

LCQ22: Improving quality and odour of coastal waters of Victoria Harbour

Following is a question by the Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Regarding the efforts to improve the quality and odour of coastal waters of the Victoria Harbour (the Harbour), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the annual Water Quality Objectives compliance rate of the Harbour Water Control Zone (WCZ) in the past year;

(2) of the number of cases of misconnections of foul water pipes leading to the discharge of sewage to the Harbour WCZ which the Government followed up in the past year and, among such cases, the number of those which have been rectified, with a breakdown by District Council district;

(3) among the cases mentioned in (2), of the respective numbers of those in which (i) rectifications were made after the owners had been given warnings/advice, (ii) rectifications were made after the owners had received statutory repair/removal orders or had been prosecuted, (iii) rectifications were still not yet made after the Government had taken law enforcement actions, and (iv) rectification works were carried out by government contractors;

(4) of the following information on the Harbour WCZ sewerage improvement projects which (i) were completed in the past year, (ii) are now under construction and (iii) are pending funding approval by this Council: project name, year of completion/expected year of completion, as well as cost/estimated cost; and

(5) of the latest implementation progress of the various proposals set out in the consultancy report on Further Enhancing Quality of Coastal Waters of Victoria Harbour?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along been attaching great importance to improving the water quality of Victoria Harbour and has devoted significant resources to improve the sewage collection and treatment systems through implementing the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme and works for enhancing the quality of coastal waters of Victoria Harbour, stepping up enforcement on misconnections of sewage pipes, and clearing sediment from the stormwater

drainage systems. These efforts have brought noticeable improvement in the water quality of Victoria Harbour. The reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The water quality of the Victoria Harbour Water Control Zone (WCZ) has been good. The overall compliance rate of Water Quality Objectives (WQOs) in the past five years has remained 90 per cent or above. The overall compliance rate in 2022 was 93 per cent, which was comparable to the five-year average of 95 per cent. The compliance rate of individual years would vary due to the influence on marine water quality by weather conditions, such as sunshine, temperature and rainfall, as well as the seasonal fluctuations of background levels. The slight decrease in the overall WQOs compliance rate of Victoria Harbour in 2022 was mainly attributed to the relatively high background levels of total inorganic nitrogen in seawater associated with the impact of the Pearl River flow and the southwesterly monsoon in summer months. Nonetheless, the marine water quality of Hong Kong has still shown a noticeable improvement overall.

(2) In 2022, the statistics of the Government's follow-up actions on foul sewer misconnection in various districts are tabulated below:

District	Number of foul sewer misconnection cases	Number of cases rectified
Central and Western	14	0
Eastern	7	5
Wan Chai	30	6
Kowloon City	40	11
Kwun Tong	7	4
Sham Shui Po	9	4
Wong Tai Sin	2	1
Yau Tsim Mong	39	12
Kwai Tsing	3	3
Tsuen Wan	61	18
Total	212	64

(3) Among the cases mentioned in (2) above, 23 cases were rectified by owners after issuance of warnings or advice, 15 cases were rectified by owners after the statutory repair or removal orders were served, 73 cases have not been rectified after statutory repair or removal orders were served, 75 cases were under investigation or still under rectification, while 26 cases related to the maintenance of ageing public sewers and other problems were rectified by government contractors. We will continue to follow up on the remaining cases, urge or order the respective owners to fulfil their responsibility to rectify the pipe misconnection problems. For cases of non-compliance with the orders, the Buildings Department will take appropriate enforcement actions according to the circumstances, including consideration to initiate prosecution under

the Buildings Ordinance (Cap.132).

(4) The Government has all along been planning and implementing pollution control and sewerage projects in the Victoria Harbour WCZ. Relevant works projects completed in the past year and under construction are listed below:

	Projects completed in the past year (Note 1)	Project Cost (Note 2)
1	Upgrading of West Kowloon and Tsuen Wan Sewerage – Phase 1	\$280 million
2	Construction of Dry Weather Flow Interceptor at Cherry Street Box Culvert	\$660 million
3	Upgrading of Kwun Tong Preliminary Treatment Works	\$350 million
4	Enhancement Works for Kwun Tong Sewage Pumping Station	\$1,050 million

