Immigration Department adjusts application procedures of visa/entry permits

The Immigration Department (ImmD) announced today (May 24) the adjustment of application procedures of visa/entry permits. The ImmD has all along been assessing each application for visa/entry permits in a rigorous manner and will adjust from time to time application procedures and information required for applications.

Further to the adjustment of the application procedures for entry for talent admission schemes on February 22 and 27 this year, with effect from June 19, the ImmD will adjust the application procedures for entry of other visa/entry permits (including dependants, foreign domestic helpers, imported workers, students, training and working holiday). Applicants will be required to declare whether they have any criminal convictions when they apply for relevant entry visa/entry permits. Application procedures for extension of stay, and for foreign domestic helpers currently working in Hong Kong applying for contract renewal with the same employer or for completing the remaining/extended period of the current contract with the same employer and for change of employer in Hong Kong, will not be included in this adjustment. As a transitional arrangement, the ImmD will continue to process applications that reach the ImmD on or before June 18, regardless of whether declaration on criminal convictions has been made.

Shing Mun Valley Swimming Pool reopened

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 24) that Shing Mun Valley Swimming Pool in Tsuen Wan District, closed earlier on due to a power failure, has been reopened.

LCQ18: Application of generative artificial intelligence in primary and secondary schools

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

It is learnt that with the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI), quite a number of tertiary institutions have formulated guidelines on the use of generative AI by their students. However, the Government currently does not have any guidelines governing the application of generative AI in primary and secondary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that quite a number of primary and secondary school teachers have started to use generative AI to assist them in preparing for lessons and designing test papers, whether the Government will provide more training for primary and secondary school teachers on the use of generative AI and promote the use of generative AI in primary and secondary schools to assist in the development of teaching contents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the Government will (i) draw up a code of practice on the use of generative AI by primary and secondary school teachers to assist their teaching work, so as to ensure that teachers will not violate professional conduct, and (ii) formulate guidelines for primary and secondary school students on the use of generative AI in learning, so as to ensure that students will not violate academic ethics; if so, of the details and implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the measures currently put in place by the Government to monitor the use of AI in learning by primary and secondary school students, so as to ensure their academic integrity?

Reply:

President,

Technological development is ever-evolving. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology has brought about various opportunities and challenges worldwide. On one hand, generative AI technology has various contexts for application and could enhance work efficiency. At the same time,

the related technology also gives rise to issues related to laws and regulations, ethics, authenticity of information, privacy protection, intellectual property rights, addiction, excessive dependence, etc which have attracted much attention. As the development of generative AI technology is still evolving, we will continue to increase our awareness of related technologies and closely monitor its development and application in order to make appropriate responses. To protect mentally and psychologically immature children from potential negative influences, the education sector need to approach the related matter cautiously.

Our reply to the Hon Mrs Regina Ip's question is as follows:

(1) All along, the public sector primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are required to plan and implement their curricula in accordance with the curriculum guides published by the Curriculum Development Council to help students construct knowledge, develop generic skills, as well as nurture proper values and attitudes and "learning to learn" capabilities through diversified learning experiences, with a view to achieving the educational aims of whole-person development and lifelong learning. When adopting AI for teaching purpose in schools, including the development of learning and teaching materials as well as assessment for learning, teachers must exercise their professional judgment to ensure that the approaches adopted and the materials prepared align with the curriculum aims and objectives by making reference to the curriculum guides and cater for the abilities and learning needs of their students. They should also make sure that there will be no negative impacts on the development of students' thinking skills, construction of knowledge base, and the nurturing of learning interests, attitudes and habits. In this regard, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing teachers with training relating to AI, including the application of AI in enhancing learning and teaching effectiveness. We have been working with post-secondary institutions and innovation and technology (I&T) institutions to co-organise professional training on I&T for teachers, including seminars and exhibitions on AI and Internet of Things, with a view to helping teachers make good use of I&T and teach students properly.

(2) The EDB has formulated the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct to clearly stipulate the professional conduct and norms of behaviour required of teachers, including nurturing in students positive values and attitudes, equipping them with the knowledge and skills required, and helping them develop critical thinking skills and lifelong learning capabilities. Teachers must be law-abiding, observe rules and regulations, respect intellectual property rights, discharge duties earnestly, and provide students with positive and effective guidance. Teachers should also keep pace with the times and continuously enhance teaching pedagogies. Therefore, teachers must uphold professional conduct and use AI applications prudently to assist their teaching.

