

# LCQ14: Transition work for change of term of Government

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Chun-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

The sixth-term Chief Executive Election was held smoothly on the eighth of this month. Regarding the transition work for the change of term of the Government, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the staffing establishment and estimated expenditure of the Office of the Chief Executive-elect;

(2) whether it has formulated mechanisms and roadmaps in respect of the transition work of various policies to ensure their continuity; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the Government has plans to expeditiously complete the work on the re-organisation of the government structure to ensure that the new government structure will come into operation starting from the next-term Government, whether the Government has deployed or recruited additional manpower to cope with the relevant work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government's reply to the Hon Lee Chun-keung's question is as follows:

(1) The Office of the Chief Executive-elect (CE-elect) was established on May 3, 2022 to ensure a smooth transition to the new term of the Government. The CE-elect's Office has been operating since the sixth-term CE was elected until June 30, 2022. The CE-elect's Office will support the CE-elect in undertaking major tasks including forming a governing team for the new term of the Government; preparing and formulating the policy plan for the new Government based on the CE-elect's election manifesto; making arrangements with the incumbent Government for a smooth transition including major events relating to the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, and liaising with different sectors of the community and participating in various official activities, etc.

There are five posts at directorate level and over 20 at non-directorate levels in the CE-elect's Office. Furthermore, the Police has deployed

suitable manpower to protect the CE-elect. All staff of the CE-elect's Office are accountable to the CE-elect. The Administration Wing is responsible for house-keeping for the CE-elect's Office's day-to-day administration and resource management. The operating costs of the current CE-elect's Office will be absorbed by deployment of the Government's existing resources.

(2) and (3) For the work related to the re-organisation of the government structure, the current-term Government would render full assistance to the CE-elect's Office with a view to securing all necessary approvals as soon as possible. We aim to complete the relevant legislative and funding procedures by mid-June 2022, so as to facilitate the new government structure to come into operation on July 1, 2022. The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office is in charge of co-ordinating the relevant work.

The civil service will continue to work closely with the new-term Government. As a permanent and professional team, the civil service will continue to maintain the effective implementation and continuity of policies. In the light of the changes in government structure and the policy adjustments, policy bureaux and departments will fully communicate and collaborate with each other to ensure a smooth transition of various policies.

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## **LCQ15: Redevelopment and renewal of old buildings**

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

It is learnt that Hong Kong's buildings are ageing rapidly: the number of private buildings aged 50 years or above has surged from 3 900 to 8 600 over the past decade, the proportion of public housing flats aged over 35 years soared from six per cent in 2009 to 24 per cent in 2019, and more than 5 000 "three-nil" buildings across the territory are dilapidated. Some members of the public have strongly requested the Government to erect higher-density buildings through redevelopment projects, so as to increase the supply of public housing flats in the long run and improve the living environment of residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of private buildings aged 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, and 60 years or above in Hong Kong, with a breakdown by geographical constituencies for the 2021 Legislative Council General

Election;

(2) whether it will consider allocating additional resources to assist "three-nil" buildings in improving building repair and maintenance, and continuously implementing the Operation Building Bright, so as to support owner-occupiers of eligible buildings to carry out prescribed inspection and repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that in the Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City submitted to the Secretary for Development on January 29, 2014, the authorities put forward a number of proposals, including prioritising the redevelopment of "5 Streets" and "13 Streets" Area in To Kwa Wan and enhancing waterfront and district connectivity, of the timetables and progress of these two projects and other proposed projects;

(4) of the current number of public housing estates (PHEs) in Hong Kong which have an average age of over 50 years, and set out, by the name of such PHEs, their average building age and the number of flats involved; and

(5) given that the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) identified in 2013 a total of 22 non-divested aged PHEs under its management as having build-back potential, but so far only a few of these PHEs have specific timetables for redevelopment, whether the Government will consider (i) requesting HA to commence a new round of assessment on the feasibility and effectiveness of redeveloping other aged PHEs, and (ii) resorting more to the means of redevelopment to increase the supply of public housing flats and improve the living environment of residents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the Hon Starry Lee's question, I would like to reply as follows:

(1) As of end 2021, the distribution of all types of private buildings (including residential, composite, commercial and industrial) of different age groups from 30 years and above as broken down by geographical constituency in respect of the 2021 Legislative Council election is set out below:

Geographical constituency in respect of the 2021 Legislative Council election	Building age (years)				Total
	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 or above	
Hong Kong Island East	925	938	931	654	3 448
Hong Kong Island West	2 151	1 786	1 138	708	5 783

