

LCQ19: Road safety

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Peter Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question:

It is learnt that from July this year onwards, all the double-deck buses procured by franchised bus operators will be equipped with electronic stability control systems and speed limiters. Besides, an intelligent traffic safety system incorporating a global positioning system, vehicle-mounted radar and various types of sensors can provide drivers with various types of driving assistance (including warnings of frontal collision, lane departure and blind spot; detection of fatigue driving and driving stability; as well as autonomous emergency braking system). Apart from that, it can provide running data and records for analysing the driving behaviour of drivers when traffic accidents occurred. Regarding the application of intelligent traffic safety technologies to enhance road safety, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following statistical information from January to October this year and how such information compares with that in the same period last year:

- (i) the average daily number of passenger trips of franchised buses;
- (ii) the casualties of traffic accidents;
- (iii) the pedestrian casualties of traffic accidents;
- (iv) the three categories of vehicles having the highest accident rates and their respective accident rates; and
- (v) the driver factors involved in the traffic accidents and, in respect of each factor, the number of traffic accidents that may be attributed to that factor;

(2) whether it has formulated specific strategies and objectives to reduce the casualties of traffic accidents; whether it will devise standards for the use of safety technologies by commercial vehicles, and support the transport sector in researching, developing and applying innovation and technology to enhance road safety; and

(3) whether it will examine subsidising the trial use of intelligent traffic safety technologies on commercial vehicles in order to enhance road safety, thereby reducing the casualties, damage to property and indirect economic loss caused by traffic accidents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to road safety, including the operational safety of commercial vehicles, and has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enhance road safety. My reply to the various parts of the Hon Charles Peter Mok's question is as follows:

(1) (i) The daily number of passenger trips of franchised buses between January and September 2018 was about 4 million, while that between January and September 2017 was about 3.94 million. The average increase is about 1.5 per cent. The daily number of passenger trips of franchised buses in October 2018 is under preparation.

(ii) & (iii) The number of traffic casualties and pedestrian casualties between January and October 2018, the figures in the same period last year and the corresponding percentage changes are set out in Annex 1.

(iv) The three classes of vehicles with the highest accident involvement rate per 1 000 licensed vehicles between January and October 2018 are franchised bus, tram and taxi, which are the same as that in the same period in 2017. The accident involvement rates of these three classes of vehicles and the corresponding percentage changes as compared with that in the same period last year are set out in Annex 2.

(v) The number of traffic accidents involving various driver contributory factors between January and October 2018, the figures in the same period last year and the corresponding percentage changes are set out in Annex 3.

(2) & (3) The Government adopts a multi-pronged approach to enhance road safety, including legislative amendments and strengthened enforcement, publicity, application of technology, etc. The Transport Department (TD) also makes reference to overseas practices and experience from time to time, and will set up a new dedicated team responsible for carrying out road safety audit. In addition, the TD has been closely monitoring the trends of traffic accident statistics, paying close attention to and analysing relevant data such as traffic accident-related figures, so as to formulate and implement appropriate road safety strategies and measures.

Regarding the application of technology to enhance vehicle safety, the Government is open-minded on any innovative technologies that could effectively improve road and driving safety and welcomes vehicle manufacturers to introduce new driver assistance systems for such purpose for all classes of vehicles. The TD has been closely monitoring the development and application of technology in the automotive industry worldwide, including driver assistance systems, such as Collision Prevention Assist, Lane Keep Assist and Blind Spot Assist alerts, Stability Programme and Automatic Emergency Braking System, installed by some vehicle manufacturers on their vehicles. Upon assessing the technical details submitted by vehicle manufacturers for type approval applications, the TD has approved the installation of some of the aforesaid systems on vehicles registered in Hong Kong. Manufacturers of commercial vehicles may also consider introducing such driver assistance systems to enhance driving safety. Apart from this, the TD is actively facilitating relevant organisations or vehicle manufacturers in trials of innovative vehicle technologies, such as field testing of

autonomous vehicles at suitable locations in Hong Kong.

