

LCQ16: HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

The Government established the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund (GSF) in 2008 to provide scholarships to students every year on an ongoing basis with investment returns. Since the 2016-2017 academic year, the Education Bureau (EDB) has established the Belt and Road (B&R) Scholarship under the Targeted Scholarship Scheme of GSF to encourage students from countries/regions along B&R to pursue post-secondary education in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in its press release issued on the 24th of last month, the EDB changed the name that has been used for many years for the Targeted Scholarship Scheme, one of the five types of scholarships and awards under GSF, to the Belt and Road Scholarship, whether the Targeted Scholarship Scheme has been officially renamed as the Belt and Road Scholarship or replaced by it; if so, of the details and reasons for that;

(2) of the respective principal, surplus, investment income and expenditure of GSF in each of the past five academic years;

(3) of the following information in respect of the scholarships under the Targeted Scholarship Scheme other than the B&R Scholarship for each of the past five academic years: (i) the maximum number of places, (ii) the number of awardees (set out by participating institutions and awardees' places of origin), and (iii) the total amount of scholarships awarded;

(4) given that there are three categories of B&R Scholarship, namely B&R Scholarship (Designated Countries), B&R Scholarship (Other Countries) and B&R Scholarship (Research Postgraduate), of the following information on the three scholarships for each of the past five academic years: (i) the maximum number of places, (ii) the number of awardees (set out by participating institutions and awardees' places of origin), and (iii) the total amount of scholarships awarded;

(5) as it is learnt that the EDB indicated a few years ago that it did not maintain statistics on the respective numbers of B&R Scholarship awardees who had, upon completion of their studies, stayed in Hong Kong for advancing their studies, taking up employment or starting businesses, whether the authorities have maintained the relevant statistics thereafter to monitor the effectiveness of such scholarship; if not, how the authorities review the effectiveness of the scholarship; and

(6) whether the authorities have plans to introduce other measures or scholarships to attract more overseas students to come to Hong Kong to study; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To promote the development of Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub and to actively nurture local talents and attract talents from outside Hong Kong, the Government has introduced a basket of measures, including the establishment of the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund (the Fund) in 2008 to, through scholarships, encourage more outstanding local students to pursue their studies in Hong Kong and to attract more outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong. The Legislative Council approved five subsequent injections into the Fund to provide more types of scholarships and scholarship places. My reply to the question raised by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok is as follows:

(1) and (3) To strengthen collaboration in education with Belt and Road (B&R) countries, since the 2016/17 academic year, the Government has offered B&R Scholarship under the Targeted Scholarship Scheme (in addition to the Targeted Scholarship) to students from designated countries, i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, along the B&R regions. To attract more outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong, since the 2019/20 academic year, the annual quota of the B&R Scholarship has been substantially increased from 30 to 80, and has been expanded into three categories, i.e. B&R Scholarship (Designated Countries); B&R Scholarship (Other Countries); and B&R Scholarship (Research Postgraduate), to cover all regions, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and Korea, along the B&R.

Since the 2019/20 academic year, the Targeted Scholarship has ceased to be offered and has been covered by the B&R Scholarship. Therefore, in the past five academic years, other than the B&R Scholarship awardees, there were no new Targeted Scholarship awardees.

(2) The principal, balance, investment income and expenditure of the Fund from the 2019/20 academic year to the 2023/24 academic year are set out below:

Academic year	Principal (\$ million)	Opening balance (\$ million)	Income (\$ million)	Expenditure (\$ million)	Closing balance (\$ million)
2019/20	3,070	3,248	239	108	3,379
2020/21	3,070	3,379	397	105	3,671
2021/22	3,070	3,671	-327	121	3,223
2022/23	3,070	3,223	167	140	3,250

2023/24	4,070	3,250	1,358*	147	4,461
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*including a new injection of \$1 billion.

(4) For the B&R Scholarship, the number of awardees and the total amount of scholarships awarded in the past five academic years (from 2020/21 to 2024/25) are set out in the table below:

	Academic year				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of awardees	88	99	100	100	150
Total amount of scholarships awarded (\$ million)	23.8	29.6	34.5	39.2	53.3#

#The figure for the 2024/25 academic year has yet to be audited and confirmed.

