

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is conducting comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor the situation and continue to implement the enhanced testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on May 27 to noon today (May 28), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 259 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 139 169 samples of food imported from Japan (including 91 621 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 31 988 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples

passed the tests.

LCQ6: Promoting traditional customs and cultural activities

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Edward Leung and a reply by the Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

It is learnt that the traditional customs of "Petty Person Beating" and "Offering Sacrifices to the White Tiger" carried out underneath the Canal Road Flyover (commonly known as "Ngo Keng Kiu") in Causeway Bay have attracted quite a number of tourists to view and experience them. However, due to the crowded environment at the location, there have been conflicts between tourists and local residents from time to time, which is not conducive to the promotion of the relevant cultural activities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the change in the number of stall operators carrying out the aforesaid traditional customs and cultural activities underneath the flyover in the past 10 years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the details of the authorities' work in promoting the aforesaid traditional customs and cultural activities in the past three years, and whether the effectiveness of such work has been assessed; and

(3) as it is learnt that at present, the aforesaid stall operators only hold business registration certificates and there is no accreditation mechanism for such cultural activities, while the management of stall operators and related activities also involves different policy areas (e.g. environmental hygiene and cultural tourism), whether the Government has considered setting up an interdepartmental management group to improve the relevant accreditation and management work with the focus on cultural conservation, so as to reduce the conflicts between tourists and residents while balancing the operational needs of the industry; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

President Xi Jinping once pointed out that the outstanding traditional

Chinese culture is the spiritual lifeblood of the Chinese nation. The current-term Government is committed to promoting the outstanding traditional Chinese culture and has introduced multiple measures over the past two years, including establishing the Chinese Culture Promotion Office and organising the Chinese Culture Festival. "Promote Profound Traditional Chinese Culture and Develop Cultural Contents with Hong Kong Character" was also formulated as one of the four strategic directions in the Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Development promulgated at the end of last year.

From the perspective of traditional culture, whether a custom qualifies as "outstanding" traditional culture depends on its cultural values in terms of diversity and pluralism. The merit of traditional culture should also be evaluated based on among others, its transmission, dissemination, and level of prevalence.

Both "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger" and "Beating Petty Person" are traditional Chinese culture with certain folk customs and symbolic meanings. In folk belief, White Tiger is seen as a malevolent spirit believed to bring misfortune. Thus, the ritual of "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger" aims to ward off bad luck and troubles. "Beating Petty Person", a folk custom in southern China, involves striking paper effigies or wooden figures with various tools to drive away bad luck and negative energy.

The "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger during Insects Awaken Day" is included as one of the items on the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Inventory of Hong Kong. The item specifically pertains to the practice of "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger" conducted on the "Insects Awaken Day" within the "Twenty-Four Solar Terms" system, which typically falls on the 5th or 6th of March in the Gregorian calendar. This practice conducted on the "Insects Awaken Day" may include "Beating Petty Person", and the practice of "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger" can take place at various venues across Hong Kong, without limitation to any specified location. However, the "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger" and "Beating Petty Person" activities underneath the Canal Road Flyover (commonly known as "Ngo Keng Kiu") in Causeway Bay are operated all year round in general. These activities, which are not included in the scope of the "Twenty-Four Solar Terms" social practices, constitute commercial operations conducted by service providers.

In consultation with the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau and the Environment and Ecology Bureau, my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Edward Leung is as follows:

The area underneath Canal Road Flyover is a renowned location for "Beating Petty Person". While peak activity occurs during the "Insects Awaken Day" in March each year, the stalls operate "year-round". Currently, around ten stalls operate beneath the flyover for this ritual, primarily concentrated along the pedestrian walkway facing the Hennessy Road tram tracks.

Relevant departments have all along been following up on the environmental hygiene and street management issues arising from "Beating

Petty Person" and carrying out enforcement actions within their respective jurisdictions. The Wan Chai District Office (WCDO) co-ordinates interdepartmental clearance operations (Joint Operation) on a regular basis to mitigate nuisances caused by these activities to the local residents and the surrounding environment. On-street activities may involve the purviews of various departments. The work of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is mainly to maintain environmental hygiene. The FEHD has been monitoring the traditional customs of "Beating Petty Person" underneath the Canal Road Flyover and officers will, during their routine inspection, take appropriate actions based on the actual circumstances to maintain environmental hygiene.