In addition to continuing to liaise with various organisations, vehicle manufacturers and safety device manufacturers to promote the application of innovative technologies, the Government has been taking initiatives to conduct feasibility studies on vehicle safety technologies. For example, the TD will fund a research on the application of geo-fencing technology in 2019. This technology could assist drivers to comply with the applicable speed limit of the roads concerned. If the research demonstrates that the technology is suitable for adoption by vehicles registered in Hong Kong, the Government will promote such technology to commercial vehicles.

Furthermore, to encourage and support the industry to conduct trials on safety technologies suitable for commercial vehicles for enhancing road safety, the Government will provide subsidies to the industry. For example, to further enhance the operational safety of franchised buses, the Government proposed in the 2018 Policy Address to set aside \$500 million to subsidise franchised bus operators for retrofitting three safety devices on suitable existing buses, including Electronic Stability Control systems which can improve vehicle stability and reduce the risk of rollover, speed limiter with slow-down function, and seat belts to be retrofitted on all seats in the upper deck of buses deployed for long-haul routes which are operated via expressways with relatively fewer bus stops. The subsidy scheme is expected to be rolled out in Financial Year 2019-20.

The Government has also supported different types of research and development and technology application projects through the Innovation and Technology Fund. For example, the research and development of a next generation of driver assistance system and the trial of an intelligent system, which can identify potential hazards on roads and give warnings to drivers so as to enhance road safety, on various classes of vehicles (including private cars, light buses, buses, light goods vehicles, medium goods vehicles, refuse collection vehicles and special purpose vehicles) of government departments.

LCQ6: Measures to attract and nurture talents

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question:

It has been reported that the ranking of Hong Kong in a world talent report has fallen from the 12th place of last year to the 18th of this year.

There are comments that Hong Kong has to catch up expeditiously in respect of attracting and nurturing talents so as to maintain its competitiveness. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that some top overseas academic institutions (e.g. the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University) require their students taking artificial intelligence programmes to also take humanities subjects such as languages, music or economics with a view to enabling them to develop broad horizons, an open mind and innovative ideas, whether the Government will request the various universities to make reference to overseas practice and nurture more talents with multi-abilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that 12 member states of the European Union have incorporated programming courses into the curricula in primary and secondary education and the Mainland authorities will introduce artificial intelligence courses in primary and middle school levels, whether the Government will review the education policies and allocate additional resources to cater for innovation and technology development, including incorporating all "Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics" (STEAM) subjects into the regular curricula in primary and secondary education, devising plans to train up sufficient STEAM teachers, and requesting the various universities to recruit more STEAM academics and increase the number of places for the relevant programmes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that quite a number of countries and regions (e.g. Australia and Shenzhen) have put in place measures such as granting incentive payments, concessions and right of abode to attract foreign scientific research professionals, whether the Government will adopt more proactive talent admission policies; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Acting Madam President,

Talent has been a major pillar underpinning Hong Kong's present-day success and will continue to be the key driver propelling our economic development. The current-term Government attaches great importance to enhancing and optimising our human capital to cater for the evolving development needs and maintain Hong Kong's overall economic competitiveness. Our reply to Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is in three parts as follows:

(1) The University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities enjoy academic freedom and institutional autonomy. All along, the UGC-funded universities would, taking into account a host of factors such as social developments, market demand, relative strengths and observations on manpower trends of different industries, to carry out academic planning and curriculum design.

Since the implementation of the four-year undergraduate curriculum, the universities have devoted much effort in reorganising the curriculum, including the introduction of a newly designed general education curriculum. It allows students to systematically broaden their knowledge, extensively

spanning across different areas such as languages, literature, philosophy, economics and technology. Universities are also devoted to strengthening students' creative thinking, leadership and communication skills, as well as improving cultural qualities through general education, thereby implementing the concept of whole-person education. In addition, universities also offer more overseas exchanges, work attachments and internship opportunities to strengthen students' international horizons and experiences.

Moreover, individual faculties allow students to take up minor studies in other faculties according to their own interests and goals, so that students can learn beyond their majors. In response to the needs of society, universities are launching more cross-disciplinary programmes in recent years, such as Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, to nurture all-rounded talents.

