

## LCQ17: Consolidating Hong Kong's status as international financial centre

Following is a question by the Hon Robert Lee and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

There are views that Hong Kong should continue to consolidate and enhance the development of an international financial centre, further dovetail with the national development strategies, expand various mutual access mechanisms, and enhance Hong Kong's functions in the overall development of the country, so as to attract more Mainland and international capital to Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some members of the industry have relayed that at present, under the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect (WMC) in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, products under the Southbound Scheme cannot be directly promoted in the Mainland by Hong Kong financial institutions, and products under the Northbound Scheme cannot be directly promoted in Hong Kong by Mainland financial institutions, whether the authorities will discuss with Mainland regulators enhancement measures on cross-boundary sales and promotion, so as to enable practitioners in both places to fully launch their businesses;

(2) as it is learnt that under the existing arrangements for mutual recognition of professional qualifications with the Mainland, Hong Kong practitioners holding the relevant licences of the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission are still required to pass the examination on relevant Mainland laws and regulations before they are allowed to practise in the Mainland, whether the authorities will further discuss with the Mainland regulators to explore the streamlining or exemption of the examination on relevant laws and regulations, so as to facilitate Hong Kong practitioners to develop their business in the Mainland;

(3) given the views relayed by some members of the industry, whether the authorities can expand the scope of investment products under the WMC Scheme, including providing additional investment options other than those with low or medium risk, including but not limited to alternative investments or private equity funds, so as to meet the diversified risk management needs of both Mainland and overseas investors; and

(4) as it has been mentioned in this year's Budget that the Government will actively enhance the mutual market access mechanism with the Mainland,

including the plan for the issuance of offshore Mainland government bond futures in Hong Kong, and implementing block trading of stocks as soon as possible, what measures the authorities have in place to further improve market liquidity and facilitate market transactions when exploring further expansion initiatives in the future?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong has been actively leveraging our unique advantages under the "one country, two systems" principle, with the support of our motherland and our connectivity to the world. We have proactively aligned with national strategies such as the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with an aim to promoting deeper integration with the Mainland financial markets and to fully capitalising on the opportunities brought by our country's development. In consultation with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC), my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (3) Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect (WMC) in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) provides GBA residents with a formal, direct and convenient channel for cross-boundary investment in diverse wealth management products and marks a milestone in the financial development of the GBA.

WMC has seen continuous and steady development since its launch in September 2021. "WMC 2.0" commenced in February 2024. Enhancement measures include increasing the individual investor quota from RMB1 million to RMB3 million, lowering the threshold for participating in the Southbound Scheme to support more GBA residents to participate in the scheme, expanding the scope of participating institutions to include eligible securities firms, expanding the scope of eligible investment products, and further enhancing the promotion and sales arrangements.

In terms of sales and promotion, taking banks as an example, enhanced promotion and sales arrangements were introduced last year under the Southbound Scheme. After obtaining written consent from a Southbound Scheme client, the Hong Kong bank concerned could proactively introduce products and relevant information that align with the client's risk appetite during that sales promotion process. This not only simplifies the sales process of the relevant institutions but also allows Southbound Scheme investors to more conveniently access the needed product information and professional guidance.

In June 2025, we also jointly implemented with relevant Mainland financial regulatory authorities a "Tri-party Online Meeting" sales arrangement. Under this arrangement, at the request of a Southbound Scheme client, a Mainland bank may assist him/her at its Mainland branch to set up a tri-party online dialogue or video conference with a Hong Kong bank in relation to the Southbound Scheme services. During such meeting,

representative(s) from the Hong Kong bank can introduce eligible wealth management products under the Southbound Scheme to the Southbound Scheme client. This arrangement provides Southbound Scheme investors with a convenient online channel to learn about relevant Hong Kong wealth management products and is also expected to enhance the convenience of sales and communication for local banks.

Furthermore, we are committed to further enhancing the range of investment products under the "WMC 2.0" policy framework. For example, in the area of funds, since the launch of "WMC 2.0", the number of eligible public funds under the Southbound Scheme has increased from around 160 in end-2023 to 358 by the end of March 2025, thereby strengthening the range of products available. We will continue to review the operation of "WMC 2.0" under the principles of controllable risk and adequate investor protection, and work with relevant Mainland regulatory authorities to explore the feasibility of further optimisation and expansion of WMC.