While guiding students to make good use of I&T and information technology (IT) tools (including the use of AI), it is important for teachers to also foster students to become ethical users of technology. Improper use of AI at the primary and secondary levels will affect students' progressive

construction of knowledge base and innovative thinking, and may even lead to undesirable consequences such as plagiarism or leaving assignments entirely to AI. Whether AI could be used should also depend on factors including students' age, the learning expectations and outcomes at the respective learning stages, and the nature and topics of the assignments (such as whether they are meant for self-learning or assessment). We need to approach the related matters in a cautious manner.

The EDB has announced in 2022 the updated learning framework of Information Literacy for Hong Kong Students, which included ethical issues arising from the application of I&T, so as to enhance students' media and information literacy; provide guidance for them to learn how to select and interpret different types of information critically and the proper use of information to solve problems; as well as enable students to know how to differentiate the authenticity of information and use information and IT in an ethical and effective way.

In addition, the EDB is developing the Module on Artificial Intelligence for Junior Secondary Level and the Enriched Module on Coding Education for Upper Primary Level, with a view to enabling students to better understand and grasp the latest development in technology and I&T and their applications, and learn about how technology can improve our everyday life and enhance the development of our society. The module on AI for the junior secondary level mentioned above covers knowledge and concepts such as the foundation and ethics of AI, computer vision, computer speech and the impact of AI on society. The module on coding education for the upper primary level, covering the concepts of coding and computational thinking, aims at cultivating students' computational thinking through the learning of coding. The above curriculum modules are expected to be launched later this year for use by schools. The EDB also provides relevant professional development programmes for teachers to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

(3) The EDB has formulated guidelines on curriculum and assessment for schools and they should adopt suitable modes of assessment to track students' learning performance and progress. Schools should establish corresponding enforcement and supervision mechanisms to prevent improper use of AI programmes by students for completing their assignments/assessment works. As professional education workers, teachers can compare students' in-class performance and formative assessment results with their performance in assignments to determine whether the students have used tools (including AI programmes) to commit plagiarism. At the same time, schools should enhance information literacy education so as to nurture students' skills and attitudes to use information and IT effectively and ethically.

The impact of the development of I&T (e.g. generative AI) on students' learning is subject to further study by the education sector. The EDB will continue to closely monitor the latest development and update the contents of related curricula and guidelines in a timely manner. Besides, we will also organise seminars and workshops to provide assistance for teachers in teaching the knowledge and proper use of I&T to their students.

LCQ16: Standardising charging interfaces for portable electronic devices

Following is a question by the Hon Yim Kong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

There are views that while the use of portable electronic devices is increasingly popular, the different charging interfaces required for charging devices of different standards cause much inconvenience to users and may likely lead to the generation of electronic waste (e-waste). On the other hand, the European Union (EU) Directive of November 23, 2022, has established the USB Type-C receptacle as the common charging interface in the EU and has mandated the use of the USB Type-C receptacle as the charging interface for all portable electronic devices available on the market in EU with effect from December 28, 2024, with a view to reducing e-waste and ensuring consumer convenience. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quantity of e-waste generated in Hong Kong in each of the past five years; the main channels through which such e-waste is disposed of in Hong Kong; and

(2) whether it has considered introducing legislation to mandate the adoption of a common charging interface for portable electronic devices progressively; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, the details, and whether it will, before a common charging interface is adopted, promote the use of environmentally friendly charging devices which are compatible with multiple interfaces, so as to reduce the generation of e-waste and ensure consumer convenience?

Reply:

President,

(1) The Government has all along attached great importance to the recovery and treatment of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), and has endeavoured to identify suitable recycling outlets for such waste. Apart from introducing by legislation a mandatory Producer Responsibility Scheme on WEEE (WPRS) to reduce waste at source, the Government has also developed local WEEE treatment and recovery facilities to properly treat and recycle waste collected.