(2) To align with the worldwide educational trend and equip students with necessary knowledge and skills in response to economic, scientific and technological developments as well as changes in society, the Government has made significant efforts to promote STEM education in recent years. In late 2016, the Education Bureau released the Report on Promotion of STEM Education – Unleashing Potential in Innovation, containing a number of recommended measures which are being implemented progressively. In light of the latest development in science and technology, we updated the relevant curriculum guides, which were published in 2017. In the 2017/18 school year, we enhanced coding education at the primary level to develop students' computational thinking skills. We are now reviewing the Information and Communication Technology Curriculum for the senior secondary level and considering incorporating contents related to artificial intelligence.

In fact, STEM education is not a separate and new subject. We have been promoting STEM education in primary and secondary schools through relevant Key Learning Areas (KLAs), including the Science, Technology and Mathematics Education. In accordance with their school context and their students' interests and abilities, schools may adopt different emphases and plans when implementing STEM education. Some schools, for example, have implemented STEAM education by incorporating elements of Arts Education.

On professional training for teachers, we have been providing intensive training programmes on STEM education for school leaders and middle managers in batches since the 2017/18 school year, and organising professional training programmes for teachers on coding education and on themes related to technology application. Besides, we have been providing primary and secondary schools with diversified school-based support services, so as to assist them in curriculum planning across the KLAs of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education and incorporating elements of STEM education into the school-based curriculum.

At the university level, the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) has earlier briefed the UGC-funded universities on the trends and development of manpower requirements in the innovation and technology (I&T) sector. In view of the importance attached by the community to I&T, the UGC-funded universities have responded positively in their Planning Exercise Proposals for the 2019/20 to 2021/22 triennium by, inter alia, proposing more cross-

disciplinary programmes, such as those relating to artificial intelligence and financial technology.

In 2003, the Government deregulated the salary scale of UGC-funded universities, with a view to enhancing their international competitiveness in recruiting and retaining talents. In accordance with the principle of institutional autonomy and their respective human resources policy and mechanism, the universities will continue to recruit teaching and research personnel having regard to universities' circumstances and demand for talents.

(3) As Asia's world city, Hong Kong is an international business and financial hub, enjoying unique advantages to tap into the unlimited opportunities in both the Mainland and other Asia-Pacific regions. Also renowned for its open and free trade regime, low tax system, rule of law and high competitiveness, Hong Kong is a livable international city welcomed by global talents. The report mentioned in Dr Hon Quat's question also re-affirmed Hong Kong's strengths in attracting outside talents to sustain a top-tier talent pool.

To further attract quality talent from around the world in a more effective and focused manner to support Hong Kong's development as a high value-added and diversified economy, the Government promulgated in August this year the first Talent List of Hong Kong. The 11 professions under the Talent List cover a variety of cutting-edge and emerging technology and research professionals, and are those whom Hong Kong needs most in the immediate to medium term for our economic development. Immigration facilitation is provided to eligible persons under the Talent List through the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS). For applicants who meet the specifications of the respective profession under the Talent List, bonus marks will be given under the General Points Test of the QMAS, subject to documentary proof.

In addition, to attract outside technology talent in support of Innovation Technology (I&T) development, ITB launched the Technology Talent Admission Scheme in June this year to provide a fast-track arrangement for admitting overseas and Mainland technology talent to conduct research and development work in Hong Kong, thereby facilitating the I&T sector to attract talent.

The Government is also committed to promoting the various talent admission schemes overseas, including commissioning publicity visits and strengthening promotion through the economic and trade offices outside Hong Kong and relevant organisations with a view to attracting talent to come to Hong Kong for development.

The Government will continue to review the effectiveness of different talent attraction measures and admission schemes and keep an eye on other countries or regions' initiatives to attract outside talent, with a view to considering enhancements to the talent admission regime of Hong Kong and further attracting high-quality outside talent to come to Hong Kong for development and enrich Hong Kong's talent pool. Thank you, Acting Madam

President.