	Projects under construction	Expected Completion Year	Project Cost (Note 3)
1	West Kowloon and Tsuen Wan Village Sewerage – Phase 1	2023	\$100 million
2	Revitalisation of Tsui Ping River (Associated Works for Dry Weather Flow Interceptor)	2024	\$50 million
3	Upgrading of Central and East Kowloon Sewerage – Phase 3	2024	\$680 million
4	Sewerage to Lo Wai, Chuen Lung and Kau Wa Keng Old Village	2025	\$170 million
5	Upgrading of West Kowloon and Tsuen Wan Sewerage – Phase 2	2026	\$2,290 million

Regarding works projects that are pending for funding approval by the Legislative Council (LegCo), the Government will submit a funding application to the LegCo this year for the Construction and Rehabilitation of Trunk Sewage Rising Mains in Cheung Sha Wan to enhance the existing sewerage system. The project is expected to be completed in 2030. Furthermore, the investigation and design works of the newly designed dry weather flow interceptors to be installed at coastal areas at Hung Hom, Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter, Tsuen Wan Bay, Wan Chai East and Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter are in full swing. Subject to support from local communities and completion of relevant procedures, and with funding approved by the LegCo in the coming two years, these projects are expected to be commissioned and completed in stages from mid-2027 to early 2029. We are also planning and investigating for the Enhancement Works for Preliminary Treatment Works at

Harbour Side, which are expected to be completed in 2030, and the project estimates will be assessed upon completion of the preliminary design.

(5) The Government has completed the consultancy study on Further Enhancing Quality of Coastal Waters of Victoria Harbour and has been progressively implementing a series of measures based on the recommendations to improve the near-shore environment of Victoria Harbour. In addition to the progress on rectification of sewer misconnections to stormwater drains and relevant pollution control projects mentioned in the replies to items (2) to (4) above, the Government is taking forward, as stated in 2022 Policy Address, large-scale investigation work which focuses on districts that are more seriously affected by coastal odour so as to trace the major pollution sources in stormwater drainage systems in full swing, and also carrying out inspection, maintenance and desilting of public sewers and stormwater drainage systems on a regular basis. Our target is to reduce the pollution loading by half at stormwater outfalls with serious pollution problems on both sides of Victoria Harbour, in particular in Tsuen Wan, Sham Shui Po and Kowloon City districts, by the end of 2024. The Government has also started in March 2021 regular and extensive application of Malodour Control Hydrogel, which was jointly developed by the Drainage Services Department and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, at stormwater outfalls along the shorelines of Victoria Harbour and nearby locations with odour problems to reduce odour in drains.

The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach, and implement various pollutant discharge reduction works projects and odour mitigation measures persistently, in order to further expedite the improvement of near-shore environmental and odour problems at Victoria Harbour.

Note 1: Sewerage to Lei Yue Mun Village was completed in March 2023.

Note 2: The project costs stated are approved project estimates.

Note 3: The project costs stated are approved project estimates.

InvestHK announces launch of Global Fast Track 2023 with Global Scaleup Competition across 12 cities

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) announced today (May 31) the official launch of the 2023 Global Fast Track (GFT). The year-round fintech accelerator is established through three pillars – the Global Scaleup Competition, the Business Matching Platform, and the always-on GFT Alumni Programme. InvestHK, corporates, investors and partners are excited to explore collaboration opportunities with participating fintech firms. Partnering regulators of the

2023 GFT, including the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Insurance Authority, the Securities and Futures Commission, together with the Customs and Excise Department, set the goal and vision to facilitating the world's most innovative fintech firms to launch and succeed in Hong Kong, across Asia, and beyond.

The Head of Fintech at InvestHK, Mr King Leung, said, "Since the start of the year, we have been thrilled to reconnect with the world in person. We have engaged in many events and networking opportunities, and the message that 'Hong Kong is back' is loud and clear. With new partnerships and ideas, we will continue to push forward as Hong Kong cements its status as a leading fintech hub and the gateway for next-generation fintech companies worldwide. I look forward to an even more exciting year with participation from companies all around the world."

