuneration packages so as to attract new blood and alleviate the problem of manpower shortage. My reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) The number of holders and new holders of public light bus driving licences by age group as at December 31 in each of the past five years is

tabulated at Annex.

(2) to (4) As at December 31, 2018, there are a total of 3 295 green minibuses (GMBs) and 1 028 red minibuses (RMBs) in Hong Kong, while there are a total of around 175 000 holders of a valid full driving licence for PLB. Holders of a valid full driving licence for PLB may work as a GMB or RMB driver. The key to alleviating the problem of manpower shortage in the PLB trade lies in how to attract more people (especially younger people) to the trade.

In this connection, the GMB operators have been attracting new blood through different means, including improving salaries and benefits, and hiring part-time drivers to meet service demand during peak hours, etc. Meanwhile, the Government is committed to facilitating the overall development of the industry and assisting the trade in recruiting drivers. The Transport Department (TD) has been proactively coordinating GMB operators to participate in job fairs organised by the Labour Department (LD) since 2013. So far, about 21 such job fairs have been held. The TD also assists in liaising with relevant support organisations and the Correctional Services Department with a view to encouraging the operators to employ members of the ethnic minorities and rehabilitated persons.

The rest time arrangements for drivers are equally important. In mid-August 2017, the TD put into effect an updated version of the Guidelines on Working Hours of Green Minibus Drivers (Guidelines), providing guidance on the daily maximum duty hours and driving hours for drivers. From time to time, the TD reminds operators of the importance of drawing up work arrangements for their drivers according to the Guidelines.

Moreover, the TD also strives to improve the operating environment for the trade with a view to enabling the trade to offer better remuneration packages to attract new blood. Measures include increasing the maximum seating capacity of PLBs so as to raise the overall carrying capacity; relaxing or rescinding passenger pick-up/drop-off restricted zones and prohibited zones at certain locations in the light of the actual situation of the trade; allowing PLBs to park at PLB stands during non-peak periods; and extending the validity period of the PLB driver identity plates, etc. These measures aim to improve the overall operating environment of the trade. If the PLB operators have to apply for fare increase on the account of rising costs (including cost of salaries), the TD will consider the applications on individual merits.

Meanwhile, to attract more young drivers to join the industry, the Government proposes to relax the current requirement for applications of learners' or full driving licences for commercial vehicles to have held a valid driving license of private car (PC) or light goods vehicle (LGV) for a period of at least three years to at least one year (Note). Earlier on, the Government consulted the transport industry, the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council (LegCo) and the Road Safety Council on the proposal and their views were generally positive. The Government will introduce the relevant legislative proposal into the LegCo within 2018-19 legislative session.

At present, the Employees Retraining Board runs a Pre-service Course for PLB Drivers under its "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus". Eligible low-income applicants may apply for course fee subsidy under the Scheme.

On the suggestion to import labour, to ensure local workers enjoy priority in employment and to safeguard their salaries and benefits, in the event that employers are genuinely unable to recruit the necessary workforce locally, they may apply under the "Supplementary Labour Scheme" administered by the LD to import workers at technician level or below. As the proposal to import labour will have implications on the livelihood of local drivers and the difference in the driving culture of foreign drivers may have potential implications on road safety, we must consider the case carefully.

The Government is willing to formulate strategies together with the trade, and will facilitate the trade at policy level where practicable and desirable. We also hope that the trade will strive to improve the working environment and remuneration packages to improve the manpower situation.

Note: If an applicant needs to undergo the probationary driving period, he/she will be eligible to apply for a learner's or full driving licence for commercial vehicles immediately upon issue of the full driving licence for PC or LGV after completion of the minimum one-year probationary driving period; if the applicant does not need to undergo probationary driving period (for example, persons who obtained full driving licences by direct issue), he will be eligible to apply for the two aforementioned types of commercial driving licences after having held the full driving licence for PC or LGV for at least one year.