LCQ3 : The Buy-or-Rent Option and Tenants Purchase Scheme of the Housing Authority

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) launched the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) in 1998 for tenants of selected public rental housing (PRH) estates to buy the flats in which they lived at a discounted price. Although HA terminated TPS in August 2005, existing and new tenants of TPS estates may still buy the flats in which they live. On the other hand, HA implemented the Buy-or-Rent Option (BRO) from 1999 to 2003 for prospective PRH tenants to choose between renting or buying the flats in designated housing blocks. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that at present, tenants of TPS estates may buy the flats in which they live, why tenants of BRO blocks may not do so;

(2) as a number of tenants of BRO blocks have indicated that upon their moving in, some staff members of the Housing Department gave a verbal undertaking that they might in future buy the flats in which they lived, whether the Government will honour the undertaking; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will re-launch BRO and TPS, so as to rebuild the home ownership ladder for the grass roots; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) launched the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) in 1998 for public rental housing (PRH) tenants to buy the units they lived in at a discounted price, thereby helping achieve the then policy objective of attaining a home ownership rate of 70 per cent in Hong Kong in ten years' time. In 1999, HA launched the Buy or Rent Option (BRO) to provide an additional option for prospective PRH tenants, enabling them to

move up the ladder to home ownership without the interim stage of PRH. Under BRO, HA would select suitable building(s) in public housing estates for sale, with sale units co-locating in one single location to facilitate building management. Remaining buildings in the estate were used as rental units.

Arising from the Government's announcement of the re-positioned housing policies in November 2002, HA decided to halt the provision of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats and other subsidised sale flats (SSFs) in 2003. The BRO was ceased at the same time. In line with the then overall strategy of withdrawing from direct provision of SSFs, HA also decided to cease the sale of PRH units after launching Phase 6B of TPS in August 2005.

The co-existence of flat owners and HA's tenants in TPS estates has created many problems in estate management and maintenance. HA's estate management policies cannot be fully implemented in TPS estates. As a result, PRH tenants living in TPS estates and those living in non-TPS estates are subject to different management regimes. At present, HA can only regulate misdeeds committed in the rental units of TPS estates, while misdeeds committed in common areas (such as littering, burning wax, etc.) cannot be regulated by the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement as such areas fall under the management of the Owners' Corporation. Owing to the mixed tenure in TPS estates, the Housing Department (HD) can neither effectively carry out maintenance works (such as ceiling seepage, pipes leakage, etc.) which involve both sold and rental units within the same block. There have been discussions on whether TPS should be re-launched during the public consultation on Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS). Taking into account the above considerations, the LTHS Steering Committee also considered it not advisable to re-launch TPS.

BRO and TPS are two different schemes, with different arrangements and target groups. Under BRO, as all sale units are located in individual buildings which are separate from PRH blocks, management problems encountered in TPS estates due to co-existence of flat owners and HA's tenants in the same building would not exist. If HA allows individual PRH tenants living in BRO estates to purchase the PRH units they are living in, since not all tenants are willing or have the ability to purchase the units, it is likely to replicate the situations in TPS estates. This is undesirable.

According to our records, HD did not give any undertaking that tenants living in BRO estates may purchase the PRH units they are living in. On the other hand, sitting tenants of the 39 TPS estates can still opt to purchase the PRH units they are living in. However, HA has no intention of launching TPS in other PRH estates.

The Chief Executive pointed out in the 2017 Policy Address that the housing policy of the current-term Government comprises four elements.

First, housing is not a simple commodity; while maintaining respect for a free market economy, the Government has an indispensable role to play in this area. Second, the Government will focus on home-ownership, and strive to build a housing ladder to rekindle the hope of families in different income brackets to become home-owners. Third, the Government will focus on supply

and increase the supply of housing based on the LTHS. Fourth, when new supply is not yet available, the Government will optimise existing housing resources to help families awaiting PRH and residents in poor living conditions.

Increasing supply of public housing, and rekindling hopes of families in different income brackets for home ownership are important components of the housing policy. The Government has been striving to consummate the housing ladder by providing SSFs for low to middle-income families to achieve home ownership. Opportunities are provided for PRH tenants who have improved their financial conditions to achieve home ownership, thereby vacating their PRH units for allocation to those waiting for PRH. The Government will continue to identify suitable sites and support HA and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) to implement HOS and other SSFs projects. According to the forecasts as at September 2018, in the five-year period from 2018/19 to 2022/23, the estimated total production of HA and HKHS' SSFs is about 26 300 units, excluding Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) flats.

