

LCQ15: Solving the problem of insufficient manpower of lifeguards

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

According to the information provided by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), it needed to employ more than 600 seasonal lifeguards from April to May this year, but as at the 1st of this month, only 240 lifeguards reported for duty. Some members of the public are worried that some public swimming facilities may not be fully open for members of the public to use during the swimming season, resulting in a waste of public resources. Moreover, in the light of the shortage of lifeguards in Hong Kong, I proposed at the meeting of the Panel on Public Service of this Council on the 15th of this month that the authorities should consider importing lifeguards from the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has conducted survey on the median wage of lifeguards employed in the private sector in Hong Kong at present, and how such figure compares to the median wage of the LCSD's lifeguards (including seasonal lifeguards and civil service lifeguards);

(2) as some trade unionists have indicated that with the low academic qualification requirements for entry into the lifeguard industry, its attractiveness to talents with high academic qualifications from the GBA Mainland cities is limited, whether the Government has assessed the attractiveness of recruiting qualified persons from the GBA Mainland cities to come to Hong Kong to work as lifeguards with the median wage of lifeguards in Hong Kong; whether it will launch a pilot recruitment scheme to gauge responses to the scheme from the actual application situation;

(3) as some trade unionists have indicated that the Government should recruit more civil service lifeguards to maintain a stable workforce, whether the Government has assessed if it is a proper use of public money to expand the staffing establishment of civil service lifeguards under the circumstances that the work nature of lifeguards is mostly seasonal;

(4) whether it has studied in detail the feasibility of importing lifeguards from the GBA Mainland cities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as the LCSD indicated earlier on that it would explore the feasibility of the provision of seasonal lifeguard services by outsourced contractors at designated public swimming pools, of the progress of the relevant work, and

whether there is an implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

There are 45 public swimming pools, 39 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres with life-saving services under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). Apart from senior lifeguards, around 1 300 lifeguards are needed during the non-swimming season (i.e. from November to March of the following year). In the swimming season from April onwards, around 1 800 and 2 000 lifeguards are required during the non-peak months (i.e. from April to May and from September to October) and peak months (i.e. from June to August) respectively. As at May 1 this year, the number of lifeguards employed by the LCSD is close to 1 700, including around 1 400 lifeguards on long-term employment and over 200 contract lifeguards. In view of the number of lifeguards currently recruited (as of May 1), 25 public swimming pools under the LCSD have been fully open for public use; 17 swimming pools are partially open due to manpower problem; and three swimming pools are closed due to conversion/annual maintenance works. The LCSD is still actively recruiting seasonal lifeguards for the year. Appointed contract staff will report for duty in batches. My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai is as follows:

(1) The mid-point of the pay scales and the average monthly salary of lifeguards employed by the LCSD (including civil service lifeguards and contract (full-year or seasonal) lifeguards) are \$20,540 and \$23,800 respectively.

According to the information collected from companies/institutions taking part in the salaries survey of similar jobs conducted by the LCSD in September 2022, the average monthly salary of lifeguards in the private sector is about \$22,500.

(2) and (4) There have been an undersupply of manpower in the overall labour market in Hong Kong in recent years. With the number of new swimming pools in local private development projects, hotels and theme parks increasing rapidly by nearly 200 in the past few years, the demand for lifeguards in the market continues to rise. In addition, swimming is a seasonal activity and the need for lifeguards varies with the swimming season. The job of seasonal lifeguards is also short-term in nature and lacks stability, which have brought tremendous challenges and difficulties in their recruitment.

To stabilise the manpower supply of lifeguards in the department, the LCSD added full-year lifeguard posts on two-year contract in 2023 to increase the stability of the posts and recruited 110 employees successfully. With longer contract period, it is believed that this will stabilise the manpower supply of lifeguards. Furthermore, the LCSD has rolled out a series of measures to increase the overall supply of qualified lifeguards. These include (i) launching the Combined Seasonal Lifeguard Training Scheme to offer full-time training and practice in respect of swimming pool and beach

lifeguards in a "hire and train" mode, so as to help those without life-saving qualifications to acquire pool and/or beach life saving awards before serving as the seasonal lifeguards of the LCSD; (ii) exploring with the Hong Kong Life Saving Society and the Employees Retraining Board to co-organise life-saving training programmes and provide employment services; and (iii) organising life-saving training programmes for ethnic minorities again to provide them with intensive training to become qualified lifeguards within a short period of time, thereby expanding the source of manpower supply in the market.

