

## LCQ9: Integrated development of urban greening and urban farming

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

The Blueprint for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Fisheries (Blueprint) has proposed to introduce urban farming elements into the planning stage of New Development Areas (NDAs). It is learnt that many cities both within and outside the country have integrated urban greening with urban farming. For example, the Sports Park in Jinnan District, Tianjin City uses idle green space to cultivate more than 300 plant species, including herbs, rice, fruits and vegetables. Regarding the integrated development of urban greening and urban farming, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current respective areas of urban green space in various districts; the average total expenditure on the management and maintenance of such space in each of the past three years and a breakdown of such expenditure;

(2) of the respective areas of planned green space in projects currently under planning or construction in NDAs and various districts (e.g. the Global Innovation Centre of the University of Hong Kong and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute), as well as the total expenditure earmarked for greening and a breakdown of such expenditure; and

(3) as the Blueprint has proposed the establishment of a Modernised Techno-Agricultural Park led by an agricultural organisation within part of Agri-Park Phase 2, and it has been reported that the authorities also plan to entrust the fishermen with the management of the fish ponds of the proposed Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park to maintain the conservation and production functions concurrently, and there are views that this is sufficient proof of the feasibility of the Government's collaboration with the industry, whether the authorities will draw reference from the mode of green space management in other cities to enhance the functions of urban green space in NDAs; whether the authorities will explore the possibility of allocating some green space to farmers or agricultural bodies for management to promote agricultural production, reduce the maintenance costs of greening, and enhance the economic benefits of green space; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along attached great importance to the development of local agriculture and fisheries industries, and published in end-2023 the Blueprint for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Fisheries, formulated hand in hand with the industries. The Blueprint sets out specific measures on various areas of development, including promoting diversification of industries and strengthening the functions of trade organisations. To take forward the relevant work, the Government is actively assisting the industry in developing urban farming so that local agriculture can move towards sustainable development in the midst of urban development. Meanwhile, the Government will also foster the development of trade organisations, strengthen their functions, and provide opportunities for them to participate in project management and joint promotion of policies.

Having co-ordinated information provided by the Development Bureau, we provide our reply to the question raised by the Hon Steven Ho on the integrated development of urban greening and urban farming as follows:

(1) "Green space" may refer to areas zoned "Green Belt" in statutory zoning plans (which covers a land area of around 17 000 hectares), and land of other zonings that are vegetated (including different categories of land and facilities, such as parks, gardens, as well as landscaped areas along roads or within public and private developments). Information on the greening area on different categories of land is not readily available. For example, there are over 1 600 parks and gardens under the management of Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), while the area of land with which the LCSD provides horticultural maintenance service is around 1 300 hectares. Since the "green space" mentioned in the question includes both government land and private land, and that managing and maintaining government land and facilities are part and parcel of the regular duties of various departments, which are discharged with their overall resources, the relevant management and maintenance expenditure is not readily available.

(2) Not only will urban greening beautify the environment, but also help moderate temperature and improve air quality, rendering Hong Kong a more liveable city.

In terms of urban planning, greening-related planning guidelines have been stipulated under the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, including the overall target of attaining 30 per cent green coverage for public housing developments. Besides, in order to develop a green and liveable Northern Metropolis, when planning New Development Areas (NDAs), the Government has adopted a higher standard of 3.5 square metres per person (as compared to 2.5 square metres per person in the past) when reserving land for open space.

As for public works projects, apart from the implementation of the Greening Master Plans, these projects are also required to incorporate greening elements in planning and development stages. For example, new government building projects should include greening measures on 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the site area (including roof greening and vertical

greening), new at-grade road projects should allow for space for quality greening and landscape works and soft landscape provisions should be integrated in the highway structure projects to enhance street landscape.

To encourage private development projects to include greening elements, for projects with site area of 1 000 square metres or more, if there is at least 20 per cent to 30 per cent site coverage of greenery for the project and that other requirements are met, gross floor area concessions for certain facilities and equipment can be granted.