The distribution of scholarship places and the distribution by participating institution and place of origin of awardees under the three categories of the B&R Scholarship, namely the B&R Scholarship (Designated Countries), the B&R Scholarship (Other Countries) and the B&R Scholarship (Research Postgraduate), are set out at Annex 1.

(5) When applying, the awardees generally indicated an intention to work, start a business or pursue further studies in Hong Kong upon completion of their studies. However, the Education Bureau (EDB) does not maintain statistics on B&R Scholarship awardees staying in Hong Kong for development after graduation.

Since its launch in the 2016/17 academic year, the B&R Scholarship has been well received by outstanding students from countries and regions along the B&R and participating local universities. In the five academic years from 2020/21 to 2024/25, we received over 1 000 nominations from 66 B&R countries (including the six designated countries of the B&R Scholarship), covering Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, North America and South America. Since the 2024/25 academic year, the Government has increased the scholarship places per annum from 100 to 150. The average utilisation rate of the yearly quota in the past five years was over 97 per cent, and all places were fully utilised in the past three academic years. Thus far, over 680 students from 49 B&R countries have been awarded scholarships totalling about \$210 million. Details are set out at Annex 2.

The Government and institutions have implemented various measures to encourage non-local students, including the B&R Scholarship awardees, to stay in Hong Kong for development after graduation:

(i) Measures to facilitate development in Hong Kong

The Government introduced the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates in 2008, which was further relaxed in 2022 with an extension of the limit of stay from 12 months to 24 months, so that non-local students could apply to stay in Hong Kong to seek development opportunities upon graduation. Moreover, since November 2023, the Government has temporarily exempted full-time non-local postgraduate students from the restrictions on taking up part-time jobs, and the exemption has been extended to cover non-local undergraduate students since November 2024, with a view to enhancing their experience and understanding of working in Hong Kong, and increasing their incentive to stay in Hong Kong for development after graduation.

(ii) Employment support

Local post-secondary institutions have been encouraging non-local students to stay in Hong Kong for development upon graduation through different channels, which include their faculties and student affairs offices providing information related to further studies and employment as well as diversified support services, such as employment and internship opportunities, recruitment seminars, and career counselling and consultation services.

(iii) Exchange network

The EDB has organised an exchange session on further studies in Hong Kong for new awardees each year starting from the 2024/25 academic year to help them learn about different opportunities in Hong Kong and establish a platform for them to support each other. It is also hoped that through the sharing of experience by awardees who have graduated and stayed in Hong Kong for development, new awardees will be encouraged to consider staying in Hong Kong for development upon graduation. Furthermore, the Government and institutions, from time to time, invite awardees to join exchange activities, such as the B&R Summit, to tell the good stories of Hong Kong.

The B&R Scholarship is remarkably effective in attracting students from the B&R countries to study in Hong Kong. It is also instrumental in enhancing the city's internationalisation and campus diversification, as well as facilitating Hong Kong's development into an international post-secondary education hub. Students staying in Hong Kong for development after graduation can enrich our city's talent pool. In addition, these awardees usually maintain close ties with Hong Kong after graduation, and even become ambassadors to promote Hong Kong and foster connections with the city. Even though they may not stay in Hong Kong for long-term development, they can establish a valuable worldwide network that enhances Hong Kong's global status and influence. These connections can promote collaboration in different areas (including business, technology and academics), thus reinforcing Hong Kong's advantage of being closely connected to the world.

The Government will continue to review the effectiveness of various measures, and introduce as necessary new measures or enhance the existing ones to attract non-local graduates to stay in Hong Kong for development.

(6) As the Government injected \$1 billion into the Fund in the previous

financial year to substantially increase the annual quota of the B&R Scholarship by 50 per cent to 150 starting from the 2024/25 academic year, the Government has for the time being no plans to further adjust the scholarship places or introduce other scholarship schemes. Nevertheless, the Government is also taking the following measures to attract more non-local students to study in Hong Kong:

(i) Enhancing publicity

Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure and its competitiveness is among the global top five. Our post-secondary education sector is highly internationalised and diversified, with five universities ranked among the world's top 100. The Government is establishing the "Study in Hong Kong" brand in collaboration with local post-secondary institutions by, among others, striving to host international education conferences and exhibitions, encouraging local post-secondary institutions to enhance collaboration and exchange with their counterparts around the world in promoting the "Study in Hong Kong" brand on a global scale, and attracting more non-local students, especially those from ASEAN and other B&R countries, to study in Hong Kong through scholarships and other incentives. The University Grants Committee (UGC) has been providing funding for universities to bolster their efforts in enhancing internationalisation and strengthening engagement with the Mainland. The UGC has provided a funding of \$20.47 million in the 2022-25 triennium for the Heads of Universities Committee's Standing Committee on Internationalisation (HUCOMSCI) comprising all eight UGC-funded universities to participate in and organise various overseas activities, and has set aside around \$10 million to support the HUCOMSCI in launching a brand new project to promote Hong Kong's higher education to the B&R countries, which includes the formulation of publicity and promotion strategies as well as the production of publicity materials and videos. The HUCOMSCI has commenced the work, and has commissioned a consultant to formulate the publicity and promotion strategy and conduct a market survey. The Government's overseas Economic and Trade Offices as well as relevant organisations from Hong Kong also participate in the publicity work from time to time.

(ii) Enhancing educational collaboration

To date, the EDB has signed 10 memoranda with countries along the B&R to strengthen educational ties and exchanges with these countries, while actively promoting the B&R Scholarship.

(iii) Complementary policies and support

The Government encourages and supports the post-secondary institutions' efforts to enhance campus facilities and provide social and personal support to facilitate student integration, so as to enable non-local students to have an enriched, fulfilling and enjoyable experience when studying in Hong Kong; to provide information and support related to further studies and employment for non-local students, so as to enhance their incentive to stay in Hong Kong for development after graduation; and to promote Hong Kong to the B&R countries.

LCQ3: Addressing measures of United States aimed against China's shipping industry

Following is a question by the Hon Yim Kong and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

Last month, the United States released the findings of the "Section 301 Investigations" under the Trade Act of 1974 and announced that port fees would be imposed on vessels owned or controlled by Chinese entities (including Hong Kong entities), including vessels whose owner or operator is headquartered in Hong Kong and vessels of which more than 25 per cent of the equity interest is held by a citizen or citizens or the Government of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is the fourth largest shipping register in the world, with over 1 100 maritime-related companies currently operating here. Some preliminary analyses have pointed out that such maritime companies will be faced with risks such as an upsurge in operating costs and a decline in market competitiveness, and ship leasing and ship financing businesses will also be affected by knock-on impacts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government has systematically assessed the negative impact of the aforesaid measures of the United States on Hong Kong's shipping and maritime-related industries, and formulated a cross-departmental collaboration plan to safeguard Hong Kong's status as an international shipping centre, as well as companies' legitimate rights and interests;

(2) whether it will provide targeted relief measures to the affected companies engaged in shipping, ship leasing and so on, or provide certain financial support for them to adjust their route deployments; and

(3) whether it has proactive measures to attract "non-US" ship operators or relevant high-end maritime service providers to carry on developing their business in Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

The United States (US) Government announced on April 17 this year the results of its Section 301 Investigations against Chinese maritime, logistics and ship building industries and decided to impose port fees on vessels owned or operated by Chinese (including Hong Kong and Macao) companies, and vessels

built in China for the use of US ports. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has immediately issued a press release to express its strong opposition to the decision, particularly for the fact that the measures are blatantly discriminatory, deliberately dividing the international maritime community and undermining the spirit of international solidarity and co-operation.

The HKSAR Government is highly concerned about the incident and the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB) has been maintaining close liaison with the industry to assess the situation and respond as needed. With regard to the various parts of Hon Yim's question, my reply is as follows:

(1) The US authorities has announced that the port fees will take effect on October 14 this year. For a vessel of 50 000 net tonnage, it will be charged US\$2.5 million per entry into a US port, thereafter increased annually reaching US\$7 million in April 2028. Each vessel will be charged up to a maximum of five times per year. The fees are indeed detrimental to others without beneficial to oneself, not only undermining the interests of the US port industry, cargo owners and consumers but also unfairly increasing the costs of Hong Kong's shipping companies on their business operations routing to and from the US ports.

Hong Kong is an international maritime centre supported by our country. Over the years, Hong Kong has attracted shipping companies of different capital backgrounds from all over the world to operate in the city by virtue of our "one country, two systems", bilingual common law as well as a free and open business environment. Each of these shipping companies has its own specific business portfolio and clientele. The extent to which they will be affected would depend on the share of the US market in their respective portfolios and their scope for adjusting shipping routes and business portfolios. It is therefore difficult to generalise the situation.