At present, the LCSD is focusing on the implementation of the above measures and reviewing their effectiveness. It is also actively studying and exploring other measures that help increase the supply of lifeguards, including exploring the feasibility of recruiting people holding relevant qualifications from places other than Hong Kong (including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area) as lifeguards.

(3) We must strike a balance between maintaining public services and using public funds. We must use public funds effectively while providing quality services to the public as far as possible. Swimming activities have always been popular with the public. As the problem of global warming continues, the public hopes to extend the swimming season. At present, the newly constructed swimming pools of the LCSD are open throughout the year.

In the past five years, the LCSD bid for resources to create more than 260 civil service lifeguard posts and created 110 two-year contract full-year lifeguard posts in 2023 to increase the ratio of civil service lifeguards to seasonal lifeguards of beaches and swimming pools, thereby increasing the stability of lifeguard manpower. The LCSD will deploy the full-year lifeguards additionally employed to swimming pools or beaches open all year round or with longer swimming season to enhance the services of aquatic venues. The arrangement is considered appropriate.

Besides, with a view to maintaining and upgrading the standard of the serving lifeguards, the LCSD provides training to the serving civil service lifeguards during non-swimming season, which includes assisting them to revalidate their life saving qualifications every three years; arranging them to participate in enrichment courses on life-saving skills; and offering training to improve their customer service skills. The full-year lifeguards can also support the above arrangements.

(5) The LCSD is exploring and making the preparations for outsourcing seasonal lifeguard services at designated public swimming pools, including selecting suitable venues, studying the deployment of manpower and seeking resources. The LCSD will then attempt to outsource lifeguard services at its public swimming pools as soon as possible.

LCQ1: Intangible cultural heritage

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Tan Yueheng (Hon Chan Pui-leung to ask on his behalf) and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

It is learnt that Hong Kong is very rich in intangible cultural heritage (ICH), with the first ICH Inventory of Hong Kong covering 480 items and the first Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong covering a total of 20 items. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) regarding the safeguarding, promotion and transmission of ICH, of the work recently done by the Government, and the Government's subsequent planning for that;
- (2) as there are views that the transmission of ICH items is very important, whether the Government has carried out relevant work to nurture young ICH bearers; if so, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such work; and
- (3) whether it has considered integrating the current frontier artificial intelligence technology, metaverse technology, etc. with the promotion and safeguarding of ICH?

Reply:

President,

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the Convention) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) includes the following domains:

1. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the ICH;
2. performing arts;
3. social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
5. traditional craftsmanship.

Based on the Convention, the Government announced the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong covering 480 items in 2014 and the first Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong with 20 items in 2017. Twelve of the items in the Representative List have been successfully inscribed onto the National List of ICH. Among these, Cantonese opera has been further inscribed onto UNESCO's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity", making it a world-class ICH item.

The Government will continue to follow up on the updating of the

Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong and the ICH inventory of Hong Kong, and has planned to announce the updated lists by the end of 2024.

In response to Dr Hon Tan's three-part question, my replies are as follows:

(1) The Government attaches great importance to the safeguarding, transmission and promotion of Hong Kong's ICH, strives to raise the public awareness of ICH by encouraging community participation, to enable the culture and tradition of Hong Kong to be preserved, passed on and developed.

We encourage and promote the community's participation in the safeguarding, research, education, promotion and transmission of ICH, and support the transmission work of local ICH bearers and organisations. A funding of \$300 million was approved in 2018 for Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to launch the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme" (ICH Funding Scheme). Up till now, a total of 92 projects have already been supported with a total grant of around \$85 million. The funded projects include traditional festive events, research and publications, educational activities, public programmes, as well as transmission and training programmes.

In 2016, Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Centre was set up at Sam Tung Uk Museum, Tsuen Wan, to showcase, promote and educate the public on the Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong and the selected items in the ICH inventory of Hong Kong. The Government has also set up the "Trace of Human Touch" exhibition gallery, which targets youngsters as audience, at the CLP Pulse, to showcase ten ICH items of Hong Kong through the collaborative works of the masters and the apprentices to present the transmission of the items between the two.