From January to May 2025, the WCDO coordinated a total of nine Joint Operations at the aforementioned location. Prior to the operation, the Government will post notices on unauthorised articles placed on Government land, reminding owners to remove the obstructive items. During the Joint Operation day, any remaining articles would be cleared by the FEHD. The WCDO will advise the "Beating Petty Person" practitioners to maintain clear pedestrian pathways. The Hong Kong Police Force will be present to maintain public order and provide assistance as required. Furthermore, any unauthorised structures found to be occupying Government land would be referred to the Lands Department for follow-up action.

In alignment with the objective of promoting the outstanding traditional Chinese culture, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are committed to safeguarding, transmitting and promoting the ICH of Hong Kong while actively supporting the national policies on furthering the safeguarding of ICH. For ICH items across diverse domains, various corresponding measures are implemented to strengthen different aspects of work such as identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion and transmission and to enhance the public's understanding of ICH and engage the community in safeguarding ICH. An example of these measures includes the ICH Funding Scheme of the LCSD, which supports eligible local organisations and individuals in implementing meaningful local ICH projects to promote the items on the ICH Inventory of Hong Kong. In addition, the LCSD will also develop a mechanism and criteria in 2025 for recognising the bearers of the items on the Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong, as well as organising the "Hong Kong ICH Month". As to "Offering Sacrifices to White Tiger during Insects Awaken Day", the first "Hong Kong ICH Month" to be held in June this year will include workshops to introduce "Twenty-Four Solar Terms", including the introduction of this ICH item of "Insects Awaken Day".

In addition, the one-stop travel information platform of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, DiscoverHongKong, features information on "Beating Petty Person" under Ngo Keng Kiu. If visitors are interested, they can experience this distinctive local custom firsthand.

Expanding scope of regulated mercury-added products under Mercury Control Ordinance

The Government will gazette the Mercury Control Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 3) Notice 2025 on May 30 and table it before the Legislative Council on June 4 to include a number of mercury-added products newly regulated by international convention under the Mercury Control Ordinance (Cap. 640) (the Ordinance) to reduce the risk of the public's exposure to these mercury-added products, so as to safeguard public health and protect the environment.

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau said today (May 28) that the newly regulated mercury-added products will be listed in Schedule 3 to the Ordinance, including some electronic/electrical/lighting products and cosmetics. For details, please refer to the Annex. The amendments related to the first eight mercury-added products will take effect from December 31, 2025. The effective date(s) of the amendments related to the other eight mercury-added products will be announced separately after the relevant international convention becomes applicable to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

In terms of enforcement, once the amendments to the Ordinance come into effect, the manufacture, import, export and supply of the relevant regulated mercury-added products will be prohibited. Anyone who contravenes the above regulations commits an offence and, upon conviction, is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for one year. The Government has set a grace period (until January 2029) for the supply of newly regulated mercury-added products to help the public adapt. After the specified deadline (i.e. after January 2029), if anyone continues to supply the relevant regulated mercury-added products, the authorities will initiate prosecution after collecting sufficient evidence and will also include the above implementation arrangements in the relevant guidelines.

The spokesman said, "Bringing these mercury-added products under the regulation of the Ordinance can safeguard public health and protect the environment. It will at the same time enable the HKSAR to implement the amendments made to the Minamata Convention on Mercury to phase out mercury-added products."

The Convention is an international convention aimed at protecting human health and the environment from the harmful effects caused by the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. At the fourth and fifth meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2022 and 2023, the Parties agreed to phase out 16 mercury-added products progressively between 2025 and 2027, taking into account the availability of mercury-free substitutes.

LCQ11: Provision and planning of car parking space

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

Question:

It has been reported that the Middle Road Multi-storey Carpark in Tsim Sha Tsui and the Yau Ma Tei Multi-storey Carpark have been demolished one after another, resulting in the reduction of over a thousand parking spaces in Yau Tsim Mong District. However, these parking spaces have not been promptly replaced. In addition, some members of the public have reflected that parking spaces in that district and Sham Shui Po District have been insufficient for a long time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current shortage of parking spaces for private cars, motorcycles and goods vehicles in Yau Tsim Mong District and Sham Shui Po District respectively, according to the population of the two districts and the standards set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG);

(2) given that in the reply to this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2025-2026, the Government indicated that the average utilisation rates of public car parks managed by Government Property Agency and Leisure and Cultural Services Department in Yau Tsim Mong District were only 42 per cent and 33 per cent respectively last year, while those in Sham Shui Po District were only 54 per cent and 23 per cent respectively, whether the Government has examined the reasons of the relatively low utilisation rates of these car parks; whether it will consider introducing measures to attract motorists to use these public car parks;