Kowloon East	254	292	303	15	864
Kowloon West	690	1 068	1 648	1 011	4 417
Kowloon Central	572	710	837	937	3 056
New Territories South East	1 010	695	118	5	1 828
New Territories North	1 592	383	200	74	2 249
New Territories North West	741	486	65	68	1 360
New Territories South West	468	459	271	56	1 254
New Territories North East	1 905	743	106	17	2 771
Total	10 308	7 560	5 617	3 545	27 030

(2) Timely and proper building maintenance is the primary responsibility of property owners. That said, some owners may lack the ability in, for instance, affording or organising such works to fulfil the responsibility. Therefore, apart from taking enforcement action to ensure that owners discharge their statutory responsibilities under relevant statutes, the current term Government has allocated over \$19 billion and, in partnership with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), rolled out various subsidy schemes relating to building safety and rehabilitation (Note 1) to assist needy owners to maintain their properties.

In addition, we recognise that some owners, in particular those residing in "three-nil" buildings (Note 2), which are typical amongst old and dilapidated buildings, may lack ability to organise repair works at common parts of the buildings. Therefore, the Buildings Department (BD), under the Operation Building Bright 2.0 (OBB 2.0) and the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme launched in 2021, proactively selects buildings on risk basis and exercises its statutory power to carry out the requisite works in default of owners, and seeks to recover the cost from owners concerned afterwards. Eligible owners may claim subsidies under the relevant schemes to cover all or part of such costs.

The OBB 2.0 is dedicated to provide technical and financial support to eligible building owners to assist them in carrying out the requisite inspection and repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme for the common parts of their buildings. The OBB 2.0 involves \$6 billion and is expected to benefit 5 000 aged and dilapidated buildings. As of April 2022, the URA received applications from about 1 200 eligible buildings to join the OBB 2.0; over the same period, the BD selected about 1 000 buildings on risk basis to join the OBB 2.0. Depending on the implementation progress of the OBB 2.0, the URA will accept a new round of applications in due course. The BD will also continue to select buildings on risk basis under the OBB 2.0 to carry out the requisite works in default of owners.

(3) The URA undertakes, encourages, promotes and facilitates urban renewal of Hong Kong, with a view to addressing the problem of urban decay and improving

the living conditions of residents in old districts. Since the announcement of the Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City (the Plan) in 2014, the URA, owners of private land and different government departments have been implementing the relevant recommendations in phases. Of which, the URA commenced a total of nine redevelopment projects in the area covered by the Plan (Note 3). Some of the recommendations have also been putting in place through the development projects of various government departments. For example, works for the Hoi Sham Park Extension are in progress; the harbourfront site adjacent to the Kowloon City Ferry Pier will be enhanced through the development project of the Central Kowloon Route; and the waterfront section of the To Kwa Wan Preliminary Treatment Works will be developed into a harbourfront promenade through minor works by the Drainage Services Department. Due to market sensitivity, it is not appropriate for the Government to comment at this stage on the timing to redevelop "5 Streets" and "13 Streets" in To Kwa Wan. Moreover, the URA must observe confidentiality for its business plan for redevelopment and would only promulgate through publication in the Gazette etc. the details of a redevelopment project, including its location and boundary, upon commencement of the project. As for waterfront development and district connectivity of redevelopment projects, the URA and government departments will give careful consideration at the preparatory stage and consult the Harbourfront Commission in due course.

(4) As advised by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB), according to the information of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), there are nine Public Rental Housing (PRH) estates under the HA with building age reaching 50 years old or above. The estate names, completion dates and number of domestic flats are as follows:

	Estate name	Completion date (Year)	Number of domestic flats
1	Model Housing Estate (Note 4)	1954 – 1979	667
2	Sai Wan Estate	1958 – 1959	636
3	Choi Hung Estate	1962 – 1964	7 435
4	Ma Tau Wai Estate	1962 – 1965	2 075
5	Wo Lok Estate	1962 – 1966	1 938
6	Fuk Loi Estate	1963 – 1967	3 129
7	Wah Fu (I) Estate	1967 – 1969	4 801
8	Wah Fu (II) Estate (Note 5)	1970 – 1978	4 347
9	Ping Shek Estate	1970 – 1971	4 581

(5) The THB advised that the list of 22 aged PRH estates mentioned in the question is originated from a study conducted by the HA in 2013, and is not the list of PRH estates which the HA decides to redevelop. The THB added that redevelopment of PRH estates may increase the supply of PRH in the long run, but, in the short term, redevelopment will reduce the number of PRH units available for allocation. In view of the prevailing strong demand for PRH, large-scale redevelopments will result in freezing a large number of PRH units, which may otherwise be allocated to those on the waiting list with

more pressing housing needs (such as households living in subdivided units), and will have negative impacts on households waiting for PRH allocation. The HA will, where feasible, consider redeveloping individual PRH estates in an orderly manner. The HA has all along been considering the actual circumstances in a prudent manner in accordance with the four basic principles, namely structural conditions of buildings, cost-effectiveness of repair works, availability of suitable rehousing resources in the vicinity of the estates to be redeveloped, and build-back potential upon redevelopment, when deciding whether to redevelop a PRH estate.