(3) The overall concept of urban farming is to integrate commercial agriculture into the city. Not only can this produce high quality and fresh agricultural produce with reduced carbon footprints to the public, but also provide green landscapes and modernised farming experience to the communities while expanding the capacity and increasing the output, thereby improving the quality and liveability of urban life.

To promote the development of urban farming, the Government has sought consent from the Town Planning Board for amending the Definition of Terms used in statutory plan for "Open Space" to include "urban farm", so as to allow the setting up of urban farms to be operated on a commercial basis in "Open Space" areas (such as parks and outdoor public open space in urban areas and NDAs), thereby making good use of precious land resources and contributing to the integrated development of commercial agriculture and urban areas.

Moreover, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is working with relevant organisations to explore setting urban farming as one of the indicators of green buildings, such as incorporating into the assessment scheme of the Building Environment Assessment Method Plus, so as to encourage business enterprises to integrate elements of urban farming when planning property development projects, blending commercial farming into urban life.

Regarding the collaboration with the trade, the AFCD has launched a pilot project on modernised urban farming in Ma On Shan Sai Sha Road Garden, where part of the site will be made available for the trade to set up and operate a modernised crop farm, with technical support being provided. The project is expected to commence operation in the fourth quarter of 2024. To promote the concept of "harvest-to-sale", the Government will also set up modernised hydroponic farms-cum-stalls on suitable rooftops of government buildings and public markets, including the Tin Shui Wai Public Market under construction and the Kwu Tung North Public Market, for operation by the trade upon application.

We will continue to launch pilot projects on modernised urban farming at other suitable locations, and will make good use of urban spaces in Northern Metropolis and other NDAs, with a view to developing urban farming through a multi-pronged approach. With the experience gained in implementing the pilot projects, we will explore the possibility of allocating green space to agricultural organisations for management in due course.

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## LCQ12: Motorcycle parking spaces in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts

Following is a question by the Hon JoePHY Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

Some residents in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts have relayed that there are quite a number of hillside housing estates in the two districts, and travelling by motorcycle is more convenient for them. However, motorcycle parking spaces in the two districts have long been in shortage, and the emergence of the food delivery and courier industries in recent years has aggravated the situation. Besides, in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on February 28 this year, the Government indicated that there were a total of 1 355 on-street motorcycle parking spaces in the two districts last year, with their utilisation rates reaching 100 per cent in all of the past three years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of summonses issued by the Police for illegal parking of motorcycles in each of the two districts in each of the past three years;
- (2) of the current numbers and fees of motorcycle parking spaces in various car parks in the public housing estates under the Hong Kong Housing Authority in the two districts (including car parks managed by private organisations such as Link Real Estate Investment Trust);
- (3) whether the Transport Department will show in the "HKeMobility" mobile application the remaining number of motorcycle parking spaces available in public and private car parks, so that drivers can choose suitable locations for parking;
- (4) as it is learnt that there is a greater demand for motorcycle parking spaces in hillside housing estates in the two districts (e.g. Cheung Shan Estate, Shek Wai Kok Estate, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tai Wo Hau Estate, Kwai Chung Estate, Kwai Shing West Estate, Kwai Shing East Estate, Cheung Ching Estate and Cheung Hong Estate), whether the authorities will provide additional motorcycle parking spaces in the aforesaid housing estates and increase the proportion of motorcycle parking spaces in future development projects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (5) whether the authorities will consider opening up car parks in government properties during night-time and/or non-office hours for motorcycle parking; if so, of the timetable and number of parking spaces to be made available; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) as there are views that the prolonged occupation of quite a number of motorcycle parking spaces by "dead vehicles" (i.e. unclaimed vehicles) has forestalled their use by drivers with genuine need, of the measures put in place by the Police and other government departments to step up efforts to tackle the situation?