(3) given that the Government indicated in its reply to a question raised by this Council in February last year that it would, where circumstances permit, increase appropriately the number of public parking spaces in suitable Government, Institution or Community facilities and public open space projects, etc, whether the authorities have plans to provide additional parking spaces in Yau Tsim Mong District and Sham Shui Po District; if so, of the details (including target numbers and the timetable);

(4) whether the Government will provide additional public parking spaces equipped with intelligent parking systems; if so, of the details, including the locations of such parking spaces, whether it will consider installing electric vehicle charging facilities at such parking spaces, and how the Government will control the relevant construction costs;

(5) whether the Government will consider providing parking spaces underneath flyovers; if so, of the details (including whether more of such parking spaces will be provided in Yau Tsim Mong District and Sham Shui Po District); and

(6) given that Government indicated in its reply to a question raised by this Council in January this year that it would regularly review and timely revise the standards for parking facilities in HKPSG to tie in with the parking space demand, when will the Government conduct the next review of the relevant standards?

Reply:

President,

The Government's policy on parking space provision prioritises addressing the demand for commercial vehicle (CV) parking. Where overall development permits, an appropriate number of private car (PC) parking spaces are also provided. However, the Government does not encourage frequent public transport users to switch to PCs, as this would exacerbate road traffic congestion. Nonetheless, the Government recognises that some members of the public choose to commute by PC for various reasons. Therefore, it has actively implemented a range of short-term and medium-to-long-term measures to increase the supply of parking spaces.

After consulting the Transport Department (TD), the Government Property Agency (GPA), and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), a consolidated response to the question raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) set parking space standards for individual development projects rather than planning the overall parking supply in a district. In reviewing and approving development projects, relevant departments, including the TD, strive to ensure compliance with HKPSG standards. Parking demand in each district depends on various factors, including the overall economic situation, population structure, and local economic activity patterns. The demand for PC parking spaces is influenced by household income and housing types, while CV parking needs are shaped by operational modes, parking habits, and the residential and workplace locations of CV drivers. Consequently, setting specific parking supply targets for individual districts, such as Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po, is challenging.

As of March 2025, Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po had over 39 600 and approximately 37 500 parking spaces, respectively. Between March 2021 and March 2025, the number of parking spaces in both districts increased by about 2 500.

(2) The car parks at West Kowloon Government Offices and Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, managed by the GPA, provide 50 and 263 PC parking spaces respectively and operate under commercial principles by contractors. At

Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, some parking spaces are available for public use throughout the day, while others are open only during non-office hours due to departmental needs. The car park at West Kowloon Government Offices is open to the public during non-office hours.

Several LCSD-managed facilities, including Kowloon Park, Mong Kok Stadium, Shek Kip Mei Park, Lai Chi Kok Park, Sham Shui Po Sports Ground, Cornwall Street Park, and Lung Cheung Road Lookout, have open-air public car parks. Except for Mong Kok Stadium's car park, which is available only on non-match days, all mentioned car parks are open to the public around the clock.

Car park utilisation varies based on multiple factors, including fees, location, surrounding facilities, and PC parking demand during specific periods. For example, LCSD facility car parks see higher usage during venue opening hours, typically exceeding 60 per cent, but decline in the evening. Car park operators manage these facilities commercially, encouraging usage to maintain optimal occupancy rates. The fees of nearby parking facilities also influence utilisation. In 2024, the metered parking spaces in Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po had utilisation rates exceeding 90 per cent, partly due to their significantly lower fees compared to regular car parks.

(3) and (4) The Government continues to develop public vehicle parks (PVPs) in suitable Government, Institution or Community facilities and public open space projects under the "single site, multiple use" principle. Where feasible, automated parking systems (APS) are considered to enhance efficiency. Current and planned PVPs, short-term tenancy (STT) car parks, and new on-street parking spaces are expected to provide approximately 1 030 additional parking spaces in Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po (see Annex for details). By 2026, more than 135 new on-street parking spaces will be designated. This figure does not account for additional parking spaces in private and subsidised housing developments or commercial buildings. Moreover, at least 350 APS parking spaces are expected in ongoing PVP projects and STT car parks equipped with APS (see Annex for details).

Currently, no reliable electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities are available on the market that can be integrated into APS with more than two storeys or multidirectional configurations. There is currently no international standards for installing EV charging in APSs. Government departments have monitored APS developments globally and will explore EV charging options once the technology matures. Power supply capacity for medium chargers has been reserved in relevant public works projects based on current Environment and Ecology Bureau standards. For example, the PVP at the Joint-User Government Office Building in Area 67, Tseung Kwan O, is actively planning to install medium charging facilities at the bottom level of its puzzle-stacking APS. The Government will explore EV charging integration in APSs where technically and financially viable.

