

## LCQ20: Transport connecting two hospitals in Kai Tak

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

It is learnt that the Transport Department plans to introduce Citybus Limited Route No. 20X and Supplementary Green Minibus Route No. 88A, and extend the existing route of Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited Route No. X6C, so as to enhance the connectivity of Hong Kong Children's Hospital (Children's Hospital) and the New Acute Hospital in Kai Tak (New Acute Hospital) with neighbouring areas. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the aforesaid newly-introduced and extended routes: (i) the tentative implementation schedule, and (ii) the stops involved;

(2) whether it will consider extending the origin and destination of Green Minibus Route No. 88A from Wong Tai Sin Station to Chuk Yuen and Tsz Wan Shan, and introducing a franchised bus route connecting Tsz Wan Shan, Chuk Yuen, Lok Fu and San Po Kong, so as to make it convenient for local residents to travel to and from the Children's Hospital and the New Acute Hospital; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will study the construction of a traveller connecting a station of the proposed Smart and Green Mass Transit System in Kai Tak to the aforesaid two hospitals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Transport Department (TD), our reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit, is as follows:

(1) and (2) The TD has been maintaining close liaison with the Hospital Authority and relevant departments on the public transport services for Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) and the New Acute Hospital (NAH), with a view to assessing the overall demand for public transport services in the Kai Tak Hospital Area (KTHA) and making targeted planning in advance to meet the travelling needs of passengers. This includes strengthening services for citizens in Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin districts and the surrounding vicinity to travel to and from the KTHA, as well as enhancing the connectivity between the KTHA and the MTR network.

At present, there are four franchised bus routes and six green minibus

(GMB) routes serving the KTHA, connecting the area with districts such as Kwun Tong, Kowloon City, Mong Kok and Tsim Sha Tsui, as well as nearby MTR stations such as Kai Tak Station, Sung Wong Toi Station, To Kwa Wan Station, Kowloon Bay Station, Ngau Tau Kok Station, Kwun Tong Station, and Wong Tai Sin Station. Among them, GMB Route No. 88A is a new route commissioned in end-March this year, connecting HKCH with Wong Tai Sin Station. Residents in the San Po Kong area can take this route to travel to and from the KTHA. Meanwhile, residents in Lok Fu and Chuk Yuen can take MTR and GMB Route No. 38M to Wong Tai Sin Station respectively, and then interchange to GMB Route No. 88A to the KTHA. The existing franchised bus and GMB routes serving the KTHA are set out in Annex 1.

To cope with the increasing passenger demand, the TD plans to introduce or extend three franchised bus routes via the KTHA, including the addition of CTB Route No. 20X and extension of KMB Routes No. X6C and No.15A, in order to further enhance the KTHA's connectivity with other districts. Details of the relevant routes are set out in Annex 2. The new routes are expected to come into service from the second half of this year to early next year.

The TD will continue to closely monitor the progress of the NAH project and the overall development of the area. Subject to the demand, the TD will make timely adjustments or enhancement of the public transport services in the area, or introduce new franchised bus or GMB routes to cater for public's need to travel to and from the KTHA.

(3) We will explore pedestrian connectivity improvement scheme between the proposed station of the Smart and Green Mass Transit System in Kai Tak and the captioned two hospitals, such as the addition of cover or traveller, on facilities including the existing footpath of the Kai Tak Bridge. In the process, we will have to consider the impact of the improvement scheme on the existing facilities, including relevant carriageways, footpaths and public facilities, and assess the technical feasibility and cost-effectiveness.

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## LCQ1: Pet-friendly policy

Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a reply by the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

There are views that the existing legislation has impeded the development potential of Hong Kong's pet industry, and there is still substantial room for improvement in the pet-friendly policy of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in the reply to a question from a Member of this Council on June 12 last year, the Government indicated that it would conduct research on practices and experiences in other places regarding bringing dogs into food premises and consider reviewing the existing legislation, of the progress and details of the relevant work, including whether it will establish a licensing regime for pet-friendly food premises and devise supporting insurance solutions, open up outdoor dining areas for entry of pets on a trial basis, and implement a tiered access system based on the size of food premises, indoor and outdoor space, or types of dog;

(2) as it is learnt that the Government is studying the introduction of ISO microchips for pets, of the progress and details of the relevant work; and

(3) whether it has studied including other Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in Group IIIA countries or places concerning the quarantine-related arrangements for cats and dogs, and shortening the quarantine period for cats and dogs imported from countries or places in the Group to less than 30 days, as well as assessed the technical barriers and risks involved; if so, of the details and progress; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

As pet keeping has become increasingly common in Hong Kong, there has been more attention in society to bringing animals to enter different premises and use public facilities. In general, the Government needs to take into account different factors when considering whether to further relax existing arrangements, including the nature of individual facilities, whether ancillary facilities are in place and the degree of social acceptance, to achieve the policy objective of facilitating animals and people to co-exist harmoniously.