As an innovative financial co-operation measure in the GBA involving three different regulatory systems, WMC has been implemented under a pilot approach in a gradual and incremental manner. Since the implementation of "WMC 2.0", operations have been smooth, with a significant increase in the number of investors and amount of cross-boundary fund remittances. According to statistics from the People's Bank of China, up to end-April 2025, over 154 200 individual investors in the GBA participated in WMC, with cross-boundary fund remittances (including Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao) amounting to over RMB112.2 billion had been recorded. The Government and the financial regulators will continue to monitor market developments and the operation of WMC, collaborate with the Mainland regulatory authorities and the industry to explore room for further enhancement.

(2) Regarding mutual recognition of financial professional qualifications with the Mainland, the SFC and the China Securities Regulatory Commission have implemented an arrangement for mutual recognition of professional qualifications for the securities and futures sector, and simplified the relevant procedures for obtaining securities practising registration and applying for the futures or fund practising qualifications in the Mainland. Hong Kong professionals with relevant licence issued by the SFC only need to pass the Mainland's examination on the relevant laws and regulations; and the examination on the foundation paper is not required.

For the banking sector, the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers (HKIB) and the China Banking Association (CBA) signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Recognition of Personal Wealth Management Qualification Certificates in 2009, officially launching the mutual recognition mechanism. Subsequently, the two sides signed addendums twice to improve the relevant arrangements. The CBA, the China Bankers Institute and the HKIB signed Addendum III in 2022 to ensure eligible practitioners can obtain the Associate Retail Wealth Professional (ARWP) professional qualification issued by the HKIB. Under the Agreement, financial practitioners from the Mainland and Hong Kong can obtain "dual qualifications" (Level 1 of Qualification Certificate of Banking Professional and ARWP) through the mutual recognition mechanism.

We will continue to examine enhancement measures with Mainland regulatory authorities to explore ways of broadening Hong Kong professionals' entry into the Mainland market, thereby increasing the flexibility in the provision of human capital for the Mainland and Hong Kong markets.

(4) The Government, together with financial regulatory authorities, is actively working with relevant Mainland authorities to advance the inclusion of the Renminbi counters under the Southbound Trading of Stock Connect, introduction of block trading, and the expansion of mutual-market access regime to cover Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), with a view to attracting and facilitating greater participation in Hong Kong's securities market and enhancing market liquidity. We will continue discussions with Mainland counterparts on further expansion and optimisation of the financial market connectivity schemes. This will better meet the needs of domestic and overseas investors for cross-market and diversified asset allocation, supporting the healthy integration and development of the Mainland and Hong Kong capital markets.

---

## **Online auction of vehicle registration marks to be held from July 3 to 7**

The Transport Department (TD) today (June 18) said that the next online auction of vehicle registration marks (VRMs) will be held from noon on July 3 (Thursday) to noon on July 7 (Monday) through the auction platform E-Auction ([e-auction.td.gov.hk](http://e-auction.td.gov.hk)). Interested bidders can participate in the online auction only after they have successfully registered as E-Auction users.

A spokesman for the TD said, "A total of 200 Ordinary VRMs will be available at this online public auction. The list of VRMs (see Annex) has been uploaded to the E-Auction website. Applicants who have paid a \$1,000 deposit to reserve the Ordinary VRM for auction should also register as an E-Auction user in advance in order to participate in the online bidding, including placing the first bid at the opening price of \$1,000. Otherwise, the VRMs reserved by them may be bid on by other interested bidders at or above the opening price. Auctions for VRMs with 'HK' or 'XX' as a prefix, special VRMs and personalised VRMs will continue to be carried out through physical auctions by bidding paddles, and their announcement arrangements remain unchanged."

Members of the public participating in the online bidding should take note of the following important points:

(1) Bidders should register in advance as an E-Auction user by "iAM Smart+" equipped with the digital signing function; or by using a valid digital

certificate and an email address upon completion of identity verification. Registered "iAM Smart" users should provide their Hong Kong identity card number, while non-Hong Kong residents who are not "iAM Smart" users should provide the number of their passport or other identification documents when registering as E-Auction users.