Since 2018, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has fully implemented the WPRS, which covers air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, computers (i.e. desktop computers, notebook computers and tablet computers), printers, scanners and monitors. These eight classes of regulated electrical equipment (REE) account for about 85 per cent of the WEEE generated in Hong Kong. The rest is largely consumer electronics that are often marketable in the second-hand market, and other miscellaneous small-scale household appliances. The WPRS requires that REE sellers must, upon distribution of REE, arrange free removal services for consumers to deliver the old equipment of the same class to licensed WEEE treatment facilities for proper treatment, and must not dispose of such old equipment at landfills.

The WEEE Treatment and Recycling Facility (WEEE·PARK), with a designed capacity of 30 000 tonnes per year, commenced full operation in March 2018 to underpin the WPRS through a series of detoxification, dismantling and recycling processes which turn WEEE into secondary materials of value. As at the end of 2022, more than 100 000 tonnes of waste REE have been processed by WEEE·PARK. At present, there are also EcoPark tenants engaging in the recycling of WEEE, and the major recycling processes include the dismantling of WEEE into useful materials such as metals and plastics.

Taking into account the sales trend in recent years and the projected future market demand, we proposed enhancement to the WPRS in our submission of the Product Eco-responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2023 to the Legislative Council in March this year. It is proposed that the existing scope of REE under the WPRS be expanded to include refrigerators and washing machines with larger capacities and add stand-alone clothes dryers and dehumidifiers. The proposal is expected to be implemented in 2024 at the earliest.

Moreover, other waste electrical appliances or electronic devices, including miscellaneous small-scale household appliances like electric fans, rice cookers, ovens and mobile phones, are collected through the Community Recycling Network established by the EPD for recycling, thereby promoting circular economy and turning waste into resources.

Through the various means of recovery and treatment mentioned above, of the 59 000 tonnes of WEEE generated in Hong Kong in 2021, about 43 800 tonnes were recovered for recycling and turned from waste into resources, representing a recovery rate of over 74 per cent. Statistics on quantities of the WEEE generated, disposed of and recovered in Hong Kong from 2017 to 2021 are tabulated below.

Year	Quantity generated (tonnes)	Quantity disposed of (tonnes)	Quantity recovered (tonnes)	Recovery rate
2017	75 600	26 600	49 000	65%
2018	66 400	24 500	42 000	63%
2019	69 000	21 600	47 400	69%

2020	57 700	16 600	41 100	71%
2021	59 200	15 300	43 800	74%

Note: Compilation of the relevant statistics for 2022 is still in progress.

(2) Regarding the directive made by the European Union (EU) in 2022 to establish USB Type-C receptacle as the standard charging interface, such requirement by the EU, one of the major international markets, will help promote the standardisation of charging interfaces for electronic products. As electronic products available for sale in the local market are mainly manufactured and imported from other places, it is anticipated that the product standards gradually formed internationally will also become increasingly common in the market of Hong Kong. Therefore, we do not see the need to standardise the charging interfaces for electronic products through local regulation.

LCQ7: Plan of Japanese Government to discharge nuclear wastewater into sea

Following is a question by the Dr Hon David Lam and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

It has been reported that the Japanese Government plans to, from the spring or summer of 2023, discharge into the sea more than one million tonnes of nuclear wastewater generated by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station where a nuclear incident had occurred. In reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on May 5, 2021, the Government indicated that it had requested the Japanese authorities to provide data on various aspects as well as information on control and surveillance in relation to the discharge of nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, and that they must provide all relevant information, as well as formulate and promulgate a highly transparent and robust surveillance programme. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has continuously requested the Japanese authorities to provide up-to-date information, including the timetable for the discharge of nuclear wastewater; if so, of the details;

(2) as it has been reported that in 2022, Hong Kong remained the second largest export destination for Japanese agricultural, forestry and aquatic products, whether the Government actively explored replacement food sources

over the past two years, so as to cope with the possible shortage of imported Japanese food and changes in the structure of the food industry resulting from the aforesaid discharge of nuclear wastewater; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the Government has continuously conducted radioactivity screening on aquatic products from East Asian waters; if so, of the results?

Reply:

President,

We have reported to the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council on March 14 this year the stance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and our strategy and preparation in relation to food safety, in response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge the wastewater generated in the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station (FNPS).