Reply:

President,

It is the Government's transport policy to centre on public transport with railway as the backbone. Hong Kong enjoys a well-developed public transport network, and the Government encourages the public to make good use of the public transport services as far as possible, so as to prevent too many private cars (PCs) and motorcycles, which have a smaller passenger carrying capacity, from aggravating the burden on road traffic. Nevertheless, the Government understands that some members of the public choose to commute by PCs or motorcycles for various reasons. Hence, the Government has been actively pursuing a host of short-term and medium-to-long-term measures to suitably increase the supply of parking spaces where circumstances permit, which include the following measures for motorcycles:

- (a) Utilising the spaces underneath flyovers for designation as motorcycle parking spaces;
- (b) Opening up more motorcycle parking spaces at government buildings for public use during non-office hours;
- (c) Continuing to provide additional on-street parking spaces for motorcycles at suitable locations while ensuring that traffic flow, road safety and the loading/unloading activities of vehicles would not be compromised;
- (d) Providing more motorcycle parking spaces for public use in suitable "Government, Institution or Community" facilities and public open space projects in accordance with the principle of "single site, multiple use"; and
- (e) Providing motorcycle parking spaces in development projects in accordance with the parking standards under the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG).

As regards the Member's question, having consulted the Housing Bureau (HB), Transport Department (TD), Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) and Government Property Agency (GPA), a consolidated reply is provided as follows:

(1) The numbers of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued by the Police against illegal parking of motorcycles under the Fixed Penalty (Traffic Contraventions) Ordinance (Cap. 237) over the past three years are tabulated below:

Year	2021	2022	2023
Numbers of FPNs issued against illegal parking of motorcycles	171 633	199 734	191 817

The Police does not maintain the above traffic enforcement statistics on a district basis.

(2) As at end March 2024, there are 22 car parks in the estates/courts/shopping centres/factory estates under the Housing Authority in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts, providing a total of about 820 motorcycle parking spaces. Among them, the monthly charges of open and covered motorcycle parking spaces are \$480 and \$630 respectively, while a flat rate of \$5 per hour is charged for hourly parking. A breakdown of number of motorcycle parking spaces by car parks is provided in Annex.

(3) Currently, drivers can use the "HKeMobility" mobile application to check the real-time parking vacancy information for various types of vehicles provided by participating operators of car parks (including public and private car parks). Users can select motorcycles in the types of vehicles under the layer icon to display the relevant information on the map.

(4) Roads at hillside housing estates in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts are mostly dual two-lane carriageways and sidewalks are also generally narrower, making the provision of additional on-street parking spaces more difficult. Nevertheless, the TD has been proactively identifying suitable locations in these two districts for the provision of additional on-street motorcycle parking spaces. For example, in recent years, 15 additional parking spaces have been provided on Lei Shu Road near Fung Shue House of Lei Muk Shue Estate while five parking spaces have been provided at Kwai Shing Circuit near Luen Yuet House of Kwai Luen Estate. In the coming year, the TD will also provide additional on-street motorcycle parking spaces in various places, including on Kwai Hau Street near Shing Kwok House of Kwai Shing East Estate, Kwai Luen Road near Block 8 of Kwai Shing West Estate, Tai Wo Hau Road near On Kwai House of Kwai Fuk Court, and Ching Hong Road near Cheung Hong Estate (Phase 4) Car Park.

The TD has been continuously reviewing the current standards for motorcycle parking spaces in residential developments under the HKPSG. The HKPSG sets out different parking standards for subsidised housing and private housing respectively based on the number of flats, and that appropriate amendments have been made having regard to factors such as the socio-economic situation and parking demand. Noting that the number of motorcycles has increased in recent years, which is probably due to the upsurge of demands for meal delivery and courier services in a short time during the epidemic, the TD will keep in view whether the situation will persist after the epidemic subsided, and timely review the standards of motorcycle parking provision under the HKPSG.