Three enhanced pillars for businesses to connect with the city

The 2023 GFT provides opportunities for fintech firms in Hong Kong, Mainland China and around the globe to tap into the vibrant fintech market in Hong Kong through three pillars:

1. The Global Scaleup Competition: Unlike previous years, the 2023 GFT has introduced the Global Scaleup Competition, with physical semi-finals across 12 cities and one virtually, from June to September. The 12 cities are:

- Bangalore
- Bangkok
- Berlin
- Dubai
- Hong Kong
- London
- New York
- Paris
- Shenzhen
- Singapore
- Tel Aviv
- Toronto

Thirteen finalists from fintech, artificial intelligence, and Web3 scaleups will be selected to pitch in person in the grand finale at [Hong Kong FinTech Week 2023](#). This opportunity not only provides unmatched exposure to over 30,000 visitors, it also unleashes business opportunities through one-on-one meetings with Corporate, Investor and Service Champions, consultation sessions with regulators, and a winning potential investment of up to US\$3 million from venture sponsors AngelHub and Club Deal.

Applications are open now till July. Further details and the semi-finals' schedule can be found [here](#).

2. The Business Matching Platform: Going live online in the third quarter of 2023, the FintechHK Community Platform will serve the GFT community by enabling one-on-one business matchings. Through the platform, GFT Champions

are able to explore and connect with suitable fintech firms. Other off-line activities such as mentor sessions by industry partners, business networking and more will also be featured on the platform.

3. The always-on GFT Alumni Programme: the FintechHK Community Platform will also support the GFT Alumni Programme which provides year-round business networking and advice to empower fintech firms to build sustainable businesses in the region.

Last year, GFT received over 400 fintech applications from across 45 economies, and support from over 100 Champions across three categories – Corporates, Investors and Service Providers. The programme facilitated over 175 one-on-one business meetings.

New partnership calls for new beginnings

This year, InvestHK appointed WHub as co-organiser of the 2023 GFT. With its passion for boosting startups and fostering the Hong Kong startup ecosystem, WHub accelerates startup business through meaningful connections with accelerators, incubators, the Government and investors. InvestHK looks forward to synergising with WHub to benefit fintech firms and scale the GFT to new heights.

For details on the entire programme of the 2023 GFT, please visit [here](#).

About InvestHK

[InvestHK](#) is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government responsible for attracting foreign direct investment. It has a dedicated fintech team to attract the world's top innovative fintech enterprises, start-up entrepreneurs, investors, and other stakeholders to set up and scale their business via Hong Kong into Mainland China, Asia and beyond. For more information, please visit www.hongkong-fintech.hk.

[LCQ21: Encouraging employment of more half-time and part-time professional drivers](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Some members of the transport sector have pointed out that the shortage

of bus and minibus drivers has affected the daily lives of members of the public. Regarding encouraging public transport operators to employ more half-time and part-time drivers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective total numbers of half-time and part-time drivers employed by operators of (i) bus, (ii) tram, (iii) minibus and (iv) MTR in each of the past five years and, among them, the respective numbers of female drivers;

(2) whether it knows the numbers of (i) half-time and part-time drivers and (ii) half-time and part-time female drivers as mentioned in (1) by various age groups to which they belonged (i.e. aged below 25, 25 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 or above) (set out in a table); and

(3) whether it will provide incentives to encourage various public transport operators to engage more housewives to take up half-time or part-time driver posts, with a view to enabling them to join the labour market and earn a living while unleashing more labour force?

Reply:

President,

The Government is paying close attention to the manpower shortage situation in the local public transport sector, and has actively taken forward various initiatives to assist the relevant trades in their recruitment efforts. Such measures include relaxing the requirements for applying for commercial vehicle driving license, collaborating with the relevant trades to participate in different employment schemes, launching training programmes along with training subsidies and allowances, as well as facilitating the trades to diversify their recruitment channels, etc. The Government also encourages public transport operators to improve the staff welfare through enhancement of remuneration and benefits and adopting more flexible employment terms, with a view to creating a better work environment and attracting more new entrants (including women and young people) to the trades.

In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) and (2) The numbers of half-time and part-time drivers employed by franchised bus companies, MTR Corporation Limited and Hong Kong Tramways Limited in the past five years, as delineated by age groups and gender, are set out in Annex.

As for public light buses, the Transport Department does not keep the relevant statistics.