On the questions raised by the Hon Maggie Chan, I would like to reply to the question as follows:

(1) Regarding bringing dogs into food premises, the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) currently prohibits dogs (except guide dogs) from entering food premises. The existing regulatory requirements have been in place for close to 30 years. The Government understands that there has been changes in the societal culture but would also have to strike a balance on the need to safeguard public health and hygiene, etc, including food premises in Hong Kong are generally cramped, the need to consider the reaction of pet dogs in a crowded and cramped environment (possibly with different types of dogs), as well as the potential impact on other diners.

The society is divided over this subject. On the one hand, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has from time to time received complaints about certain food premises allowing customers who bring pet dogs inside, expressing concerns on pet dogs entering restaurants. On the other hand, in recent years, there are views in society hoping to bring along pet

dogs to dine in food premises.

The Government needs to take into account different factors when considering whether to relax certain restrictions on pet dogs entering food premises, including public health, the operating environment of food premises and social acceptance. The Environment and Ecology Bureau, together with the FEHD, are conducting research on practices and experiences in other places, and would carefully consider whether there is room for relaxing the relevant restrictions.

(2) To effectively prevent and control the spread of rabies in Hong Kong, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) requires all dogs over five months of age to be vaccinated against rabies and implanted with a microchip in the AVID format (microchip), which serves as a proof of rabies vaccination and licencing. Each microchip carries a unique identification number for identifying the pet, and can be used to assist the owner in locating their dogs if they are accidentally lost.

Considering the widespread use of ISO microchips in many other countries and regions, to further facilitate the movements of dogs into and out of Hong Kong, the AFCD has completed a feasibility study and proposed to introduce ISO microchips in addition to the existing AVID microchips. The AFCD has consulted relevant stakeholders, including licensed animal traders, animal welfare organisations, pet transport agents, veterinary clinics and animal-related organisations on the proposal, and the trade is generally supportive. The Government expects to consult the relevant Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on the proposal in the second quarter of this year. If the proposal is supported by the Panel, the Government will introduce the proposed amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation into the LegCo in due course.

(3) On the quarantine arrangement for the import of cats and dogs, the AFCD currently regulates the import of live animals through a permit system, and controls the import of cats and dogs under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Regulations (Cap. 139A) and the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A), aiming to prevent the transmission of animal diseases including rabies into Hong Kong, and safeguard the health of the public.

The AFCD classifies places into different groups according to different risk of rabies, with reference to information about the surveillance of animal diseases from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Group I includes rabies-free places (i.e. where rabies has been absent for a long time); Group II includes places where rabies cases are few and under effective control. Since Groups I and II places are considered of lower risk of rabies, cats and dogs imported from these places are exempted from quarantine upon fulfilling relevant requirements (such as providing Animal Health Certificate, Residence Certificate and Anti-rabies Vaccination Certificate). Furthermore, Group IIIA includes places that do not meet the requirements of Group II but have satisfactory regulation of veterinary services and official controls on health certification; whereas Group IIIB includes places where rabies cases are reported and not under effective control. In general, places that do not meet the requirements of Group I, II,

or IIIA (or their situations cannot be determined) will be included in Group IIIB. Since the incubation period of rabies can be up to several months, to prevent the transmission of rabies into Hong Kong, the AFCD requires a quarantine period of no less than 120 days for the cats and dogs imported from Group IIIB places.

Group IIIA has been introduced since December 2024 to facilitate animal owners in bringing their pet cats and dogs to Hong Kong. The quarantine period for cats and dogs of the relevant places will be significantly shortened from the current 120 days to 30 days upon their arrival in Hong Kong, provided that they meet the relevant quarantine requirements including that the animals must be vaccinated against rabies, have a satisfactory rabies neutralising antibody titre test and have an animal health certificate issued or endorsed by a government veterinary officer of the place of export. The AFCD has proactively contacted some Group IIIB places which do not meet the requirements of Group II but have satisfactory regulation of veterinary services and official controls on health certification to discuss the relevant quarantine arrangements and, upon reaching an agreement, to include them in Group IIIA to shorten the quarantine period for dogs and cats upon arrival in Hong Kong. Among Group IIIA places, the Macao Special Administrative Region has implemented the new arrangements since December last year. On extending the new arrangement to other cities of the Greater Bay Area, the AFCD is actively discussing the details of the arrangement with the relevant Mainland authorities with a view to implement the new arrangement as soon as possible.