Recently, we have been visiting the shipping companies one after another, and the industry has reflected that the business environment in Hong Kong is indeed unrivalled and that the Hong Kong's ship registry has brought an edge to their ships in terms of quality assurance and international reputation. The industry is striving to identify solutions to the incident, and we do not underestimate the pressure faced by them due to various commercial considerations. On the strength of our country's strong backings, the HKSAR Government will render its full support to the Hong Kong's shipping companies to cope with the challenges. At the same time, we urge the industry to stay confident and avoid making hasty decisions under short-term geopolitical pressures at the expense of the long-term development opportunities in Hong Kong.

(2) We understand from the affected companies that they consider financial subsidies from the Government neither financially sustainable nor an effective solution to the problem. In contrast, the industry hopes that the Government can better consolidate the edges for the maritime sector operating in Hong Kong.

In recent years, the Government has introduced a number of measures to

enhance the competitiveness of the maritime industry, which has indeed saved up for a rainy day and enhanced the industry's resilience in coping with the complex external circumstances. We will capitalise on our strengths via a systematic and proactive approach to reinforce the local maritime industry chain internally as well as to expand market opportunities in our country and the world externally. We would have four key areas of work in future, including strengthening the maritime ecosystem, leading the industry to seize the opportunities arising from green shipping, deepening Hong Kong's role as an international exchange platform, and expanding opportunities in Mainland and overseas markets:

(i) Strengthening the maritime ecosystem, including the introduction of a half-rate tax concession for commodity traders and enhancement of the existing tax concessions for the maritime industry, for which the legislative bill is to be submitted to the Legislative Council in the first half of next year; continuing to provide green cash incentives and implementing the Block Registration Incentive Scheme for Hong Kong-registered ships;

(ii) Supporting and leading the industry to seize the opportunities arising from green shipping. The TLB has promulgated the Action Plan on Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering at the end of last year, with a view to promoting Hong Kong into a high-quality green maritime fuel bunkering centre by, inter alia, providing collaborative platforms for catalysing green maritime fuel supply and trading, thereby equipping the industry to cope with the international trend of green transition.

(iii) Deepening Hong Kong's role as an international exchange platform for facilitating interfaces between the local and overseas industry and expanding global business opportunities. The Government has been actively deepening collaborations with the international maritime organisations. The Hong Kong Maritime Week last year has been one of the most international editions ever where the key organisations like the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Maritime Organization had staged events in Hong Kong. These organisations have confirmed their continued participation in the Hong Kong Maritime Week this year and there would also be other international organisations staging events in Hong Kong for the first time.

(iv) Assisting and leading Hong Kong shipping companies to expand opportunities in Mainland and overseas markets, capitalising on Hong Kong's connectivity. This include establishing a "rail-sea-land-river" intermodal transport system with the Mainland for securing more cargo sources for Hong Kong, as well as utilising the port community system to be launched in January next year for connecting with the international maritime community, thereby assisting the industry to further enhance efficiency and reduce costs.

In addition, the Government will soon set up the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Development Board to be chaired by a non-official and provided with dedicated team and resources for enhancing its research, promotion and manpower training capabilities, so as to provide more effective support to the Government in promoting the development of Hong Kong's maritime industry.

(3) The aforementioned measures will significantly enhance Hong Kong's business environment and attractiveness, reinforcing Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre. We will continue to step up external promotion on the advantages of operating in Hong Kong through the Marine Department's service points located in seven different continents and Invest Hong Kong's network at home and abroad. The Marine Department will also set up a new dedicated team in the Middle East in the fourth quarter of this year for targeted promotion towards the emerging markets there.

Thank you, President.

Special traffic and transport arrangements in Southern District and Tai Po during Tuen Ng Festival holidays

The Transport Department (TD) today (May 28) reminded members of the public that the following special traffic and transport arrangements will be implemented in Southern District and Tai Po during the Tuen Ng Festival holidays (May 30 to 31) to facilitate the holding of dragon boat races.

Southern District

A. Traffic arrangements

(i) Road closures

Hoi Fung Path, Stanley Link Road, Stanley New Street, Stanley Market Road and Kwun Hoi Path will be temporarily closed to all vehicular traffic, except for vehicles of the local residents, police, emergency vehicles and vehicles with permits, by phases from 6am to 7pm on May 31.