(2) Bidders are required to provide a digital signature to confirm the submission and amount of the bid by using "iAM Smart+" or a valid digital certificate at the time of the first bid of each online bidding session (including setting automatic bids before the auction begins) to comply with the requirements of the Electronic Transactions Ordinance.

(3) If a bid is made in respect of a VRM within the last 10 minutes before the end of the auction, the auction end time for that particular VRM will be automatically extended by another 10 minutes, up to a maximum of 24 hours.

(4) Successful bidders must follow the instructions in the notification email issued by the TD to log in to the E-Auction within 48 hours from the issuance of email and complete the follow-up procedures, including:

- completing the Purchaser Information for the issuance of the Memorandum of Sale of Registration Mark (Memorandum of Sale); and
- making the auction payment online by credit card, Faster Payment System (FPS) or Payment by Phone Service (PPS). Cheque or cash payment is not accepted in the E-Auction.

(5) A VRM can only be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. Relevant information on the Certificate of Incorporation must be provided by the successful bidder in the Purchaser Information of the Memorandum of Sale if the VRM purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(6) Successful bidders will receive a notification email around seven working days after payment has been confirmed and can download the Memorandum of Sale from the E-Auction. The purchaser must apply for the VRM to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser within 12 months from the date of issue of the Memorandum of Sale. If the purchaser fails to do so within the 12-month period, in accordance with the statutory provision, the allocation of the VRM will be cancelled and a new allocation will be arranged by the TD without prior notice to the purchaser.

The TD has informed all applicants who have reserved the Ordinary VRMs for this round of auction of the E-Auction arrangements in detail by post. Members of the public may refer to the E-Auction website or watch the tutorial videos for more information. Please call the E-Auction hotline (3583 3980) or email ([e-auction-enquiry@td.gov.hk](mailto:e-auction-enquiry@td.gov.hk)) for enquiries.

---

## LCQ15: Providing support for non-local students

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

In recent years, Hong Kong has spared no effort in building the "Study in Hong Kong" brand to develop Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education, and has been gradually enhancing support measures for non-local students while they are studying in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of non-local students applying through different ways for studying full-time locally-accredited programmes in Hong Kong who have obtained bachelor's degrees or higher qualifications and those who have eventually been admitted, as well as the percentages of non-local students in the number of places of the relevant programmes, in each of the past three years;

(2) given that full-time non-local undergraduate and postgraduate students were required to obtain a "No Objection Letter" (NOL(s)) issued by the Immigration Department before they were allowed to take up part-time jobs in Hong Kong in the past, of the number of non-local students who took up part-time jobs after obtaining NOLs in each of the past three years and, among them, the respective numbers of those who were pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies;

(3) given that the Government temporarily exempted full-time non-local postgraduate and undergraduate students from the restrictions on taking up part-time jobs in November 2023 and November last year respectively (the temporary exemption arrangements), whether the authorities have compiled statistics afterwards on the number of non-local students who have taken up part-time jobs under the temporary exemption arrangements; if they have not compiled the statistics, whether they will collect the relevant data and review the effectiveness of such measure in future; whether they will consider regularising the temporary exemption arrangements in the long run;

(4) as some non-local students have relayed to me that some local employers are deterred from employing non-local students to take up part-time jobs because they are not clear about the temporary exemption arrangements, how the authorities will publicise and promote the temporary exemption arrangements, and whether they have co-operated with the relevant tertiary institutions to provide non-local students with the relevant employment information and support services; and

(5) as it has been reported that the Chief Executive has indicated earlier that Hong Kong fully welcomes students who suffer from unfair treatment as a result of the policies of the United States to study in Hong Kong, and that he will do his best to provide the most appropriate support and assistance to students in collaboration with the local universities, of the work progress made by the authorities in supporting such students so far; whether they have set up task forces with various local universities to provide one-stop transfer services for such students, e.g. expediting their admission, transfer of credits, as well as urgent support measures such as providing accommodation arrangements, so as to attract more outstanding students to Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure and our overall competitiveness in education ranked top five in the world. Among others, Hong Kong's post-secondary education is highly internationalised and diversified, and we boast five of the world's top 100 universities with outstanding talent in technology and research, making Hong Kong an international hub for exchange and collaboration among high-calibre talent. To fully leverage the distinctive advantages of the post-secondary education sector in Hong Kong under "one country, two systems", and to develop Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub, we strive to build the "Study in Hong Kong" brand and attract more non-local students to study and conduct research in Hong Kong.

After consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau, our consolidated replies to Hon Kenneth Leung's questions are as follows:

(1) In the 2022/23 to 2024/25 Academic Year (AY), the numbers of non-local students pursuing locally-accredited programmes at undergraduate level or above in Hong Kong, and the number of non-local students as a percentage of relevant undergraduate student places are tabulated below:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Non-local student enrolment			
University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded programmes (Note 1)	21 656	23 051	26 609
Non-UGC-funded programmes (Note 2)	40 267	48 859	62 305
Total	61 923	71 910	88 914
Percentages of non-local students			
UGC-funded undergraduate programmes (Note 3)	19.2%	19.9%	23.2%

Non UGC-funded undergraduate programmes (Note 4)	7.0%	14.2%	18.7%
--	------	-------	-------

(Note 1) Referring to full-time equivalent student enrolment, including both full-time and part-time programmes.

(Note 2) Non-UGC-funded programmes cover publicly-funded programmes offered by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and self-financing programmes offered by UGC-funded universities, the HKAPA, and other institutions. Relevant figures refer to the headcounts of full-time and part-time programmes.

(Note 3) Referring to non-local student enrolment as a percentage of local student places in UGC-funded undergraduate programmes.

(Note 4) The percentages of non-local students of non-UGC-funded undergraduate programmes refer to the percentages of intakes of non-local students as a share of the estimated intake places of relevant programmes. Estimated intake places are based on estimates made by institutions for planning purposes and may not necessarily represent the maximum approved intake quotas or admission targets.

In the 2022/23 to 2024/25 AY, the number of applications from non-local students for UGC-funded first-year-first-degree undergraduate programmes ranged between 70 000 and 80 000. The Education Bureau (EDB) does not maintain information on the number of applicants of other taught programmes.

(2), (3) and (4) The Government has temporarily exempted full-time non-local postgraduate students of local programmes from the restriction on taking up part-time jobs since November 2023, and has extended the temporary exemption arrangement to full-time non-local undergraduate students from November 2024 onwards. Since November 2023, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has issued "No Objection Letters" to nearly 150 000 eligible non-local students, who are allowed to take up part-time jobs under the temporary exemption arrangement without making applications. There is no restriction on the number of hours or the location of the part-time employment. The breakdown of the numbers of "No Objection Letters" issued by the ImmD under this arrangement by student category are tabulated below:

Student category	Number of "No Objection Letters" issued		
	2023 (November to December)	2024	2025 (as of May)
Non-local postgraduate students	51 161	54 987	16 946
Non-local undergraduate students	Not applicable#	24 037#	749



Total	51 161	79 024	17 695
-------	--------	--------	--------

# The Government has temporarily exempted full-time non-local undergraduate students from the restriction on taking up part-time jobs since November 1, 2024.

Non-local students benefitting from this arrangement are eligible to apply to stay in Hong Kong after graduation for development through the "Immigration Arrangement for Non-local Graduates". Allowing them to take up part-time jobs during their studies enables them to gain personal exposure and knowledge for working in Hong Kong, enhances their incentives to stay in Hong Kong for development after graduation, and helps attract more outside students to study in Hong Kong.

Under the temporary exemption arrangement, non-local students are not required to apply to the ImmD or notify their institutions for part-time employment. Therefore, the Government does not maintain statistics of non-local students taking up part-time jobs. According to the institutions, many non-local students have made use of the arrangement to take up various types of part-time jobs, including business support, retailing, and marketing, etc. The institutions generally agree that this arrangement helps attract non-local students to stay in Hong Kong for development after graduation, thereby expanding the city's potential talent pool.