The THB indicated that the HA has completed 10 redevelopment projects of aged PRH estates in the past 10 years. The HA is currently proceeding with a total of eight redevelopment projects.ã€€Given the availability of suitable rehousing resources for Sai Wan Estate and Ma Tau Wai Estate and their build-back potential of providing more housing units upon redevelopment, the HA is conducting a study on the redevelopment of these two estates and will include the adjacent areas into the redevelopment sites as far as possible to enlarge the site area.

The THB pointed out that the aged PRH estates with no redevelopment plan are structurally sound and have no imminent urgency for redevelopment. The HA will continue to implement various programmes and measures to upkeep and improve the building conditions of the aged estates, and provide residents with a safe and comfortable living environment. These include the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme, the Estate Improvement Programme, the Total Maintenance Scheme, the Responsive In-flat Maintenance Services, and the replacement and addition of lifts, etc.

Note 1: Subsidy schemes includes OBB 2.0 (\$6 billion), Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme (\$5.5 billion), Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme (\$4.5 billion), Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Needy Owners (\$2 billion) and Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme (\$1 billion), etc.

Note 2: Viz. buildings which do not have an owners' corporation or residents' organisations, or having engaged any property management company.

Note 3: Excluding the two pilot projects to redevelop the sites of Civil Servants' Co-operative Building Society Scheme in Kowloon City commenced by the URA in May 2020 in relation to the recommendation announced by the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address.

Note 4: Model Housing Estate comprises seven domestic blocks. Five of them (with 245 flats in total) were completed in 1954, while the remaining two high blocks were completed in 1979.

Note 5: Wah Fu (II) Estate comprises six domestic blocks. Four of them were completed between 1970 and 1971 (with 2 913 flats in total), while the other two blocks were completed in 1978.

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## LCQ9: Isolation and quarantine arrangements amid the epidemic

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

It has been reported that earlier on, a confirmed patient of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 who was suffering from various chronic diseases died while under isolation at a community isolation facility. Also, an 87-year-old person died while under quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel (DQH). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government currently requires confirmed patients to declare their significant past medical history and medication history, and whether it provides relevant lists to facilitate such patients to submit sufficient information for the pre-triage assessment; if so, whether it will review if such lists are comprehensive enough for ensuring that confirmed patients can be triaged and sent to suitable isolation or medical facilities;

(2) whether it will review the triage procedure for confirmed patients, and request healthcare personnel of the Hospital Authority to take part in the pre-triage initial assessment for confirmed patients;

(3) whether it will (i) review the considerations for determining if it is appropriate for a confirmed patient to be isolated alone, and (ii) triage confirmed patients who are suffering from relatively serious chronic diseases and with unstable conditions as well as those aged above 75 for sending to hospitals for isolation and treatment;

(4) whether it will review the medical support to be provided to persons with chronic diseases when they are under isolation or quarantine;

(5) whether it knows if DQHs have arranged dedicated staff to provide assistance to persons under quarantine at their hotels when such persons have urgent needs such as medical treatment, and whether the Government has issued guidelines to the hotels in this regard; and

(6) given that the aforesaid two incidents were only discovered when the family members had been unable to contact the victims and requested the staff's assistance, whether the Government will consider requiring persons under isolation or quarantine to regularly contact the staff concerned using instant messaging applications (e.g. reporting body temperature), so as to let the staff know their physical conditions?

Reply:

President,

In light of the fifth wave of COVID-19 epidemic, the Government will, depending on the health risks, care needs and transmission risks in the households of infected persons, make arrangements for them according to the multi-tiered triage and treatment strategy for suitable treatment and isolation. Generally, asymptomatic persons who do not require medical support but have to be isolated at a place other than their household due to their care needs or household environment will be admitted to the Penny's Bay Community Isolation Facility (CIF) to reduce transmission risks. In addition, the Government has implemented the Designated Quarantine Hotel (DQH) Scheme since December 22, 2020, requiring all arrivals from specified places to undergo compulsory quarantine at DQHs as a measure to further prevent the importation of COVID-19 cases.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam is as follows:

(1) The DH requires individuals tested positive through the nucleic acid tests or rapid antigen tests to submit their personal particulars and basic epidemiological data through its online platforms ([www.chp.gov.hk/cdpi](http://www.chp.gov.hk/cdpi) and [www.chp.gov.hk/ratp/](http://www.chp.gov.hk/ratp/)). The websites provide a questionnaire for relevant infected persons to conduct risk assessment themselves to see if their household environment is suitable for isolation, or if they have to be admitted to CIFs based on relevant risk factors, including the suitability of household environment in terms of physical and health conditions of relevant individuals, such as self-care abilities, whether they need to be taken care of by others, have chronic illnesses, are pregnant.