(3) The Government has been implementing a range of measures to identify and unleash potential labour force, which include the Labour Department (LD)'s provision of comprehensive employment services to job seekers (including women) and employers of different sectors (including public transport

operators) to assist them to recruit employees. The LD implements the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged to encourage employers to hire the elderly and middle-aged, who are aged 40 or above, to take up full-time or part-time jobs and provide them with on-the-job training (OJT) through the provision of an OJT allowance. The LD has also set up a dedicated webpage on part-time vacancies on the Interactive Employment Service website and organises part-time job fairs from time to time.

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) implements the "First-Hire-Then-Train" Scheme to encourage employers to provide suitable job vacancies and modify the working hours (including flexible hours and part-time positions) as well as leave arrangements to cater for the family commitment needs of trainees, and to provide OJT and other related support measures, with a view to attracting women and homemakers to join the employment market. Training bodies appointed by the ERB will assist employers in the recruitment and provide employed trainees with designated training courses within working hours. In the past few years, participating employers mainly covered professions of care workers and cleaning assistants for residential care homes as well as hotel room attendants. The ERB recently explored with public transport operators on the possibility of their participation in the Scheme.

In respect of the public transport sector, the Government has always encouraged operators to recruit employees of different backgrounds, including working women who are also homemakers, through improvement of remuneration package as well as adoption of more flexible and attractive employment terms. Currently, there are public transport operators who provide paid maternity and paternity leaves to their employees, scholarships to employees' children, as well as free rides and medical benefits to employees' family members. On top of these, some operators also allow drivers to work on five-day week, half-time, or part-time basis, in order to accommodate those who are inclined towards flexible employment or those who need to reserve time for attending to family commitments. Full-time drivers who work on five-day week, as well as half-time drivers, are also entitled to fringe benefits provided by operators.

LCQ13: Conclusions made by United Nations committee on situation in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Committee) held its meetings in February this year to receive the Chinese delegation, which included the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government delegation, and consider the fourth report submitted by HKSAR under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. According to the Government, the Committee issued its Concluding Observations in March, in which it made inaccurate, biased and misleading statements on various aspects of the situation in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) apart from the Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs being one of the Deputy Heads of the Chinese delegation, of the ranks of the other members of the HKSAR Government delegation, the policy bureaux/government departments to which they belong, and their specific work contents in the delegation;

(2) apart from taking note of the "shadow reports" submitted by non-governmental organisations before the Committee's meetings with regard to the aforesaid fourth report, and preparing lines-to-take beforehand, what other advance preparatory work the Government carried out for the aforesaid meetings to rebut any inaccurate allegations of the Committee;

(3) given that even though the Government had carried out the advance preparatory work mentioned in (2), the Committee still made inaccurate, biased and misleading statements on various aspects of the situation in Hong Kong, whether the Government has learnt from the experience of the aforesaid meetings, and reviewed how to make better preparations before the submission of the next report in 2028; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as a number of members of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs of this Council pointed out at its meeting in April this year that it was insufficient for the Government to express dissatisfaction with and respond to the Committee's Concluding Observations only through press releases, and they considered that the Government should rebut the inaccurate allegations of the Committee by means of measures such as using videos, data and multi-media and holding regular press conferences, with the officials attending the meeting undertaking to consider those suggestions, whether the Government will take those suggestions on board; if so, of the timetable for implementing relevant measures; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Committee) considered the fourth report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) at the meetings held on February 15 and 16, 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland. As part of the Chinese delegation, the

HKSAR Government delegation introduced to the Committee the part of China's report under the ICESCR which was related to the HKSAR, and answered the Committee's questions on the implementation of the ICESCR in the HKSAR.

The Government's reply to the Hon Lai Tung-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) The Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (PSCMA) led a ten-member HKSAR Government delegation to attend the meetings of the Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. At the beginning of the meetings, PSCMA delivered opening remarks in the capacity of one of the Deputy Heads of the Chinese delegation. She highlighted that under the double safeguards of the implementation of the National Security Law and an improved electoral system, Hong Kong is back on the right track of "one country, two systems". People returned to their day-to-day life in peace and stability resumed. At the same time, she also illustrated to the Committee the determination of the HKSAR Government to improve people's livelihood through various means. During the two-day meetings, other members of the delegation, including the Under Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, six directorate officers from the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Security Bureau, the Department of Justice and the Labour Department actively answered Committee members' questions on their respective policy areas, as well as gave clear responses and robust rebuttals within the time limit. The two other staff members from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Immigration Department were responsible for internal and external co-ordination work and logistical support.