The Government promotes this temporary exemption arrangement through various channels such as press releases, the ImmD's website and communications with employers, etc, and introduces the arrangement to chambers of commerce, employers and human resources practitioners through meetings with chambers of commerce, joint meetings of Human Resources Managers' Clubs, and other occasions. The Government also encourages relevant institutions to assist in enhancing on-campus promotion and providing appropriate support to eligible students. The Government will review the entire temporary exemption arrangement this year.

(5) In the light of the changes in the global higher education landscape, the EDB has promptly called on all universities in Hong Kong to introduce facilitation measures for affected students and scholars with a view to safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests, while attracting top talent in accordance with their diversified admissions and talent policies. The EDB is pleased to see that local universities are responding proactively and closely monitoring the situation, fully utilising the Government's facilitation initiatives that support the capacity expansion and quality enhancement of post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong.

The EDB will continue to keep a close eye on the development and accordingly consider support measures for them in a holistic approach so as to give full play to Hong Kong's role as an international post-secondary education hub. Apart from the recruitment measures of the institutions, the Government attracts more top talent to pursue their studies in Hong Kong

through a range of initiatives, including doubling the cap on non-local students in publicly funded post-secondary institutions to 40 per cent, increasing scholarship quotas, and gradually increasing the number of places under the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme. We remain committed to pursuing various policies and initiatives, fostering networks and partnerships at the national, regional, and international levels, and will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to promote the "Study in Hong Kong" brand. These efforts align with the national strategies to invigorate the country through science and education, cultivate high-calibre talent, and advance innovation and development, thereby contributing to meeting the needs of our nation.

---

## **LCQ19: Facilitating admission of high-calibre overseas students and scholars to Hong Kong**

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

It has been reported that the United States (US) Government has recently barred Harvard University from enrolling international students. There are views that, due to political factors, it is expected that more top-tier institutions will face restrictions on international student recruitment in the future. This could lead to significant shifts in the global talent mobility within the higher education sector. As such, Hong Kong, as an international education hub, should seize the opportunity to actively attract and retain high-calibre international students and scholars, so as to consolidate its position as a regional hub for knowledge, innovation and technology. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether, in the face of the aforesaid abrupt change in overseas higher education policies, the Government has formulated a systematic plan to assist Hong Kong institutions in attracting high-calibre students affected by the turbulent international situation to pursue studies in Hong Kong, and to ensure that they can stay in Hong Kong for career development after graduation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) how the University Grants Committee (UGC) will avoid resource misallocation and vicious competition in the course of promoting talent competition among the eight UGC-funded universities, and whether UGC will take the lead in establishing a unified platform to foster collaboration

among institutions, so as to enhance their overall international competitiveness; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether, in the face of the China-US confrontation and competition, the Government will introduce specific policy measures to encourage Hong Kong's higher education institutions to capitalise on new opportunities arising from the shifting geopolitical landscape, with a view to further strengthening Hong Kong's position as an international education hub; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong's overall competitiveness in education ranks among the top five in the world, and our post-secondary education is highly internationalised and diversified. To date, five University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities have been ranked among the top 100 in the world, six are ranked among the top 50 in Asia, a number of them have been ranked among the top universities in the most international universities ranking, and they have excellent research talent, which make them attractive to students and scholars from all over the world. Under the leadership of the Committee on Education, Technology and Talents led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Government will continue to promote Hong Kong as an international hub for high-calibre talent, co-ordinate and drive the integrated development of education, technology and talent, expand connections, formulate policies to attract and cultivate talent, and foster the co-ordinated development of technologies, so as to strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international post-secondary education hub and an international innovation and technology centre.

Our reply to the Hon Tang Fei's question is as follows:

(1) and (3) In the light of the changes in the global higher education landscape, the Education Bureau (EDB) has promptly called on all universities in Hong Kong to introduce facilitation measures for affected students and scholars with a view to safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests, while attracting top talent in accordance with their diversified admissions and talent policies. The EDB is pleased to see that local universities are responding proactively and closely monitoring the situation, fully utilising the Government's facilitation initiatives that support the capacity expansion and quality enhancement of post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong.