LCQ21: Unmanned aircraft systems

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

It has been reported that the flight movements at Gatwick Airport in London were suspended twice late last year due to the intrusion of unmanned aircraft systems (UASs), which in total lasted for over 30 hours and affected about 1 000 flights and 140 000 passengers. Despite the presence of legislation in the United Kingdom banning UASs from flying inside and within 1 000 metres surrounding the airport and from flying above 400 feet, the aforesaid incident still happened and the law enforcement agencies have failed to track down the perpetrators so far. After the aforesaid incident, the authority of the airport has procured an anti-UAS system at a cost of £5 million to deal with similar incidents in future. On preventing the operation of the Hong Kong International Airport from being affected by UASs,

will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of reports received by the authorities concerning the illegal flying of UASs within the Bylaw Area prescribed in the Airport Authority Bylaw (Cap. 483A), (ii) the respective numbers of persons arrested, prosecuted and convicted for illegally flying of UASs within the Bylaw Area, and (iii) the punishments imposed on those convicted, in each of the past five years;

(2) whether it has formulated measures for the expeditious handling of the situation of UASs illegally flying within the Bylaw Area, so as to avoid disruptions to flight movements; if so, of the details (including the procedure for activating the contingency measures); if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether equipment with the following functions has been installed at the Hong Kong International Airport: detecting UASs flying within the Bylaw Area, manipulating such UASs to land safely and stop operating, and tracking down the location of the person who has flown the UASs; if so, of the details, if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are classified as aircraft and are governed, as far as aviation safety is concerned, by the civil aviation legislation. Article 48 of the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 (Cap. 448C) stipulates that a person who recklessly or negligently causes or permits an aircraft (including an UAS and a model plane) to endanger any person or property is liable to prosecution, and upon conviction, to a fine and to imprisonment for two years. Moreover, under section 35 of the Airport Authority Bylaw (Cap. 483A), no person shall, within the Bylaw Area (Note), fly a model plane (including UAS). Offenders shall be liable on conviction to a maximum penalty of a fine of HK\$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) has initiated a review of the regulation of UAS, with a view to safeguarding public safety while accommodating the technological development and diversified uses of UAS. To facilitate the Government in reviewing the existing statutory requirements and exploring ways to refine the prevailing regulatory regime, the CAD commissioned an overseas consultant to conduct a study on the regulation of UAS. In April 2018, the CAD published the consultancy report and launched a three-month public consultation on the directions for regulating UAS. The CAD is now drawing up detailed proposals for an enhanced regulatory regime of UAS taking into account the recommendations of the consultancy study and the views gathered during the consultation exercise. The CAD planned to consult the Legislative Council on the proposed legislative amendments for the enhanced regime of UAS in 2019.

Meanwhile, the CAD will continue to work proactively to enhance the awareness of UAS operators on safe operation through different channels like

television and radio, the Department's website, other relevant websites and publications. For instance, the CAD has been promoting the safe operation of UAS through various television and radio programmes such as "Police Magazine" and "Innovation GPS" since May 2017. Meetings with UAS organisations and manufacturers are also held from time to time to strengthen co-operation on safety promotion. In view of the recent intrusions of UAS into Gatwick Airport in London, the CAD immediately contacted local UAS organisations to remind UAS operators that flying UAS in the Bylaw Area and in the vicinity of the airport is prohibited. The Airport Authority Hong Kong (AA) has already put up notices at appropriate positions in the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and will consider other channels including the AA's website to remind various sectors of the community about the legislation prohibiting the flying of model plane (including UAS) in those areas.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Jeremy Tam's question is as follows:

(1) According to the record of the AA, there was one case of illegal operation of UAS within the Bylaw Area stipulated in the Airport Authority Bylaw over the past five years which happened in July 2017. The offender was subsequently convicted of "causing or permitting an aircraft to endanger any person or property" under the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 and was fined HK\$2,000.

(2) Pursuant to the Airport Authority Bylaw, no one shall fly a model plane (including UAS) within the Bylaw Area. The AA and the law enforcing agency will pay attention to if there have been UAS operations when they are on duty and patrolling the Airport Area. If the AA is aware or notified of any illegal UAS operation within the Bylaw Area, it will immediately request the Police to follow up the incident and deploy its staff to search for the UAS and its operator in the Airport Area. Under the existing communication mechanism between the AA and CAD, if flight movements are affected by the operation of UAS, the AA and CAD will discuss the matter and make appropriate arrangements. In case of flight disruptions, the AA will liaise closely with the industry and disseminate real-time flight information to update the affected passengers and airlines on the latest situation. Having regard to the technological development of UAS, the CAD and AA will review the co-ordination and handling procedures with the Police in a timely manner to strengthen the contingency measures.