B. Public transport arrangements

The following adjustments will be implemented for the public transport services on May 31:

(i) Citybus special route No. 73S (Stanley Village to Ocean Park Station) will be operated at 4.30pm, and additional departures will be operated subject to passenger demand;

(ii) The services of Citybus route Nos. 6, 6X, 14, 65, 73 and 260 will be strengthened/adjusted subject to passenger demand and traffic conditions, and the first departure of Citybus route No. 260 from Central (Exchange Square)

will be advanced to 6.45am;

(iii) Citybus route No. 314 will be diverted via Stanley Village Road northbound in lieu of Stanley Village Road southbound and Tung Tau Wan Road after Stanley Beach Road;

(iv) Citybus route Nos. H3 and H4 will omit Stanley Village Bus Terminus and terminate at the bus stop on Stanley Village Road outside Stanley Village Bus Terminus, and depart from the bus stop on Stanley Village Road opposite to Stanley Police Station respectively;

(v) The service of Hong Kong Island (HKI) green minibuses (GMB) Route No. 40 will be suspended from 6am to 7pm, while the service of HKI GMB Route No. 40X will be strengthened accordingly;

(vi) The kaito service between the landing step outside Aberdeen Promenade and Ap Lei Chau will be suspended from 7am to 5pm; and

(vii) Some bus stops, the GMB stands and the taxi stand in the vicinity of Stanley, Repulse Bay and Aberdeen will be suspended or temporarily relocated by phases.

Tai Po

A. Traffic arrangements

(i) Road closures

Dai King Street, Dai Hei Street and the section of Dai Kwai Street south of Dai Cheong Street will be temporarily closed to all vehicular traffic, except for taxis, emergency vehicles and those vehicles authorised by the police officers on site, from 6pm on May 30 to 5pm on May 31.

B. Public transport arrangements

(i) Bus route diversion and suspension of bus stops

KMB Route No. 72A (Tai Wai Station – Tai Po Industrial Estate) (both bounds) will omit Dai King Street, Dai Hei Street and the section of Dai Kwai Street south of Dai Cheong Street from 7am to 5pm on May 31. Concurrently, the bus stops on the above road sections will be suspended during the above period.

(ii) Temporary provision of taxi pick-up/drop-off area

A temporary taxi pick-up/drop-off area will be provided on the section of Dai Hei Street west of Dai Kwai Street from 7am to 5pm on May 31.

For details of the special traffic and public transport arrangements, members of the public may visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk), its mobile application "HKeMobility" or refer to the passenger notices issued by the relevant public transport operators.

Due to road closures, the TD anticipates that traffic in the areas concerned will become significantly congested. Motorists are advised to avoid driving to the above areas affected by the road closures. In case of traffic congestion, motorists should exercise patience and drive with care, and follow the instructions of the Police on site.

The TD appeals to members of the public to make use of public transport services as far as possible to avoid traffic congestion and unnecessary delay. The TD and the Police will closely monitor the traffic situation and implement appropriate measures when necessary. The Police may adjust the traffic arrangements, subject to the prevailing crowd and traffic conditions in the areas. The public should pay attention to the latest traffic news through radio, television or "HKeMobility".

Incoming passenger convicted and jailed for possessing duty-not-paid cigarettes

An incoming male passenger was sentenced to four weeks' imprisonment and fined \$800 at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (May 28) for possessing duty-not-paid cigarettes and failing to declare it to Customs Officers, in contravention of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO).

Customs intercepted an incoming 32-year-old male passenger at the China Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui yesterday (May 27) for Customs clearance. Four thousand two hundred sticks of duty-not-paid cigarettes, with an estimated market value of about \$17,200 and a duty potential of about \$13,900, were seized from a suitcase carried by him. The male passenger was subsequently arrested.

Customs welcomes the sentence. The custodial sentence has imposed a considerable deterrent effect and reflects the seriousness of the offences. Customs reminds members of the public that under the DCO, tobacco products are dutiable goods to which the DCO applies. Any person who deals with, possesses, sells or buys illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



Fraudulent website and internet banking login screen related to Chong Hing Bank Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Chong Hing Bank Limited relating to a fraudulent website and an internet banking login screen, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website or login screen concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.