Meanwhile, we have been organising a series of public, educational and outreach programmes. These programmes include "Fun in ICH" Series and ICH fun days which let the public explore Hong Kong's ICH from different perspectives; "Meet the Masters" Series which invite ICH bearers to demonstrate their skills; "ICH Domain", "ICH Puppetry Shows" and "Mobile ICH" targeting students; and the programmes under "ICH for All" specially arranged for persons with disabilities.

We will continue to organise public, educational and outreach programmes, and further engage the community to enable the continuous preservation, continuity and development of ICH.

(2) Through ICH Funding Scheme, the Government provides support for the local bearers and bearer organisations to transmit ICH and train the younger generation to become the future ICH bearers. Among the funded projects in the past three years, 16 are related to the transmission of ICH by bearers or bearer organisations. For instance, "Tracing the Legacy and Origin of the Cantonese Narrative Nanyin", "Hang Hau Traditional Hakka Unicorn Dance Conservation Project", "Training and Promotion of Hakka Pixiu Dance", "Inheritance Hong Kong Porcelain Paintings, Guangcai", "Traditional

Craftsmanship â™™ Transmission of Paper Crafting Technique" and "Courses on Hong Kong Traditional Paper Crafting Arts". As at the first quarter of 2023, 138 training sessions with over 2 000 participants have been completed. Many of the participants are students and young people. These programmes could stimulate young people's interest in ICH and help to identify the young people with potential to continue their studies and practices in the field of ICH, enabling them to organise the core techniques and accumulating experiences to become new ICH bearers. We will further enhance the supports for local ICH bearers and bearer organisation under the ICH Funding Scheme, to train up the ICH practitioners with a view to promoting the transmission of ICH items, in particular the 20 items on the Representative List of ICH.

(3) In recent years, we have been using digital technology to facilitate the promotion and recording on ICH. In the exhibition "300 Years of Hakka Kung Fu: Digital Vision of its Legacy and Future" held at Hong Kong Heritage Museum in 2016, the essence of traditional martial arts was displayed through 3D multimedia technology. The movement of a martial arts practitioner was captured using 3D motion capture technology to interpret and record the forms of Kung Fu accurately. This makes it easier for the audience to understand and grasp the essence of martial arts, in addition to effectively preserving the forms of martial arts.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICH Office) is also showcasing 360-degree Virtual Reality (VR) videos under the section "ICH On-line" on its webpage. These videos capture ICH items, including Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance in Mid-Autumn Festival and Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade falling within the domain of "social practices, rituals and festive events", as well as Bamboo Theatre Building Technique falling within the domain of "traditional craftsmanship". The videos allow audience to experience and understand the rituals of the festive events and the exquisite craftsmanship of bamboo theatre through first-person perspective.

In addition, through the ICH Funding Scheme, LCSD has supported the "Three Yu Lan Festivals: Research, Transmission and Promotion" project of Hong Kong Shue Yan University to develop its virtual museum of Yu Lan Festival. The virtual museum of Yu Lan Festival is an example of the application of metaverse technology, showcasing the traditional culture in the form of a metaverse with a 360-degree panoramic view of Yu Lan Festival in 8K Ultra HD. Audience can use computers or VR headsets to access the virtual museum free of charge and create their own avatars for experiencing the festive event in virtual space created by the concept of the metaverse.

ICH Office has already launched an online "Intangible Cultural Heritage Database" in 2018 to digitise the 480 items on the ICH inventory of Hong Kong in phases. The work is planned to be completed by 2025.

Thank you, President.

Frontier Closed Area (Amendment) Order 2023 to be gazetted on Friday

The Frontier Closed Area (Amendment) Order 2023 (the Amendment Order), which excludes a new vehicular bridge across the Ping Yuen River from the current Frontier Closed Area (FCA) for public use, will be gazetted on Friday (June 2) and tabled in the Legislative Council on June 7.

The western section of Lin Ma Hang Road between the Ping Yuen River and Ping Che Road is a single-lane carriageway for two-way traffic. With a view to coping with the anticipated increase in traffic demand along the said section of Lin Ma Hang Road, which no longer falls within the FCA following the completion of the phased implementation of the FCA reduction in January 2016, it is necessary to widen the aforementioned section of Lin Ma Hang Road. The Highways Department commenced the relevant works in February 2020, including the construction of a new vehicular bridge across the Ping Yuen River which is targeted for completion by July 2023 and is still located within the current FCA.