(5) Parking spaces in the car parks of government joint-user general office buildings (JUBs) are primarily for use by vehicles of the user departments of

the JUBs or vehicles related to official purpose. Nevertheless, in order to optimise the use of land resources, the Government has opened up more parking spaces at government buildings for public use during non-office hours with a view to increasing the supply of motorcycle parking spaces. The Government will lease out the parking spaces (including those for motorcycles) to contractors for operating as fee-paying public car parks during non-office hours (normally at night-time of weekdays, and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays).

There are currently nine car parks at the JUBs or other types of government properties providing a total of 147 motorcycle parking spaces for public use. Some of the parking spaces are open during non-working hours, while the remaining ones are open all day long. The parking spaces are located across Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories.

(6) The Government has been highly concerned about the problem of abandoned vehicles. The Police handles vehicles that pose immediate danger to road users or cause traffic obstruction, whereas abandoned vehicles on unleased or unallocated government land other than public roads are dealt with by the Lands Department (LandsD). Abandoned vehicles that do not pose immediate danger to road users or cause obstruction on public roads and rear lanes are handled according to the modus operandi of inter-departmental joint operations. District Offices are responsible for co-ordinating and organising the inter-departmental joint clearance operations. The TD would, under the power delegated by the LandsD, affix notices on abandoned vehicles at the above-mentioned locations. If the vehicles concerned remain unattended upon the expiry of the notice period, the Highways Department would be responsible for towing away the abandoned vehicles to the storage pounds managed by the LandsD for further actions.

From 2021 to the first quarter of 2024, District Offices have co-ordinated over 440 inter-departmental joint operations, removing about 3 100 abandoned vehicles, of which over 90 per cent are motorcycles. The departments concerned will proactively organise joint operations on a continuous basis, with a view to handling the situation of abandoned vehicles in a timely manner.

In order to tackle abandoned vehicles at source, the Government is planning to make legislative amendment to tighten the requirements for vehicle registration and licensing, with a view to compelling registered owners to fulfil their obligation to properly dispose of the vehicles registered under their names that they no longer wish to keep. The proposed legislation will require registered owners of vehicles unlicensed for two years to renew the vehicle licence within a specified period, or cancel the vehicle registration with the TD after the vehicle has been scrapped/permanently despatched out of Hong Kong, or obtain an exemption from the TD by application in case of special needs; otherwise, the vehicle owners will commit an offence. The Government plans to submit the legislative amendment proposal within this year.

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## LCQ20: Introduction of China-made plug-in hybrid electric vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

There are views that, given the excellent performance of China-made plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (EVs), with a recently launched model boasting extremely low fuel consumption and remarkably long travel range, coupled with the fact that the supply of EV charging facilities in Hong Kong remains insufficient in the short term, Hong Kong should more proactively introduce as early as possible different types of China-made new energy vehicles into the market in addition to pure battery EVs, so as to meet the demand that will still exist before the cessation of new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars by 2035. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information in respect of the Transport Department's processing of applications for Type Approval of vehicles in each of the past three years: (i) the number of vehicle models applying for Type Approval, (ii) the number of Type-Approved vehicle models, and (iii) the average time taken for conducting Type Approval of vehicle models, with a breakdown by vehicle type (classified by fuel used, including but not limited to pure battery EVs and plug-in hybrid EVs) and place of origin of vehicle;

(2) of the staff establishment and strength of various ranks of the Type Approval Section under the Transport Department in each of the past three years; and

(3) whether it has considered providing tax incentives for first registration of motor vehicles to promote the introduction of high performance China-made plug-in hybrid EVs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) and the Transport Department (TD), my consolidated reply to questions raised by Hon Lai is as follows:

(1) The TD has always been approving vehicles in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation. The purpose of vehicle type approval is to assess the technical



specification, design and construction of a sample vehicle of the same make and model, in order to facilitate the authorised dealer or distributor in importing and selling new mass-produced vehicles for first registration. Upon completion of documentary vetting and examination of a sample vehicle by the TD, the TD will issue a type approval certificate to confirm that such vehicle model is in compliance with the statutory requirements. The TD has been accepting submissions of Guobiao (GB) from the trade to substantiate that vehicles or their components comply with the objective vehicle construction standards stipulated in the legislation. In addition to GB, the TD also accepts other standards, including those of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The TD has been regularly reviewing and amending existing legislation and guidelines with reference to different national or regional standards to cope with the latest development of the automotive market. For example, with a view to supporting the introduction of different new energy vehicles, the TD issued guidelines on Vehicle Construction Approval Requirements for Electric Vehicles in 2010 to elaborate in detail the technical and safety requirements for electric vehicles (EVs) in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, GB safety requirements for EVs and electric motorcycles have also been included in the guidelines. The latest version was released in May 2023, providing further guidance and specifications on the technical and safety requirements for EVs and facilitating the vehicle trades in providing relevant information on EVs to simplify applications for EV approval. The TD also updated the annex to the above guidelines in June of this year with a view to accepting applications for vehicle type approval of EVs with battery swapping technology.

The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the trade and listen to the trade's views, update technical guidelines and streamline the approval process in a timely manner to facilitate the introduction of more vehicle models by the trade, while ensuring that these vehicles meet the relevant technical requirements.

At present, the approval time for vehicles using different fuel types (including EVs, plug-in hybrid vehicles, fossil fuel vehicles and non-plug-in hybrid vehicles) is similar, taking generally 90 days for approval, including the time required for local authorised dealers to submit supplementary information to the TD and arranging examination of sample vehicles. The number of applications for vehicle type approval and corresponding approvals are as follows:

Number of vehicle models passing type approval (by fuel type of vehicles)

	Electric vehicle	Plug-in hybrid vehicle	Fossil fuel and non-plug-in hybrid vehicle
2021	145 (167*)	1 (1*)	725 (955*)
2022	122 (163*)	24 (27*)	555(660*)

2023	164 (239*)	10 (15*)	515 (603*)
2024 (Up to May 31, 2024)	6 (93**)	0 (8**)	91 (239**)

Note:

(\*) Number of vehicle models applying for type approval

(\*\*) Number of vehicle models applying for type approval, some of the type approval work is still in progress

Number of vehicle models passing type approval (by region of vehicle brands)

	Mainland China	Asia (other than China)	Europe	America
2021	55 (81*)	204 (245*)	572 (747*)	40 (50*)
2022	61 (77*)	252 (298*)	362 (446*)	26 (29*)
2023	83 (133*)	174 (195*)	415 (506*)	17 (23*)
2024 (Up to May 31, 2024)	10 (63**)	48 (87**)	39 (189**)	0 (1**)

Note:

(\*) Number of vehicle models applying for type approval

(\*\*) Number of vehicle models applying for type approval, some of the type approval work is still in progress

(2) There is a type approval section under the TD which is responsible for vehicle type approval works. The establishment of the team includes one Engineer, one Senior Motor Vehicle Examiner, two Motor Vehicle Examiner I and two Motor Vehicle Examiner II. The above establishment has not changed in the past three years, and the strength has remained approximately the same.

The TD has been streamlining the vehicle approval process to cope with the increasing workload of type approval applications. The TD issued new guidelines on the batch processing mechanism to the trade in December 2022, facilitating the trade in introducing EVs in batches and simplifying the approval application process for the same EV model. At the same time, the TD continues to hold a number of briefing sessions for the trade and issue corresponding guidelines to assist the trade in submitting complete vehicle technical information, so as to reduce the time for clarification on documents and thereby speeding up the progress of the overall vehicle type approval work. The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the trade and review the vehicle examination process and manpower arrangement to achieve better cost-effectiveness.