The current arrangement of a 30-day quarantine period for Group IIIA places is formulated with reference to the risk assessment conducted by the expert consultant in light of the actual situation in Hong Kong. The AFCD will continue to make close reference to the latest situation of animal diseases published by the WOA and timely review whether the relevant quarantine requirements can be enhanced in the light of factors such as operational experience, views of stakeholders and risk assessment.

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## **LCQ9: Combating animal cruelty**

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) has not been updated since its amendment in 2018. The Government proposed in 2019 to amend the Ordinance to step up efforts to combat animal cruelty, but the specific bill has not yet been introduced into this Council to date for scrutiny. In

this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in its reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on February 26 this year that it would complete the law drafting work as soon as possible after collating the views of the stakeholders concerned and introduce the proposed legislative amendments into this Council, of the specific timetable of the relevant work and the direction of the legislative amendments; whether it has encountered difficulties in the course of preparing for the legislative amendments; if so, of the details;

(2) as it is learnt that the community generally considers that the penalties for offences of cruelty to animals under the existing legislation (with the maximum penalty being a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years) fail to reflect the seriousness of some cases (such as cruelty resulting in death and organised cruelty) and to pose sufficient deterrent effect, whether the Government will consider substantially raising the maximum penalty, for example, by increasing the maximum fine to \$2,000,000, and raising the maximum term of imprisonment to seven years, so as to satisfy the principle of proportionality;

(3) as the Government has indicated that it will study the introduction of the concept of "Duty of Care" in Cap. 169 mandating persons responsible for animals to take proper care of the welfare of animals, but it is learnt that the community has rather strong and diversified views in this regard, whether the authorities will amend Cap. 169 in phases by raising the maximum penalty in the first place, followed by amendments and enhancements to the Ordinance as appropriate and necessary at the next phase;

(4) as there are views that the existing evidential threshold in Cap. 169 is too high, for example, requiring law enforcement agencies to prove that the perpetrator has the intent of "deliberately causing cruelty to animals" in order to secure a conviction, resulting in a large number of cases not proceeding to judicial proceedings due to insufficient evidence, whether the authorities will draw up dedicated prosecution guidelines so as to lower the evidential threshold and boost the conviction rate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) apart from amending the existing legislation, of the details of the Government's other specific work in preventing cruelty to animals; whether the authorities will enhance public awareness of animal protection through publicity and educational efforts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government adopts a multi-pronged approach to curb acts of cruelty to animals. This includes exploring raising penalties for offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) (the Ordinance) to

enhance deterrent effect, taking stringent enforcement actions against illegal acts, and continuing to enhance relevant public awareness through education and promotion activities.

Having consulted the Security Bureau and the Department of Justice, the reply to the question from the Hon Lau Kwok-fan is as follows:

(1) and (3) The Government has been studying amendments to the Ordinance. The directions being explored in the legislative amendment include imposing a positive "Duty of Care" on persons responsible for animals, requiring them to take proper care of the welfare of animals (including diet, environment, health, and behaviour); raising penalties for animal cruelty offences; and enhancing enforcement power, etc. In preparing the bill, it is necessary to consult the relevant stakeholders again on some of the proposals. After collating the views, we will finalise the legislative amendment proposals, implementation arrangement, and law drafting work promptly. Once the work is completed, we will consult the Legislative Council on the proposal.

(2) Currently, any person who does or omits doing any act and causes unnecessary suffering to an animal, may constitute an offence for animal cruelty. Upon conviction, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years.

The Government is studying raises to the penalties for animal cruelty offences to reflect more clearly the gravity of the offence, and to introduce an indictable offence to allow enforcement officers more time to instigate prosecution on complex or serious cruelty cases, in order to further enhance deterrent effect. In finalising the proposal on penalty, the Government will make reference to overseas experience, local penalties for relevant criminal offences, and views of stakeholders, etc.

(4) The existing offences under the Ordinance cover different forms of cruelty to animals, including causes any unnecessary suffering to an animal by wantonly or unreasonably doing or omitting to do any act; neglects to supply animal in confinement with sufficient food and sufficient fresh water; conveys an animal in such a manner as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering, etc. The Ordinance provides that an owner shall be deemed to have permitted cruelty if he shall have failed to exercise reasonable care and supervision in respect of the protection of the animal therefrom, proof of intention to cause cruelty to animals is not required.