(2) At the meetings, the Committee mainly conducted the discussion under the framework of its List of Issues (LoIs) issued in April 2021. Apart from raising questions on various aspects of the HKSAR's fourth report under the ICESCR, the Committee may also ask follow-up questions based on the HKSAR Government's response to the LoIs, as well as request the delegation's response with reference to the 31 submissions from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (i.e. shadow reports) received before the meetings.

The Government made preparation for the Committee's meetings on multifarious fronts. First, before the HKSAR Government delegation set off, we had drawn up over 100 relevant subject briefs and lines-to-take of different policy areas which involved over 20 policy bureaux and departments. We had also reviewed the latest progress of the implementation of the ICESCR and the previous Concluding Observations since the submission of the report and responses to LoIs in end 2019 and early 2022 respectively, in order to get the necessary supplementary information, court cases, data, etc, ready to support our presentation with facts and figures at the meetings.

The Committee's consideration of China's report was mainly undertaken by a task force comprising several experts. The task force would normally hold closed-door sessions with NGOs that had made written submissions so as to understand the implementation of the ICSECR in China (including the HKSAR and Macao SAR). In order to ensure that our lines-to-take were comprehensive and targeted, the Government carefully examined the areas of concerns of each

member, and reviewed the concerns and key points covered in the shadow reports. Forceful lines-to-take were prepared beforehand so that the delegation could deliver prompt and cogent responses at the meetings.

The delegation participated in the working meetings of the Chinese delegation in Geneva. We had in-depth exchanges with delegates from the Mainland and the Macao SAR which further enhanced our teamwork and enabled us to present our arguments, positions and information clearly to the Committee at the actual meetings.

(3) and (4) Despite that the delegation of the HKSAR Government held dialogues with the Committee in an open, respectful, co-operative and responsible manner during the two-day meeting, the Committee insisted on making inaccurate, biased and misleading comments on various aspects of the situation in Hong Kong in its Concluding Observations issued on March 6, 2023. In this regard, the Government strongly deplored and resolutely rejected the Committee's misleading Concluding Observations, and through a detailed press release immediately issued on the same day to respond robustly to a number of so-called issues of concern raised by the Committee in its Concluding Observations so as to set the record straight. The Committee's Concluding Observations, together with the Government's detailed clarifications and responses, have been uploaded to the CMAB website for public reference.

Generally speaking, the HKSAR Government delegation attends the meetings of various United Nations treaty bodies for consideration of the periodic reports as part of the Chinese delegation. Premised on aligning with the overall strategy of our country, the Government will seriously consider and implement the proposals to rebut the false claims made by members of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs at its meeting in April 2023.

For instance, the HKSAR Government sent a delegation to participate in the meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in May 2023 and we have already conducted publicity work through multi-faceted and multi-media channels.

Prior to the meeting, two local newspapers/online media published interviews with the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs and the Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (PSHYA) to share with the public about the development of women in Hong Kong. Members of the Women's Commission (WoC) also expressed their views through a video which was uploaded on the social media platforms of the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau and the WoC.

At the same time, the HKSAR Government took the initiative to refute the contents of the reports submitted by individual NGOs to the CEDAW which discredited the National Security Law and the Hong Kong Police in a press release before the meeting. On the day of the meeting, the PSHYA once again made well-founded and forceful clarifications and rebuttals in her opening speech. A video of her speech was uploaded to social media platforms and the full text of the speech was issued in another press release. The HKSAR Government issued a press release on the day after the meeting to summarise

the CEDAW's concerns and the government's response and clarification.

As regards the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' malicious comments on individual subjects such as the National Security Law, the Government has all along introduced the National Security Law to different people through different channels and means (including publishing pamphlets and compendium of articles, issuing press releases, placing newspaper advertisements, officials taking part in interviews on television, radio and other media, and organising/attending seminars (including webinars), etc), as well as through overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs), and has responded to concerns raised. In the days ahead, the Government will also continue to strengthen publicity and education, so as to raise the national security and law-abiding awareness of Hong Kong residents, and to deepen the understanding of the international community on the National Security Law.