(3) Exhaust gas emission from vehicles is the primary source of roadside air pollution in Hong Kong and accounts for about 20 per cent of the carbon emission of the territory. Conversion to EVs can improve roadside air quality

and help strive towards carbon neutrality. As for private cars (PCs), hybrid PCs (including plug-in hybrid PCs) are not propelled solely by electric power and still have air pollutant and carbon emission. In comparison, pure EVs do not emit any exhaust gas and are more effective in improving roadside air quality in a high-density environment in Hong Kong. The supply of pure electric PC models on the market is increasing. Currently, about 70 per cent of the newly registered PCs are pure EVs. The Government has also set out the target to cease new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid PCs in 2035 or earlier. Hence, we do not have plan to separately provide first registration tax concession for hybrid PCs which still have exhaust gas emission. On the other hand, to support the popularisation of EVs, the 2023 Policy Address has set out the target to increase the total number of public and private parking spaces with charging infrastructure in Hong Kong to about 200 000 by mid-2027.

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## **LCQ10: Vocational and professional education and training**

Following is a question by Professor the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address has proposed to work with the relevant Mainland authorities to take forward the arrangements for mutual recognition between Hong Kong and the Mainland of sub degree level qualifications and put such mutual recognition arrangements on trial for selected pilot areas. In addition, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Shenzhen Polytechnic University (SZPU) have co-organised joint dual award programmes (the Joint Programmes). The VTC also promotes the "One Examination, Multiple Certification" arrangement (the Arrangement) under which candidates only need to pass one common examination in order to have their qualifications recognised by Hong Kong, the Mainland, and international professional organisations. Regarding vocational and professional education and training (VPET), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the trial run of the aforesaid arrangements for mutual recognition of qualifications has kicked off; if so, of the pilot areas, and the sub-degree programmes which are related to VPET; of the planning for pilot areas in the next three years;

(2) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, (i) the titles of the programmes offered by the VTC which are related to the industries covered by the Arrangement, (ii) the number of candidates who successfully passed the relevant examinations under the Arrangement and obtained the relevant

qualifications recognition, and (iii) the number of local candidates who worked in the Mainland through having their qualifications recognised by the Mainland under the Arrangement;

(3) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, (i) the titles of the Joint Programmes offered by the VTC, (ii) the number of students enrolled in such programmes and, among them, the number of those who successfully obtained higher diplomas from the VTC and professional diplomas and certificates from the Mainland;

(4) of the mechanism through which SZPU sends students to pursue studies in Hong Kong; whether the VTC has conducted survey on the interest of SZPU students towards pursuing studies in Hong Kong; if so, of the outcome; if not, whether it will consider conducting a survey on SZPU students' perceptions of the academic structure, tuition fees, accommodation, development prospects, etc. in Hong Kong, so as to facilitate the formulation of measures to attract them to pursue studies in Hong Kong; and

(5) whether it will establish post-secondary institutions specialising in offering VPET programmes mutually recognised by Hong Kong and the Mainland in the Northern Metropolis University Town?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been promoting the development of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education. To this end, we adopt the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development. This is also in line with the national strategies of strengthening vocational education in the modern era, by encouraging the articulation between vocational and academic studies, co-operation between industries and education, and the integration of science and education, with a view to nurturing higher quality talent with applied knowledge and skills to support the development of strategic industries and the economy.

Our reply to Professor the Hon William Wong's question is as follows:

(1) In line with the national policy of promoting the high-quality development of modernised vocational education, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been collaborating with the relevant Mainland authorities to take forward the mutual recognition of sub-degree level qualifications, including the Higher Diploma qualification. The HKSAR Government will continue to follow up on the relevant initiative.