(3) To ensure aviation safety, the CAD and AA have been monitoring and taking precautions against the operation of UAS in the Airport Area. Currently, the HKIA is equipped with certain UAS detection system but the details of which could not be disclosed due to security reason. The CAD and AA are making reference to the experience of and equipment adopted by other international airports and further exploring various viable technologies to be applied to the HKIA in a bid to further enhance the monitoring and precautionary measures against illegal operation of UAS in the Airport Area, thereby minimising the possible impact on airport operation and aviation safety.

Note: Under section 3 of the Airport Authority Bylaw, the Bylaw Area shall comprise – (i) all the Restricted Area; (ii) all that portion of the Airport

Area no part of which is either in the Restricted Area or on any road or length of road; and (iii) all the designated roads, but shall not include any area within an area referred to in paragraph (i), (ii) or (iii) which is also within the MTR Area.

LCQ5: Operational safety of non-franchised bus and public transport services for Airport Island

Following is a question by Hon Holden Chow and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

On the early morning of November 30 last year, a serious traffic accident involving a non-franchised bus happened on Cheung Tsing Highway, resulting in a number of casualties. It has been reported that as the majority of the passengers on the bus concerned at the time of the accident were employees of an airline company but the bus had not been issued with an employees' service endorsement by the Transport Department, the operator concerned has allegedly breached the law. Regarding the follow-up work on the accident, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) how the authorities currently monitor the road safety of non-franchised buses providing transport service for employees;
- (2) of the number of prosecutions instituted by the authorities in the past five years against operators who had illegally provided transport service for employees; the new measures to be put in place to step up efforts to combat such unlawful act; and
- (3) given that some people working at the airport have indicated that the transport services between the urban areas and the airport during early morning hours are insufficient and limited in choice, and the situation will aggravate with an increase in job opportunities at the airport upon completion of the airport's third runway, of the measures the authorities have put in place to address such problems; whether they will request the various franchised bus companies to enhance overnight bus services, and discuss with the MTR Corporation Limited the extension of the Tung Chung Line to the airport island and the service hours of the Line, so as to facilitate residents in the urban areas and Tung Chung to take up employment at the airport?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the operational safety of public transport services. In response to the serious traffic accident involving a non-franchised bus (NFB) that occurred in Tsing Yi last year, the Transport Department (TD) has promptly held a special meeting with the trade to discuss various measures to enhance the operational safety of NFBs, including installing and providing safety devices, applying new technologies, and drawing up guidelines on working hours and rest time for drivers. The TD has also set up a special working group to further follow up on and implement the measures. As regards the said accident, the Police are still investigating and the TD is following it up in accordance with the established mechanism. My reply to the various parts of the Hon Holden Chow's question is as follows:

(1) The Government attaches importance to the road safety of NFBs, focusing on the driving behaviour and vehicle safety in particular. On law enforcement, the Police have been taking stern and vigorous enforcement actions in recent years to combat improper driving behaviour with a view to reminding motorists to stay alert at all times, reducing the risk of traffic accidents and enhancing road safety. Roadside equipment such as red light cameras and speed enforcement cameras as well as mobile instruments such as laser guns are used for enforcement actions. At the same time, the Police are taking enforcement actions according to the "Selected Traffic Enforcement Priorities" (such as speeding, use of mobile phones/telecommunications equipment during driving, drink driving, drug driving). The average number of prosecutions involving NFBs in contravention of traffic regulations per annum over the past five years is about 5 887.

As regards vehicle safety, all NFBs currently have to undergo the TD's vehicle type approval procedures to ensure that their designs and construction comply with the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations, and then pass a pre-registration examination. All in-service NFBs are also required to pass annual vehicle examinations for assurance of their roadworthiness before their vehicle licences can be renewed. The TD also conducts spot checks. Vehicles which cannot comply with the standards will be classified as failing the inspection. For seriously non-compliant vehicles, their vehicle licences will be instantly suspended. The TD will follow up with the NFB operators where necessary on matters concerning the maintenance and repair of the bus fleets.