"Given that the new vehicular bridge across the Ping Yuen River is the only part of the concerned road section which still lies within the current FCA, it is necessary to revise the FCA boundary to exclude from it the new vehicular bridge such that the public can utilise the new vehicular bridge upon its completion," a spokesperson for the Transport and Logistics Bureau said today (May 31).

The Amendment Order seeks to specify the revised boundary of the FCA so that the new vehicular bridge across the Ping Yuen River will not fall within the FCA after it is open for public use. The Amendment Order also reflects the recent English naming of the Ng Tung River, which is currently referred to as River Indus in the schedule to the FCA Order. The target commencement date for the above legislative amendments is July 31 this year.

LCQ7: Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited

Following is a question by the Hon Duncan Chiu and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

The 2022 Policy Address announced the establishment of the Hong Kong

Investment Corporation Limited (HKIC), which will incorporate the Hong Kong Growth Portfolio (HKGP) established under the Future Fund into its management, with an aim to further optimise the use of fiscal reserves for promoting the development of Hong Kong's economy and industries, as well as to attract and support more enterprises to develop their business in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of institutions which have expressed interest and submitted investment proposals to HKIC since its establishment; the assessment mechanism for the investment proposals; and the expected earliest time for HKIC to formally make investments;

(2) whether HKIC will directly manage some of the investments; if so, of the proportion and details of such investments (including whether HKIC will directly invest in projects, enterprises, funds, or make mixed investments, as well as the proportion of investment allocation involved);

(3) of the following information on HKGP since its establishment: (i) the number of institutions appointed as general partners, (ii) the number of institutions which have signed general partnership contracts with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and, (iii) among them, the respective numbers of institutions which have been disbursed with investment funds from HKMA and those which have not yet been disbursed with investment funds, (iv) the total amount of investment funds disbursed by HKMA, and (v) the respective time taken by various institutions appointed as general partners from the signing of the contract with HKMA to the disbursement of the investment funds; and

(4) how it will ensure that HKIC can enhance speed and efficiency in various aspects, such as vetting and approving investment proposals, and disbursing investment funds, so as to achieve more effectively the purposes for which HKIC is established and maximise its effectiveness; whether the Government will, by drawing reference from the practice of formulating performance pledges for government departments, formulate investment management standards and targets for HKIC; if so, of the specific details?

Reply:

President,

The 2022 Policy Address announced the establishment of the Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited (the Corporation) to further optimise the use of fiscal reserves for promoting the development of the economy and industries. The Corporation will manage the Hong Kong Growth Portfolio (HKGP), the Greater Bay Area Investment Fund and the Strategic Tech Fund established under the Future Fund, as well as the newly established Co-Investment Fund. The initial allocation to the Corporation for management amounts to \$62 billion. The Corporation will, based on the direction of enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness as well as leading and supporting the prosperous growth of strategic industries, identify investment opportunities to strengthen Hong Kong's ability to attract investments and enterprises, enhance the structure of industries and the impetus of economic growth. The

investments also aim to create more quality career development opportunities for people and promote the cooperation and mutual development of industries between Hong Kong and cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Having consulted the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

On February 15, 2023, the Government announced the membership of the Corporation's Board of Directors (Board). The Board had in-depth discussions on such matters as to the Corporation's corporate structure, governance, personnel arrangement as well as administration and management. The Board has also formulated the Corporation's investment strategies and criteria, and having regard to the different focuses of the funds under its management, devised appropriate strategies and asset allocation for investments in projects, corporates, funds, etc, as well as drawn up procedures and criteria in sourcing investment partners or targets. At the initial stage of the Corporation's operation, the HKMA will render support on investment, logistics and operational matters, including assisting the Board to make decisions on investment projects leveraging on the HKMA's investment management experience, formulate a risk management framework, and handle administrative matters, thereby enabling the Corporation to commence operation swiftly while upholding good corporate governance.

A number of institutions have submitted investment proposals to the Corporation since its inception, including companies in the fields of innovation and technology and Fintech. The Corporation together with the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises under the Financial Secretary's Office has been engaging in preliminary discussions with certain interested institutions, and going forward, will consider making investments in accordance with the investment criteria formulated by the Board. Generally speaking, apart from investment return, the Corporation will take into account the potential of enterprises concerned or individual projects in driving industry development and employment in Hong Kong, as well as promoting Hong Kong's competitiveness and economic vibrancy in the long run. The process will be subject to discussion among collaborating parties, specific market circumstances and decisions made by the Board. It is therefore not appropriate to stipulate a mandatory timetable or an investment ratio.