APS adoption is determined case-by-case, with cost-effectiveness as the primary criterion. Since APS equipment is relatively expensive, conventional parking spaces are used when proven more cost-effective. APSs generally enhance parking density, reduce construction scale (such as basement

excavation depth), and shorten project timelines, thereby lowering costs. As APS technology advances, construction and operational expenses are expected to decline further with benefit of economies of scale.

(5) The TD remains committed to optimising limited road space by designating parking under flyovers where feasible, ensuring road safety and traffic flow remain unaffected. Several factors, such as road safety (including sightline visibility and distance to nearby junctions), traffic flow, headroom clearance, pedestrian accessibility, underground utilities, local parking demand, and community feedback, are considered in site selection.

As of March 2025, the TD has designated over 340 motorcycle (MC) parking spaces and around 30 bus parking spaces under flyovers in Yau Tsim Mong. In Sham Shui Po, nearly 90 MC parking spaces are provided under flyovers. Additionally, the TD plans to allocate parking spaces under the Hing Wah Street West flyover near Lai Ying Street in Cheung Sha Wan, including approximately 10 PC metered parking spaces and 6 MC spaces. The Government will continue to identify new sites while welcoming input from the public and industry stakeholders.

(6) The HKPSG parking facility standards undergo regular reviews and timely revision to align with Hong Kong's evolving social and economic landscape, including future transportation policies. The last revision, in August 2021, increased ancillary PC parking spaces in private and subsidised housing projects and increased CV parking types and provisions in subsidised housing. The TD will assess the impact of these changes, including the first batch of subsidised housing developed under the revised HKPSG, expected to be completed in 2026, providing approximately 4 700 new parking spaces, to ensure continued alignment with urban developments.

LCQ22: Public benefits received by residents of public housing estates

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

There are views pointing out that with an ageing population, persistent poverty problem and increasing expenditure on education, there has been increasing public concern over the coverage, effectiveness and fairness of various social welfare payments and assistance schemes, and low-income residents of public housing estates (PHEs) are particularly dependent on the relevant benefits. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information in respect of the PHE residents receiving (a) Working Family Allowance, (b) Old Age Living Allowance, (c) Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, (d) Old Age Allowance and (e) School Textbook Assistance (the beneficiaries) and their PHEs in the past three years: the top 20 PHEs with (i) the largest numbers of beneficiaries and (ii) the highest percentages of beneficiaries in the populations of the PHEs concerned (set out by social welfare payment and assistance scheme in a table), together with the names of the PHEs concerned, the districts in which they are located, their population sizes, the total amount of allowances involved, as well as the numbers of beneficiaries and the percentages of beneficiaries in the populations of the PHEs concerned;

(2) whether the Government has plans to comprehensively review the barriers faced by PHE residents in applying for (a) to (e) in (1), such as complicated application procedures, insufficient information transparency, digital divide or excessively stringent eligibility criteria, etc, and to introduce specific enhancement measures (e.g. streamlining the application procedures, providing exclusive support services for PHEs, etc) to increase the coverage and efficiency of the various schemes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the financial conditions of residents and demographic structures vary in different PHEs, whether the Government has studied implementing targeted schemes in PHEs with a larger number of beneficiaries to support residents in getting rid of poverty or receiving education, such as introducing additional programmes on vocational training, offering subsidies for extra-curricular activities or providing training on digital skills, so as to facilitate the lifting of inter-generational poverty and promote social mobility; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) in view of the relatively high proportion of elderly people and low-income families in PHEs, whether the Government will, when considering adjustments to the amounts of allowances or eligibility requirements for receiving (a) to (e) in (1), accord priority to assessing the impact of such adjustments on residents of PHEs and adopt targeted measures to alleviate their financial burdens; if so, of the details (including the assessment mechanism and measures adopted); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Education Bureau, Housing Department (HD), Social Welfare Department (SWD) and Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA), I reply to the four parts of the question as follows:

(1) From 2022 to 2024, the top 20 public housing estates (PHEs) with the greatest number of recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) and Old Age Allowance (OAA) as well as the districts in which these PHEs are located are set out in Tables 1 to 9 respectively. The SWD does not maintain a breakdown of the assistance and

allowances by PHEs.

During the same period, the top 20 PHEs with the greatest number of Working Family Allowance (WFA) recipients, the districts in which these PHEs are located and the amount of allowance are set out in Tables 10 to 12 respectively.