(2) As regards the regulation of NFB services, under the existing law, all operators of NFB services must hold valid Passenger Service Licences (PSLs) and Passenger Service Licence Certificates. Operators or drivers are liable to prosecution if their vehicles carry passengers without PSLs.

As for NFBs with PSLs, they should also obtain relevant service endorsements. If the operators do not follow the conditions of PSLs when providing services (including operating certain type of service without obtaining the relevant service endorsements, etc.), the Commissioner for

Transport may appoint a public officer to conduct an administrative inquiry under the existing law. If the inquiry confirms that there are irregularities for the relevant services, the Commissioner may impose penalty, such as suspending, cancelling or amending the PSLs, depending on the actual circumstances and severity of each case. Since most irregularities concerning NFBs involve the provision of services without obtaining the relevant valid service endorsements or violation of the conditions of PSLs, rather than providing services without any PSLs, as mentioned above, such irregularities will be handled through the inquiry procedures and prosecution will not be applicable, according to the existing law.

In the past five years, the TD conducted inquiries into 159 cases of operating unauthorised services by holders of PSLs for NFBs and school private light buses, 12 of which involved employees' services.

To safeguard the effective operation of public transport services, the TD has been monitoring the operation of NFB services, including conducting on-site investigations. The TD will continue to step up the investigation work, in particular targeting the black spots and complaint cases, and will maintain close communication with the trade. Meanwhile, the TD will strive to shorten the time required for completing investigations and inquiries.

(3) The TD has been mindful of the public transport services for the Airport Island. Apart from the Airport Express, there are at present 79 franchised bus routes (including 28 overnight routes) and 285 employees' service routes (including 104 overnight routes) plying between the Airport Island and various areas in the territory. To facilitate the commuting of the Airport employees to and from work, the TD has introduced express overnight bus services since mid-2015. The existing 37 day-time bus routes and two new routes to be introduced in 2019 have adopted a service timetable that include the early morning hours (viz. the first departure between 5am and 6am). The TD will continue to closely monitor the public transport service arrangements on the Airport Island, review with the franchised bus operators in a timely manner, and will continue to process the applications for the employees' service routes in accordance with the established mechanism.

According to the information of the Development Bureau, the Civil Engineering and Development Department is currently conducting the Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau. On the other hand, as the Government has invited the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) to submit a proposal for the topside development at the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island, the Government will comprehensively review the need of transport connection and facilities among North Lantau, the Airport Island and the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island after AAHK submits the development proposal. To cope with the additional passenger demand arising from the commissioning of the third runway, the TD will devise plans in a timely manner and discuss with the relevant public transport service operators (including the MTRCL and franchised bus operators) where necessary on strengthening and adjusting the public transport services to satisfy passengers' needs.

LCQ2: Implementation of sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

Section 3(1) of the United Nations Sanctions Ordinance stipulates that the Chief Executive shall make regulations to give effect to the instructions given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Chief Executive on the implementation of the sanctions decided by the Security Council of the United Nations (sanctions regulations). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the government department(s) currently responsible for enforcing the various sanctions regulations, as well as the relevant staffing establishment; whether it, in view of the sanctions regulations being updated from time to time and the ever-changing international landscape, provides sufficient guidelines and training for the staff concerned on a regular basis; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the number of reports received by the authorities on activities suspected of violating the sanctions regulations, the respective numbers of such activities in respect of which the authorities monitored and investigated (with a breakdown by type), the number of activities involving violations of the sanctions regulations that they forestalled, as well as the respective numbers of the relevant prosecutions and convictions, in each of the past five years; and

(3) whether it will release regularly the details of the law enforcement actions taken in relation to the sanctions regulations (including the number of cases and their summaries), so as to demonstrate to the public and the international community Hong Kong's strict enforcement of the sanctions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

According to the Charter of the United Nations (UN), Member States of the UN (including the People's Republic of China (PRC)) should apply measures decided by the UN Security Council (UNSC) to maintain or restore international peace and security. As part of the PRC, the Hong Kong Special

Administrative Region (HKSAR) implements UNSC sanctions pursuant to the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fulfil our international obligation.

Currently, UNSC imposes sanctions or restrictions against 14 places and two organisations (Note 1).