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In April 2021, the Government of Japan announced the plan to discharge the wastewater generated in the process of cooling the reactors at the FNPS into the ocean after treatment in about two years' time (i.e., 2023). The plan has aroused concern from the international community and the public. Many stakeholders are concerned whether the discharge of wastewater into the ocean would have a serious impact on the marine ecosystem, the food chain and food safety.

The HKSAR Government has repeatedly expressed grave concern about the impact of the discharge plan on food safety, and has indicated clearly to the Japanese authorities that they should not discharge the wastewater from the FNPS into the ocean unilaterally without the consensus of the international community so as to avoid bringing about irreversible impacts on the environment. Since matters such as ocean pollution are international issues in the realm of foreign affairs, we have relayed the concerns of various sectors of the community to the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR.

In response to Japan's plan to discharge wastewater into the ocean, the Environment and Ecology Bureau has set up an inter-departmental task force with the relevant government departments including the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Hong Kong Observatory, the Department of Health and the Government Laboratory to assess the impact of the discharge plan on food safety and to formulate response measures.

Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government has been following up with the Japanese authorities on the latest position of the discharge plan, and has requested them to provide more specific data and relevant information on matters relating to food safety and public health, including their monitoring

programme on the surrounding environment and food surveillance programme. At present, the Task Force set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is conducting a review on whether the discharge plan meets the safety standard of the IAEA, and whether it would have negative impact on human health and the ecosystem. Members of the Task Force include experts from Mainland China, Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Korea, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam. The Task Force has yet to publish its concluding report. We will continue to follow up on the assessment conducted by the Task Force on the one hand, and maintain communication with the Japanese authorities on the other to keep track of the development of the wastewater discharge plan. As stated by the Japanese authorities, the discharge plan has been scheduled to commence in the summer of 2023 but no concrete date has been announced.

(2) According to existing information, aquatic products from Fukushima and the nearby prefectures are at higher risk of being affected by the discharge plan. We will enhance the testing on imported Japanese food. We expect that import control on aquatic products from related prefectures may have to be tightened for a period of time after Japan's commencement of the discharge to ensure food safety and public confidence.

Relevant control measures include suspending the import of aquatic products from some prefectures shipped after the commencement of the discharge; or requiring such aquatic products be accompanied by radiation certificates and exporter certificates certifying that their radiation levels do not exceed the guideline levels set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and they are fit and safe for human consumption, or else such food products cannot be imported into Hong Kong. The details of relevant measures, including the prefectures to be covered, will depend on the conclusion of the final report of the IAEA, related information provided by the Japanese authorities, and risk assessments, etc.

In 2022, the major food imports from Japan amounted to about 2 per cent of the total food supply (in terms of weight) in Hong Kong, among which aquatic products accounted for about 6.75 per cent of Hong Kong's total supply. Relevant government departments will maintain close liaison with related local trades (including importers of Japanese food products and catering operators) to enable their better grasp of the latest position of the discharge plan and the possible import control measures which the Government may implement to safeguard food safety, so that early preparation can be made.

(3) Currently, the import of vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk from Fukushima is still prohibited in Hong Kong. Radiation certificates have to be produced for the import of game, meat, poultry, poultry eggs and aquatic products from Fukushima and its four neighbouring prefectures (i.e., Ibaraki, Tochigi, Chiba and Gunma), whereas both radiation certificates and exporter certificates are required for the import of vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk from the four prefectures. From March 2011 to April 2023, the CFS tested more than 770 000 samples of imported Japanese food products, including about 120 000 samples

of aquatic products, seaweeds and sea salt, and found that the radiation levels of all samples did not exceed the guideline levels of the Codex. The CFS will continue to adopt a risk-based principle in conducting radiation tests on Japanese food products under its routine Food Surveillance Programme (FSP) and timely adjust the corresponding radiation monitoring work having regard to the risk assessment results to ensure food safety and safeguard public health.

Furthermore, the CFS also conducts radiation testing on food products imported from places other than Japan (including countries or regions in East Asian waters) under its routine FSP with all samples passed with satisfactory results. The CFS will flexibly adjust the arrangements of taking food samples for testing in light of actual circumstances and will adopt a risk-based principle to enhance surveillance of specific food types.