Separately, prior to the establishment of the Corporation, eight general partners have been selected to make strategic investments for the HKGP, with investments in a wide spectrum of industries including technology, healthcare, logistics and supply chain management, business and financial services, consumer products, etc. The HKMA has been assisting with the collaboration with the general partners, following up contract signing and capital injection as well as monitoring the general partners' investments based on the agreements and actual situation. We have gradually transitioned the management of the HKGP to the Corporation through administrative arrangements. The Board will formulate the overall disclosure arrangements for the Corporation having regard to such factors as the actual needs of

investment operations and the public's right to know.

LCQ12: Improving ancillary facilities at Tai Po Lung Mei Beach

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Tai Po Lung Mei Beach (the Beach), which was officially opened in June 2021, is the only public bathing beach in Tai Po District. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has planned and studied the connection of the Beach to Tai Mei Tuk for development into a waterfront promenade, and to repair the relevant seaside facilities, provide additional leisure facilities and bring in more restaurants, so as to build the relevant location into the second Hong Kong Gold Coast and make it one of Hong Kong's signature attractions;

(2) as it is learnt that in the area between Ting Kok Road near Tai Po Lung Mei Road and the Beach, some parts of the footpath near the seaside have crash barriers installed in the middle, resulting in the relevant section of the footpath being only several inches wide and quite a number of villagers being forced to walk on the carriageway when walking to that section, thus posing danger, whether the Government will improve the relevant section (e.g. widening the section concerned or altering the design of the crash barriers concerned), so as to protect the safety of the villagers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the Government will enhance the facilities at the Beach, such as providing additional leisure facilities, installing the Smart Public Toilet System in public toilets, using a smart system to monitor the water quality of the Beach, and planting more trees, so as to improve the quality of the Beach; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the Government will enhance the ancillary transport facilities in the vicinity of the Beach, such as increasing the number of public transport routes to connect with other areas of the northeast New Territories, and providing additional parking spaces in the car park; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB), my consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) Tai Mei Tuk has always been a popular leisure area with the provision of a lot of outdoor activities. As for the coast of the Tai Po Lung Mei Beach (the Beach), it is adjacent to Tai Mei Tuk and complements the recreational facilities thereat, attracting a lot of visitors to the area. Since the opening of the Beach to the public for enjoyment in June 2021, the facilities on the Beach have been in good condition. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will consider providing beach chairs and sun umbrellas at the sunbathing area of the Beach so as to create a more comfortable beach environment for the public. The Government will continue to keep in view the needs of the public and develop more recreational facilities in due course.

(2) According to the information provided by the TLB, the gap between the crash barriers and fence at the retaining wall along Ting Kok Road near Tai Po Lung Mei Road is not a footpath. At present, pedestrians traveling between the Beach and Tai Mei Tuk can use the footpath on Ting Kok Road alongside the cycle track near Lung Mei Village. The Transport Department (TD) will arrange installation of traffic signs to remind the public to use the abovementioned footpath on the opposite side of Ting Kok Road.

(3) At present, the Beach has been extensively planted with vegetation, including about 110 trees, more than 20 000 bushes and 10 000 clusters of ground covers. To provide further greening for the beach environment, the LCSD plans to plant additional trees in mid-2023 and beautify the Beach with ornamental plants such as seasonal annuals from time to time. The LCSD will, in consultation with the relevant works departments, explore the feasibility of providing smart toilets, smart water supply system etc. with a view to optimising the facilities of the Beach.

(4) Currently, the Beach is well-served by public transport services connecting to Tai Po Market Station and Tai Po Town Centre, including KMB Route Nos. 75K (Tai Mei Tuk – Tai Po Market Station), 275R (Tai Po Market Station – Wu Kau Tang), New Territories Green Minibus Route Nos. 20C (Tai Po Market Station – Tai Mei Tuk) and 20R (Tai Po Market Station – Wu Kau Tang), which facilitates passengers to interchange to railway service or other public transport services to other districts. The TD will keep in view the operation of these services, and arrange service adjustments as and when necessary to meet passenger needs.

To address to the parking demand arising from the Beach, the Government has provided 75 private car parking spaces, 7 motorcycle parking spaces and 3 coach parking spaces at the Beach. In addition, there are other public parking areas in the vicinity for use. The TD would continue to monitor the parking situation in the area and review the feasibility of providing additional parking spaces.