In making a decision of whether or not to prosecute in each case, the relevant departments make an objective and professional assessment of the available evidence and applicable law, and strictly act in accordance with the Prosecution Code issued by the Department of Justice. The current practice has worked well and we consider it not necessary to formulate a specific prosecution guideline.

On the other hand, according to the information of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), over 90 per cent of the reports were found to be not related to animal cruelty after investigation, but

nuisance or other situations, such as frequent noise from animals or odour from the premises where the animals were kept, and this misled the reporters into thinking that the animals suffered from acts of cruelty.

(5) The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the AFCD and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) jointly implement the Animal Watch Scheme to proactively prevent and detect suspected cases of animal cruelty through multi-agency collaboration. The HKPF would also invite the AFCD and the SPCA officers to provide professional advice at the scene of an animal cruelty case and assist thereafter where necessary.

On publicity and education, through various channels including the Animal Watchers Programme, the "Be a Responsible Pet Owner" thematic website and roving exhibitions, the HKPF and the AFCD are respectively promoting the message of preventing cruelty to animals at the community level and online platforms; encouraging the public to report cases timely and to provide information that aids investigations; as well as raising public awareness of animal welfare.

The AFCD has also launched a series of "Duty of Care" publicity programmes, including the production of posts on social media platforms to share information on how to take proper care of animals, and the recent launch of the "Animal Welfare Project: The Adventures of Meow" promotional video, which aims to educate the public on the content and importance of "Duty of Care" in an interesting manner.

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difficulties in the course of preparing for the legislative amendments; if so, of the details;

(2) as it is learnt that the community generally considers that the penalties for offences of cruelty to animals under the existing legislation (with the maximum penalty being a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years) fail to reflect the seriousness of some cases (such as cruelty resulting in death and organised cruelty) and to pose sufficient deterrent effect, whether the Government will consider substantially raising the maximum penalty, for example, by increasing the maximum fine to \$2,000,000, and raising the maximum term of imprisonment to seven years, so as to satisfy the principle of proportionality;

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Reply:

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## **LCQ17: Efforts in promoting waste reduction and recycling**

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

According to a paper submitted by the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the Environmental Protection Department to the Panel on Environmental Affairs and the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of this Council in December last year on the latest progress and achievements of the efforts in promoting waste reduction and recycling, the authorities were conducting a study on how to enhance the municipal solid waste (MSW) charging scheme, and would continuously monitor and assess public views and participation in waste reduction and recycling. It is expected that they will report to members again in the middle of this year on the relevant work progress and the Government's views on implementing MSW charging. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the specific measures currently put in place by the Government to enhance MSW charging scheme; of the expected time for implementing MSW charging;

(2) how the Government assesses the level of public participation in the process of promoting waste reduction and recycling, and of the factors affecting such participation;

(3) how the Government plans to increase the number of Food Waste Recycling Spots, and of the specific timetable; and

(4) as regards the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Plastic Beverage Containers and Beverage Cartons, of the challenges the Government expects to face; how it ensures that the implementation of the scheme can balance the interests of various parties?

Reply:

President,

Although the Government announced the suspension of the implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging scheme, our determination to reduce MSW has never wavered. The reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Priscilla Leung is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is continuously enhancing the community recycling network and strengthening public education to promote a green waste reduction and recycling culture in our society. We will assess public participation in waste reduction and recycling based on data such as the usage of public collection facilities, the amount of recyclables collected, and the total quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills. In this regard, the latest figures show that the number of visits to GREEN@COMMUNITY (G@C) in 2024 surged to approximately 12.7 million, representing an increase of about 80 per cent compared to that of 2023, while the quantity of recyclables collected (by weight) rose by nearly 60 per cent year-on-year. We have also successfully reversed the rising trend of waste disposal. Since 2021, the daily average quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills has decreased for three consecutive years from 11 358 tonnes per day in 2021 to 10 510 tonnes per day in 2024, representing a 3.4 per cent decrease from 2023 and a 7.5 per cent decrease from 2021.