Generally speaking, the three most common types of measures imposed by the UNSC are financial sanction, travel ban and arms embargo:

(1) financial sanction prohibits the making available of or dealing with the financial assets and economic resources of persons or entities designated by the UNSC or its relevant Committees;

(2) travel ban prohibits the entry or transit of designated persons into or through the territories of UN Member States;

(3) arms embargo prohibits the supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel, technical advice, assistance or training related to military activities, to places or organisations under sanction.

Apart from the three aforementioned types of sanction measures, the UNSC may also impose other sanctions or restrictions having regard to the situation of individual places or organisations (Note 2).

Since Hong Kong's return to China, the HKSAR Government has, according to the principle of "one country, two systems", been implementing and strictly enforcing sanctions imposed by the UNSC through local legislation, i.e. the United Nations Sanctions Ordinance (Cap 537) (the Ordinance) and the regulations made under the Ordinance by the Chief Executive (CE). The HKSAR has made regulations to implement UNSC sanctions or restrictions against the 14 places and two organisations respectively. Relevant law enforcement agencies have been acting in accordance with the law, without fear or favour, to follow up on suspected violations of the Ordinance.

We note that certain countries may, based on their own considerations, impose unilateral sanctions against certain places. HKSAR does not have the responsibility nor the authority to enforce these unilateral sanctions or investigate related cases.

My reply to the three-part question is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) are the law enforcement agencies of the Ordinance. Generally speaking, the HKPF is mainly responsible for enforcement work related to the financial sanction mentioned above and sanctions on financial transactions or transfer of funds, while the C&ED is mainly responsible for enforcement against the supply, sale or transfer of arms and other items under sanction.

As regards staffing establishment, the Financial Investigation Division of the Narcotics Bureau of the HKPF, with 69 staff members, is mainly responsible for investigating money laundering cases, including suspected violations of the Ordinance. As for the C&ED, apart from the staff

responsible for physical examination of cargoes at boundary control points, the Trade Controls Branch, with 47 staff members, is dedicated to the enforcement of strategic trade controls, the control of the provision of services to assist in the development of weapons of mass destruction, and the enforcement of the Ordinance. We do not have a breakdown of manpower for each duty concerned.

The Government has been closely monitoring the latest information regarding the UNSC, such as new resolutions adopted, updates to sanctions lists, and reports or announcements of the relevant committees or panels of experts under the UNSC. Such information will be disseminated in a timely manner within the Government to keep officers of relevant bureaux, law enforcement agencies and other departments abreast of the latest information for follow-up actions. Besides, the HKPF and C&ED organise in-house training and workshops, arrange overseas training programmes for their officers, and engage in exchanges with their overseas counterparts.

(2) Our law enforcement agencies stay highly vigilant against suspected violations of the Ordinance. They also closely monitor reports published by relevant UNSC committees or panels of experts and other organisations, and actively investigate suspected cases involving Hong Kong. The law enforcement agencies have been following up these cases in accordance with the law, without fear or favour.

In the past five years, the HKPF and the C&ED investigated 201 and 99 suspected cases of sanctions violations respectively. Breakdowns by year are set out in Annex.

Hong Kong has a robust system to implement sanctions imposed by the UNSC. Coupled with the investigation efforts of our law enforcement agencies which are vigilant and with deterrent effect, a number of alleged Hong Kong-registered companies have been struck off, and suspicious vessels have been denied entry into Hong Kong waters. All these are conducive to preventing attempts to make use of Hong Kong as a base to violate UNSC sanctions, and hence safeguarding the international reputation of Hong Kong.

There are currently no prosecution cases under the Ordinance. Hong Kong will continue to maintain a stringent system of implementing UNSC sanctions in accordance with the law. Exercising their statutory authorities, the law enforcement agencies will continue to follow up on all suspected violations of UNSC sanctions, and will institute prosecution when there is sufficient evidence.

(3) Whenever the CE makes new regulations under the Ordinance or amends existing regulations to implement new resolutions adopted by the UNSC, representatives of the Government will attend meetings of the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Examine the Implementation in Hong Kong of Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council in relation to Sanctions, to brief Members on the regulations and answer Members' questions on the implementation and enforcement of the regulations. To ensure confidentiality of investigation work, we will only provide the total number of cases investigated, and will not disclose details of such cases.