In the school years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, the top 20 PHEs with the greatest number of School Textbook Assistance recipients, the districts in which these PHEs are located and the amount of assistance are set out in Tables 13 to 15 respectively.

The recipients of assistance and allowances in the above tables live in both rental and non-rental units in various types of PHEs (Note 1), while the HD does not keep annual statistics on the number of residents living in the non-rental units of the abovementioned PHEs. We are therefore unable to provide by year the total population of the PHEs in the above tables and the population percentage of recipients of the relevant assistance and allowances in the relevant PHEs.

(2) PHE residents and other Hong Kong residents may apply for the abovementioned assistance and allowances through various channels and facilitation measures provided by the departments.

Applicants for CSSA, OALA and OAA may submit applications in person at the SWD's Social Security Field Units (some of which are located in PHE shopping centres) or by telephone, fax, email, post, or submit online. Their applications may also be referred to the SWD by other government departments or non-governmental organisations. The SWD provides application guides for reference by applicants to facilitate their completion of the application form. If applicants encounter difficulties during the process, the SWD will provide them with appropriate assistance. As more detailed information is required for CSSA applications, the SWD staff will even complete the CSSA application form based on the information provided by the applicants, explain to them details of the Scheme, understand their needs in detail and verify the submitted supporting documents through home visits or other means. CSSA applicants only need to sign the application form to confirm the information contained and declarations without filling in the application form by themselves.

The WFSFAA reviews and streamlines the application and vetting procedures of the WFA Scheme and the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS) from time to time. With respect to the WFA Scheme, the WFSFAA provides households which got approved WFA previously with application forms prefilled with basic household information, and requires less documentary proof in their subsequent applications. The WFSFAA provides reference materials for applicants such as guidance notes, checklist of documents required for the application and sample application forms. The WFSFAA sets up mobile information booths at various locations (including PHEs), and provides service counters (Note 2) and a 24-hour telephone enquiry hotline to answer public enquiries and offer assistance in filling out application forms.

In addition, the WFSFAA adopts a household-based application form to facilitate the submission of a consolidated application by families concerned for all eligible children attending primary or secondary schools or kindergartens / child care centres for applicable student financial assistance (including the STAS). Apart from providing enquiry hotlines and counter services, the WFSFAA also maintains close contact with schools with a view to offering assistance to applicants in need.

(3) and (4) The CSSA Scheme and the Social Security Allowance Scheme (SSA) form part of Hong Kong's social security system, and no contribution is required from the recipients. Eligibility criteria for the various assistance and allowances differ in correspondence to their policy objectives and target recipients. Regardless of whether being a PHE resident, an applicant is eligible for assistance or allowance as long as he/she meets the relevant eligibility criteria. According to the established mechanism, the Government adjusts the CSSA standard payment rates and SSA rates of allowances annually on the basis of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices movement to preserve the purchasing power of the relevant cash assistance.

Since the introduction of the WFA Scheme in April 2018, the Government has reviewed the WFA Scheme at various times and implemented a number of enhancement measures, including relaxing the eligibility criteria by extending the Scheme to singleton households and allowing household members to aggregate their working hours to apply for WFA. In addition, the Government has increased the rates of allowance under the WFA Scheme thrice to further alleviate the burden of grassroots working families (including those living in PHEs).

As regards the STAS, all eligible families (irrespective of whether they are living in PHEs) with financial needs may apply for assistance, which comprises a textbook grant and a flat-rate grant. The WFSFAA adjusts the rates of the above grants every year in accordance with the established mechanism, including determining the textbook grant with reference to the costs of textbooks for Primary 1 to Secondary 6 based on a survey conducted before the start of each school year, and revising the flat-rate grant annually according to the Composite Consumer Price Index movement to provide assistance for needy families (including those living in PHEs) to meet textbook and miscellaneous school expenses.

The Government has launched the Strive and Rise Programme since 2022 which focuses on lifting secondary school students from underprivileged families (including those in PHEs) out of intergenerational poverty. Through tripartite collaboration of the Government, the business sector and the community, the Scheme broadens student participants' horizons, reinforce their self-confidence, develop a positive life attitude, set goals for their future and strive for upward mobility.

Note 1: Including public rental housing (PRH) flats in PRH estates, Tenants Purchase Scheme estates and Home Ownership Scheme / Buy or Rent Option Scheme / Mortgage Subsidy Scheme / Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme courts under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), as well as rental

housing units under the Hong Kong Housing Society.

Note 2: The service counters are located at the HA customer service centre in Lok Fu and the WFSFAA office in Kwun Tong.