(2) Under the "One Examination, Multiple Certification" (OEMC) system implemented by the Vocational Training Council (VTC), candidates may obtain relevant certificates issued by the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao by passing a standardised examination. The OEMC system is currently implemented in the beauty and hairdressing industries, with two levels of examinations available for each industry. For the beauty industry, upon satisfactory completion of

the examination under the OEMC system, candidates are awarded the Certificate of Occupational Skill Level for beauticians on the Mainland, the Vocational Assessment Competency Certificate for the beauty industry in Hong Kong, and the Occupational Skills Certificate for beauticians in Macao. As for the hairdressing industry, candidates who complete the examination under the OEMC system are awarded the Certificate of Occupational Skill Level for hair stylists on the Mainland, the Vocational Assessment Competency Certificate for the hairdressing industry in Hong Kong, and the Occupational Skills Certificate for hair stylists in Macao. The OEMC system operates as an independent examination and is not tied to any particular programmes. The numbers of candidates who obtained certificates under the OEMC system in the past three years are as follows:

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
100	125	154

Remarks: The VTC does not maintain statistics on the number of candidates working on the Mainland after obtaining certificates under the OEMC system.

(3) and (4) The VTC and the Shenzhen Polytechnic University (SPU) have reached agreement on five collaborative programmes, allowing VTC students to attend these programmes at SPU, while the SPU has not yet arranged its students to study the VTC's programmes in Hong Kong. In particular, three Higher Diploma (HD) programmes, namely Electrical Engineering (Electrical Services), Building Services Engineering, as well as Games and Animation, have been successfully launched. In the 2024/25 academic year (AY), the VTC and the SPU plan to launch two other programmes in Fashion Design as well as Hotel and Catering Management.

From the 2021/22 to 2023/24 AYs, a total of 73 the VTC students of HD programmes in Electrical Engineering (Electrical Services), Building Services Engineering, and Games and Animation attended the collaborative programmes at SPU. Among them, 53 students successfully obtained qualifications from both institutions.

In relation to attracting non-local vocational and professional talent, the Government introduced the Vocational Professionals Admission Scheme (VPAS) in 2023. Under the pilot initiative, non-local students (including those from the Mainland as well as other countries and regions) enrolled in designated full-time HD programmes of the VTC in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 AYs will be eligible for applying to stay in Hong Kong for one year after graduation to seek employment in trades relevant to their studies, with a view to alleviating the manpower shortage in skilled trades. In this connection, the VTC is proactively recruiting non-local students and will be providing comprehensive support in areas such as accommodation, language and communication, living in Hong Kong, and career development, in order to attract students to study in Hong Kong.

(5) The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address announces that the Government will endeavour to develop a Northern Metropolis University Town (NMUT) in the

Northern Metropolis (NM), where post-secondary institutions are encouraged to strengthen co-operation with renowned Mainland and overseas institutions, and enhance synergy through sharing resources and enhancing collaboration with the industry sector in the area. To support the development of NMUT, the Government will reserve more than 60 hectares of sites in the area for post-secondary education development use.

Based on our preliminary idea, we will gradually take forward the relevant work, having regard to a series of objectives and strategies, including following an "industry-led" principle. We hope that the post-secondary education development in NM could suitably tie in with the different positionings of individual districts, promoting diversified development in collaboration with industries and strengthening synergy. In particular, we will consider proactively promoting VPET development in NMUT, facilitating co-operation between industries and education and integration of science and education, and supporting institutions to strengthen links and collaboration with industries in the area. Through incorporating enriched internship and work-based learning opportunities in programmes, institutions could nurture professional skilled talent with applied abilities to cater to the keen manpower needs of various sectors, adding impetus to the industry development in the area.

The Education Bureau (EDB) has introduced the post-secondary education sites in NM to post-secondary institutions and consulted the institutions on their preliminary development intentions and proposals. The EDB is currently comprehensively considering the proposals and collating the information submitted by the institutions. In accordance with the abovementioned objectives and strategies, we will closely communicate with institutions which are interested in the development of the NM, with a view to taking forward the development of NMUT in phases.

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## Missing woman in Tin Shui Wai located

A woman who went missing in Tin Shui Wai has been located.

Lai Mei-lin Elza, aged 57, went missing after she was last seen in Mong Tseng Tsuen on July 4 morning. Her family made a report to Police on July 7.

The woman returned to her residence last evening (July 9). She sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.