We will continue to keep a close eye on the development and accordingly consider support measures for them in a holistic approach so as to give full play to Hong Kong's role as an international post-secondary education hub. Apart from the recruitment measures of the institutions, the Government attracts more top talent to pursue their studies in Hong Kong through a range of initiatives, including doubling the cap on non-local students in publicly funded post-secondary institutions to 40 per cent, increasing scholarship quotas, and gradually increasing the number of places under the Hong Kong PhD

Fellowship Scheme. We remain committed to pursuing various policies and initiatives, fostering networks and partnerships at the national, regional, and international levels, and will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to promote the "Study in Hong Kong" brand. These efforts align with the national strategies to invigorate the country through science and education, cultivate high-calibre talent, and advance innovation and development, thereby contributing to meeting the needs of our country.

(2) The EDB and the UGC have been actively fostering collaboration among the eight UGC-funded universities, including supporting the jointly-established Heads of Universities Committee's Standing Committee on Internationalisation (HUCOMSCI) to promote the "Study in Hong Kong" brand around the world. We will continue to deepen institutional collaboration through the HUCOMSCI to attract more talent from around the world and accelerate the development of Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub.

Each of the eight UGC-funded universities has its own strengths and characteristics, and is making full use of the Government's facilitation policies and measures to bring their strengths into full play in recruiting and attracting more outstanding students and academics. With the Government increasing the non-local student quota for UGC-funded universities from 20 per cent to 40 per cent from the 2024/25 academic year onwards, the proportion of non-local students enrolled in UGC-funded undergraduate programmes has increased from about 19.9 per cent in 2023/24 academic year to 23.2 per cent. Universities will adopt the principle of meritocracy to attract more non-local students to study in Hong Kong. Non-local students will also make choices of further studies that suit their own strengths and interests.

As for academic staff, the UGC-funded universities have also been actively expanding capacity while enhancing quality by increasing the number of academic staff in the UGC-funded universities from 4 974 in the 2021/22 academic year to 5 398. The universities will continue to recruit top scholars from around the world through various measures to create a favourable environment for scientific research and contribute to the development of our country and Hong Kong.

---

## **LCQ16: Opening of bank accounts by non-commercial organisations**

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

I have received a number of requests for assistance involving the opening of bank accounts by non-commercial organisations and, among them, some "three-nil buildings" are still unable to open bank accounts six to eight months after the formation of owners' corporations (OCs), rendering the OCs unable to raise funds for their operation. On the contrary, it takes only one to two months on average for commercial organisations to open accounts. There are views that the difficulties encountered by OCs in opening accounts have seriously affected the livelihood of the grass roots and run counter to the Government's objective of improving the community. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the total number of complaints received by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) in the past three years about non-commercial organisations encountering difficulties (e.g. excessively long processing time) in opening bank accounts;

(2) whether it knows if HKMA has put in place measures to streamline the requirements for banks in vetting and approving applications from non-commercial organisations for opening accounts (in particular social service accounts such as those for OCs), so as to shorten the processing time;

(3) whether it will amend the Banking Ordinance (Cap. 155) or the licensing guidelines to expressly require banks to provide social service organisations with convenient procedures for opening accounts; and

(4) whether it knows if HKMA will set indicators to increase banks' incentive to process applications from organisations such as OCs for opening accounts, or impose penalties on banks against which complaints have been repeatedly lodged?

Reply:

President,

To safeguard the stability of the banking system and customer interests, banks are required to comply with the relevant laws and regulatory requirements when establishing business relationship with customers. Banks are required to conduct customer due diligence (CDD) on applicants seeking to open a bank account irrespective of whether they are commercial entities or non-commercial entities (including Owners' Corporations (OCs)).

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) has been closely monitoring the situation regarding bank account opening of non-commercial entities in Hong Kong. In this connection, the HKMA reminds the banking sector from time to time that while implementing robust control measures, they should also avoid creating unreasonable barriers for legitimate businesses and entities (including OCs and other non-commercial entities) to access banking services. Banks should maintain proper communication with customers throughout the CDD process, properly handle customers' account opening applications through transparent, reasonable and efficient procedures, uphold the principle of

treating customers fairly, and where appropriate flexibly and pragmatically handle account opening applications.