Convenient community recycling facilities and continuous public education are crucial in promoting and encouraging public participation in waste reduction and recycling. As revealed by the abovementioned figures, with the gradual enhancement of the community recycling network, public participation in waste reduction and recycling has risen continuously. To this end, the EPD has substantially increased the number of public collection points under G@C to over 800 in the first quarter of this year. Meanwhile, we are promoting the Waste Reduction and Recycling Charter (the Charter) to encourage private residential premises to set up convenient waste separation and recycling facilities, and to strengthen education and encourage residents to practise waste reduction at source and clean recycling. As of the end of February 2025, a total of 826 private residential premises have signed the Charter, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of the total number of households in private residential buildings with property management companies/owners' corporations/residents' organisations in Hong Kong and covering around 700 000 households.

On the other hand, through the outreaching services of the Green

Outreach, the EPD has strengthened the publicity and education as well as the community support for waste reduction and recycling. In 2025-26, the Green Outreach will focus on territory-wide or district-based waste reduction and recycling publicity programmes, including "We-recycle@School" and Programme on Source Separation of Waste. The Green Outreach will also make more use of mass media platforms such as social media and the Internet to carry out publicity and promotional activities, and strengthen collaborations with G@C operators, local groups, non-governmental organisations, etc. to promote a green waste reduction and recycling culture to the public. Besides, the EPD launched the GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme (GREEN\$ ePIS) in 2020. Through providing incentives, it has successfully motivated many members of the public to participate in waste separation and recycling. The EPD has further expanded the electronic redemption options since February 2024, allowing members of the public to convert their GREEN\$ points into a more diverse range of electronic rewards, including free MTR tickets, local eco-tours and supermarket items, thereby integrating waste reduction and recycling habits into their daily lives. As of the end of February 2025, the number of user accounts of GREEN\$ ePIS has reached over one million.

The total quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills has begun to decline steadily, and the recovery rate has risen. These results demonstrate that the public is actively participating in waste reduction and recycling, and that the community starts to build up a green waste reduction and recycling culture. Taking on the current positive momentum, we will continue to strengthen waste reduction and recycling initiatives, along with publicity and education, so as to encourage more public participation. At the same time, the Government is reviewing the MSW charging scheme. During the process, we will engage with relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from the property management, food and beverage, and cleaning sectors, to continuously and comprehensively evaluate public sentiments and the level of public participation in waste reduction and recycling. The Government will report on the work progress in promoting waste reduction and recycling and present the way forward of MSW charging scheme to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Environmental Affairs in mid-2025 as planned.

(3) As at the end of 2024, the EPD installed around 1 200 food waste smart recycling bins (FWSRBs) in residential buildings across the territory, and will increase the number of FWSRBs or food waste collection facilities in residential premises to around 1 600 in 2025. The EPD will also progressively install additional FWSRBs in public rental housing estates with higher usage rates, with a view to achieving the "one FWSRB per block" target. For premises without sufficient space to install food waste recycling bins (e.g. single-block residential buildings and "three-nil" buildings), the EPD has set up approximately 200 fixed or mobile Public Food Waste Recycling Points, of which 76 are Food Waste Recycling Spots operating as night-time kerbside booths at fixed times and locations for the convenience of small business operators and nearby residents. To expand the service coverage, the EPD is preparing to increase the number of Food Waste Recycling Spots gradually to around 100 in 2025, with priority given to more densely populated districts where fixed food waste collection points have yet to be set up. By taking forward various initiatives, the overall quantity of food waste recovered is

expected to increase progressively from an average of about 280 tonnes per day in 2024 to about 350 tonnes per day in 2025, representing an increase of nearly 30 per cent.

(4) The Government plans to introduce an amendment bill to the LegCo in April this year to establish a common legislative framework for the producer responsibility schemes (PRSs) applicable to different products. After the passage of the bill, we will extend PRSs to more products (including plastic beverage containers, beverage cartons, electric vehicle batteries, vehicle tyres and lead-acid batteries) as and when appropriate by means of subsidiary legislation. The Government continues the ongoing discussion with the trades about the implementation details and their readiness. Only if the trades are ready shall we consult the LegCo on various PRSs (including the PRS on Plastic Beverage Containers and Beverage Cartons) and gradually implement them in light of the prevailing circumstances.

We will maintain close communication with the trades and consider their views when fine-tuning the operational details of the schemes as appropriate, with a view to alleviating the compliance costs of the trades, setting appropriate recycling targets, assisting the trades in establishing recycling networks, and considering the provision of exemptions as appropriate, etc. In addition, we will provide sufficient preparatory and adaptation periods as well as strengthen publicity and education for members of the public, so as to ensure the smooth implementation of various PRSs in the future.