On the international front, Hong Kong, as a member of the Financial Action Task Force and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, keeps the two organisations up-to-date on its efforts in anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing as well as implementation of UNSC sanctions.

Note 1: These 14 places are Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Guinea-Bissau, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen, and the two organisations are Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida.

Note 2: For instance, UNSC prohibits Member States from:

(1) the supply or procurement of nuclear- and ballistic missile-related items to or from Iran or the DPRK;

(2) the supply of items such as aviation fuel, refined petroleum products, crude oil, industrial machinery and transport vehicles and certain luxury goods to the DPRK, the procurement of items such as coal, iron, rare earth minerals, textiles, seafood, food and agricultural products from the DPRK, certain business activities of financial institutions in the DPRK, provision of financial support for trade with persons connected with the DPRK, and engaging in ship-to-ship transfers with DPRK-registered ships, etc.;

(3) the import of charcoal from Somalia; and

(4) the transport or discharge of petroleum from Libya by vessels designated by the relevant UNSC Committee, or engaging in financial transactions concerned, etc.

LCQ18: Study on the risk factors associated with breast cancer for local women

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Chiang Lai-wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

The Government has commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to conduct a study on the risk factors associated with breast cancer for local women, so as to help formulate the future strategies for breast cancer screening in Hong Kong. The study is expected to be completed in the latter half of this year. Besides, some studies have pointed out that as compared with conventional 2D mammography, 3D mammography is more accurate and carry a lower dosage of radiation, and therefore is more suitable for carrying out breast cancer screening on Asian women (including Hong Kong women) who have a

higher density of mammary glands. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

- (1) the membership list of the HKU team that is in charge of the aforesaid study and the professions to which the team members belong, as well as the scope and the latest progress of the study;
- (2) whether the team will meet with relevant overseas organisations (e.g. organisations in Taiwan and Singapore which advocate breast cancer screening) so as to learn from the experience of other countries or regions in implementing breast cancer screening; if the team will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether the team will, by making reference to medical papers on mammography devices, put forward recommendations on the selection by the Government of mammography devices which will better meet the needs of Hong Kong women; if the team will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the various parts of the question, our reply is as follows:

(1) The commissioned study on the risk factors associated with breast cancer among local women is funded by the Health and Medical Research Fund administered under the Food and Health Bureau, and is approved by the Research Council after undergoing rigorous peer review and established procedures. This study is conducted by the research team led by Professor Gabriel Leung from the School of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong. Other research team members include Professor Ava Kwong from the Department of Surgery; Dr Irene Wong and Dr Wendy Lam from the School of Public Health; Professor Khoo Ui-soon from the Department of Pathology; and Professor Roger Ngan from the Department of Clinical Oncology of the University of Hong Kong.

The study aims at developing a breast cancer risk prediction model for Hong Kong, identifying risk factors among the local population through a case-control study, as well as building a comprehensive tissue bank and clinical database. According to the latest progress report, the research team has obtained data from the Shanghai Breast Cancer Study research group, which would be used to develop the risk prediction model for women in Hong Kong. For the case-control study, the research team has established collaboration with 15 public hospitals, seven private hospitals and six private practitioners to collect local breast cancer data and samples. As at September 28, 2018, 3 522 breast cancer cases and 2 653 control cases were recruited respectively. The research team is analysing the difference between the case patients and control subjects including the demographic characteristics, body mass index (BMI) ratio, physical activity, known breast cancer risk factors such as age at menarche, age at first live birth or nulliparous, family history of breast cancer and prior benign breast disease

diagnosis. The study team will translate predicted risk values into recommendations on whether women in Hong Kong should undergo regular breast cancer screening.

Upon completion of the study, the research should develop a personalised risk stratification tool for breast cancer in local women as well as determine and quantify potential breast cancer risk factors. The study is expected to be completed in the second half of 2019.

(2) and (3) The study aims at developing a local breast cancer risk prediction model to identify the high-risk groups among the local population. The objectives of the commissioned study do not include discussion with overseas advocacy groups on experience in implementing the breast cancer screening programmes and selection of the most appropriate local breast cancer screening test.