After consulting the HKMA, our reply to the four parts of the question is as follows:

The HKMA issued a circular to banks in April 2023 to provide further guidance on the CDD requirements with respect to account opening for commercial entities or non-commercial entities. The circular also sets out guidance on communication with customers, understanding of market developments and risk management, as well as shares past cases and good practices for the industry's reference, so as to assist banks in achieving effective outcomes and enhancing customer experience in account opening. The HKMA has also required banks to review their account opening procedures and CDD measures, and provide staff training.

In response to the HKMA's guidance, banks have introduced various facilitation measures in recent years to improve the account opening process for customers, covering OCs and other non-commercial entities. These measures include providing applicants with updates on the progress of their account opening applications, establishing review mechanisms and re-examining account opening applications upon customers' request. The HKMA has also set up a dedicated email and hotline to collect enquiries from the public and relevant stakeholders, which are handled and followed up by a dedicated team within the HKMA for account opening and maintenance (the dedicated team).

Regarding the account opening application process for OCs, as an OC is an independent body corporate set up under the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344), banks would adopt CDD measures applicable to a legal person. These include requiring applicants to provide relevant registration documents of the corporation, minutes or extracts of resolutions of the management committee meeting or general meeting of the OC regarding the approval for opening a bank account and appointment of authorised signatories, as well as the identification documents of the appointed authorised signatories. Banks may also request additional information or documents from the applicants having regard to the specific circumstances and their risk assessments. The turnaround time for account opening depends on the circumstances of individual cases, as well as whether the applicant has furnished the required information. As the HKMA understood from major banks, the account opening process could generally be completed in around two weeks upon receipt of the required information and documents from applicants.

The HKMA has been maintaining close communication with the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and offering support to the OCs seeking assistance on bank account opening under the established communication and referral mechanism. In May 2025, the HKMA and the HAD held a meeting with representatives from the banking sector for a direct exchange on matters relating to bank account opening for OCs, including a discussion on the bank account opening situations following the establishment of OCs. The participating banks responded positively and have actively introduced facilitation measures to assist OCs, including publishing information in relation to bank account

opening for OCs on banks' websites; providing hotlines and contact information for OCs to enquire about account opening related information with individual banks; assigning designated staff to handle enquiries and applications in relation to bank account opening for OCs; as well as offering multiple channels and appointment arrangements to facilitate account opening for OCs. To further enhance transparency and shorten the account opening turnaround time, the HKMA, the HAD and the banking sector are jointly compiling practical information related to bank account opening, so as to assist OCs to better understand the account opening requirements and make advance preparation for the necessary documentations, with a view to enhancing customer experience.

The numbers of complaints and requests for assistance received by the HKMA and the aforementioned dedicated team over the past three years regarding banks' handling of account opening applications by non-commercial entities are tabulated as follows:

	2022	2023	2024	2025 (as of end-May)
Complaint received by the HKMA	None	1 case (Note 1)	None	1 case (Note 2)
Request for assistance received by the dedicated team	2 cases (Note 3)	2 cases (Note 4)	None	None

Note 1: The bank concerned properly handled the complaint, and the complainant did not seek further assistance from the HKMA after communicating with the bank.

Note 2: The bank is following up on the case as requested by the HKMA.

Note 3: Two cases concerning OCs have been resolved.

Note 4: These involved one case concerning an OC and one case concerning other non-commercial entity, both of which have been resolved.

Apart from the above cases, the HKMA also received cases referred by the HAD and district organisations from time to time, mainly concerning the bank account opening procedures and requirements for newly formed OCs. In this connection, the HKMA has provided appropriate assistance to these newly formed OCs, and these OCs have subsequently started to proceed with their bank account opening applications. The HKMA noted that for some of these cases, bank accounts were successfully opened within about two weeks on average after the OCs provided the required information to banks. In certain cases, bank accounts were opened within one week.

The HKMA and the banking sector have implemented a series of measures to facilitate bank account opening for various businesses and entities, while ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulatory requirements. We

consider that there is currently no need to introduce legislative amendments or set fixed targets regarding account opening matters. The HKMA will continue to maintain close communication and collaboration with the banking sector and relevant stakeholders on bank account opening matters, with a view to streamlining the related account opening processes and enhancing customer experience.