Comparing the above projected production of SSFs for the five-year period starting from 2018/19 with that of the previous four five-year periods, the projected production shows a steady increase.

Tenants living in other PRH units with aspirations for home ownership can apply for the purchase of newly-completed HOS/GSH flats launched by HA, as well as newly-completed SSFs launched by HKHS, using Green Form (GF) status. They may also purchase HA/HKHS' SSFs with premium unpaid in the Secondary Market. The next GSH project at Cheung Sha Wan, involving some 2 500 flats, will be launched later this month. It will provide additional home ownership opportunities for GF applicants.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, December 5, 2018 is 105.4 (up 0.4 against yesterday's index).

LCQ7: Combating Mainland fishermen's illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen and a written reply by

the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question:

It has been reported that a large number of Mainland fishermen entering Hong Kong waters for illegal fishing has often been seen in recent months. By using serpentine traps for fishing, they have not only contravened the law but also caused serious damage to the ecology of Hong Kong waters. Despite repeated complaints lodged by some villagers to the Police and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the situation has shown no improvement. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the manning scale of Marine Police officers responsible for patrolling the boundary of Hong Kong waters in the past three years;

(2) of (i) the number of cases of Mainland fishing vessels suspected of illegal fishing in Hong Kong which were dealt with by the various law enforcement departments, and (ii) the respective numbers of cases in which Mainland fishermen were prosecuted and convicted for illegal fishing, in each of the past seven years;

(3) whether the authorities have, since 2016, allocated additional resources for combating illegal fishing activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will (i) allocate additional resources for law enforcement, (ii) improve the prosecution mechanism, (iii) raise the penalty, and (iv) take other measures, to curb Mainland fishermen's illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong, so as to safeguard the rights and interests of local fishermen and conserving the ecology of Hong Kong waters; if so, of the details of the measures to be taken; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Security Bureau, we provide a consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen as follows:

(1) The divisions under the Police's Marine Region are responsible for the daily patrol and enforcement actions within Hong Kong waters, providing round-the-clock service for the general public. The staff establishment of the Marine Region was 2 281 in the past three years. The Police does not maintain a separate breakdown of the number of officers responsible for patrolling the boundary of Hong Kong waters.

(2) In tackling the cross-boundary illegal fishing activities of Mainland fishing vessels, the Marine Region has drawn up a standing action plan and has been actively carrying out joint enforcement operations against illegal

fishing with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). 491 joint operations were carried out from 2012 to October 2018. The Marine Region has arrested 108 illegal immigrants and intercepted 188 fishing vessels suspected of illegal fishing, and referred the relevant cases to AFCD for follow-up having regard to the circumstances. Apart from the joint operations, AFCD also conducts daily patrols in Hong Kong waters. Together with the aforementioned cases as referred from the Marine Region, AFCD made prosecution in 35 cases involving 78 Mainland fishermen in total for illegal fishing activities under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) and the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation (Cap. 476A) in the same period.

(3) and (4) The Government considers that the existing statutory provisions are already effective in combating the illegal entry of Mainland fishing vessels into Hong Kong waters for fishing activities, and that the penalties imposed by the court, including fines and imprisonment, provide certain deterrent. Out of the 78 Mainland fishermen prosecuted as mentioned above, 24 were fined up to \$10,000, and the remaining 54 were sentenced for imprisonment up to two months.

The Government has been flexibly deploying resources to take enforcement actions against illegal fishing activities. As pointed out above, besides patrolling in Hong Kong waters, AFCD conducts joint operations with the Police's Marine Region to target blackspots for illegal fishing such as Soko Islands and the waters south of Cheung Chau, striving to curb illegal fishing activities of Mainland fishing vessels in Hong Kong. Since July 2016, AFCD has been seizing fishing gears deployed by Mainland fishermen in Hong Kong waters during regular patrols, so as to further safeguard the interests of local fishermen.

In addition, AFCD will exchange intelligence with Mainland law enforcement agencies. If Mainland fishing vessels are found illegally fishing in Hong Kong waters but they could not be successfully intercepted within Hong Kong waters, AFCD will, having regard to the circumstances, refer these cases to Mainland law enforcement agencies for follow-up.