As for the submission of different reports to the committees of the United Nations in future, we will, subject to the relevant requirements and guidelines of the committees and the actual circumstances at the time, consider using different forms of presentation such as data and multimedia, etc, to elaborate on the human rights situation and social development of the HKSAR, and the real situation of the implementation of the National Security Law to the committees, NGOs, as well as local and international communities.

With the concerted efforts of various policy bureaux and departments, the Government will continue to tell the good stories of Hong Kong on all fronts. This includes promoting the advantages of Hong Kong through overseas visits by senior officials in meeting with dignitaries, the business community, the media and Chinese groups, and promoting Hong Kong's strengths and opportunities and clarifying misconceptions through different activities organised by the overseas ETOs, such as visits to local governments and organisations, media interviews and briefings, etc. We will also actively encourage different organisations to host major international events in Hong Kong (such as Art Basel and Hong Kong Sevens), bringing people from all over the world and all walks of life to witness our achievements. Against the false and groundless narratives from international organisations, the Government will continue to make firm clarifications and forceful rebuttals in a serious manner, so as to reflect the actual situation of Hong Kong to the international community and safeguard the interests of our country and the HKSAR.

LCQ10: Regulating contents generated by artificial intelligence technology

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Nixie Lam and a written reply by

the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Some views have pointed out that generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology is developing by leaps and bounds, giving rise to not only transformative changes in the productivity of society but also hidden security hazards such as algorithmic bias, information leakage and fabricated contents. In particular, as AI-generated images can pass off as genuine, they may facilitate dissemination of false information and conspiracy theories. On the other hand, the Cyberspace Administration of China published the Measures for the Administration of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services (Draft for comments) in April this year with a view to regulating generative AI services. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has studied and assessed the impacts of the popularisation of AI on Hong Kong's various aspects, such as the community, teaching and research activities, as well as economic structure; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will study and compare the legal provisions on regulation of the application of AI put in place by the Mainland and overseas regions (e.g. the European Union and Japan) and formulate forward-looking proposals to resolve the legal issues involved in the application of AI; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will study the enactment of legislation to require that AI-generated images must be specified as being generated by AI, with a view to preventing false information from being generated; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Security Bureau, my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Lam is as follows:

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) (including generative AI technology) is still evolving. More and more industries are set to apply AI technology to improve existing operations and business models, with a view to driving business growth and increasing overall productivity. The AI technology has also brought changes to scientific research and teaching. At the same time, the development and application of AI technology have given rise to concerns over a number of issues such as information security, privacy protection, fake and biased information, ethics and intellectual property rights, etc.

We note that the pace of AI development and its popularity vary in different regions, and the impact of AI technology on various industries and sectors are not entirely the same. Different regions and organisations have

started to look into various measures in light of the latest development in order to cope with the implications and challenges brought by AI, while striking a balance between promoting technology innovation and ensuring compliance of relevant requirements.

In the case of Hong Kong, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) published in 2021 the Guidance on the Ethical Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence (the AI Guidance), with an aim to help organisations understand and comply with the relevant personal data privacy protection requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) (PDPO) when developing and using AI. The content of the AI Guidance includes data stewardship values and ethical principles for AI, and provides AI strategy governance practice guides to help organisations devise appropriate AI strategy and management models, conduct risk assessments and devise relevant oversight arrangements, etc.

Having consulted the PCPD and drawn reference to its AI Guidance, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer has formulated the Ethical Artificial Intelligence Framework to provide government bureaux and departments with a set of practice guidance when implementing projects that involve the use of AI technology, and to identify and manage the potential risk of the relevant project and other issues (e.g. privacy, data security and management, etc.).

It is worth mentioning that the Internet is not an unreal world that is beyond the law. Under the existing legislation in Hong Kong, most of the laws enacted to prevent crimes in the real world are in principle applicable to the online world. There are various provisions in place under the existing legal framework to deal with the dissemination of untrue or inappropriate information. For instance, the Crimes (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 introduced the offences of publication or threatened publication of intimate images without consent. The offence is also applicable to intimate images that have been altered (including that altered by AI technology).

As the development of AI technology is evolving, the Government will keep an open mind and closely monitor the advancement, application and development of AI in Hong Kong. We will also make reference to the practices of different regions in order to make appropriate responses and embrace the various opportunities and challenges brought by AI technology.