(2) to (4) After reviewing the operational experience, the HA has further enhanced the arrangements for admission to CIFs from May 4, 2022 onwards. Chronically ill patients in more serious or unstable conditions and elderly persons aged above 70 without accompanying family members will be arranged for admission to the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre (NLTH HKICC) or other hospital facilities for isolation, so as to be provided with more appropriate monitoring and care.

Healthcare personnel deployed to the CIF by the HA will conduct initial assessment for infected persons arranged to undergo isolation at the Penny's Bay CIF. To facilitate monitoring, infected persons with chronic illness but in stable condition will be admitted to units in special blocks installed with emergency alarm system and in close proximity to the medical post. Moreover, outreach medical teams will visit these infected persons regularly every day to provide them with proper care and assistance. Infected persons assessed by healthcare personnel as having high risks (e.g. with complicated medical conditions or with recent and serious health problems) will be transferred to the NLTH HKICC or other hospital facilities for closer monitoring and treatment.

As infected persons aged above 70 are prone to complications or sudden deterioration of conditions, they are also categorised as having high risks and considered unsuitable for isolation in individual units on their own. Those without accompanying carers will be transferred to the NLTH HKICC or other hospital facilities for enhanced monitoring. Those in relatively stable conditions, if accompanied by carers, will be accommodated in units specially designed for the elderly at the CIF, in which barrier-free facilities and emergency alarm system are provided. Besides, outreach medical teams will visit them regularly and maintain close contact with their family members to monitor their conditions closely.

(5) and (6) For persons under quarantine at DQHs, the DH briefs inbound travellers on relevant quarantine arrangements through a dedicated website ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/designated-hotel-returnees.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/designated-hotel-returnees.html)) and by distributing a leaflet on Points to Note for Designated Hotel Quarantine for Inbound Travellers, reminding them that for any urgent needs, medical or otherwise, they may contact DQH staff or call the DH's 24-hour hotline centre for persons under quarantine. In case of emergency, they may dial 999 to seek assistance from the Police.

The DH will provide training to DQH staff and request them to assist the persons under quarantine, including:

- (a) exercising common sense when considering whether the special requests of persons under quarantine are reasonable, and attending to their needs. DQHs should provide suitable assistance and fulfill the medical requests of persons under quarantine whenever possible, such as delivering medicine to them;
- (b) ensuring sufficient manpower to handle emergencies. In case of emergency, they should dial 999 to seek assistance from the Police;
- (c) paying close attention to the condition of persons under quarantine regularly. If they do not dispose of garbage or collect meals regularly, DQH staff should call them to check on their conditions. If they cannot be reached after several attempts, under an emergency or when their safety is of concern, DQH staff may open the doors of their rooms after wearing suitable personal protective equipment to assist as appropriate even without prior Government approval, and report to relevant Government departments afterwards; and
- (d) assisting in contacting the persons under quarantine if their family members request so to understand the situation.

Moreover, the DH provides support to DQHs and answers medical-related or other enquiries via a 24-hour help desk hotline.

Meanwhile, to ensure that persons with special needs (such as minors or the elderly) can receive the required care when admitted to DQHs, if the person under quarantine requires an accompanying carer, the accompanying carer can apply to the DH before the person's arrival to Hong Kong or after receiving his or her Quarantine Order upon arrival. The accompanying carer and the person under quarantine will undergo quarantine in the same DQH room until the end of the quarantine period.

A 24-hour telephone hotline manned by staff of the Civil Aid Service is available at the Penny's Bay CIF to provide information and enquiry services for persons under quarantine. Medical support hotline services are also available at the community isolation hotels. Those under isolation who are in need or feel unwell may contact the staff on duty via the hotline for immediate assistance or medical support. If necessary, the staff on duty will notify the healthcare personnel on-site immediately for rendering medical support. Security staff and housekeeping assistants at the facilities will also conduct regular inspections of the isolation units. If any person is in need of assistance or should any unexpected incidents occur, relevant staff will be informed immediately for taking appropriate actions.

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## [Hong Kong 2022 International Society for the Performing Arts Congress being held online](#)

The Hong Kong 2022 International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) Congress is being held from today (May 25) until May 27 (Friday) online under the theme of "To Connect Beyond", marking Hong Kong as the first Asian city that has won the bid for organising the ISPA Congress twice, following the success of hosting this international event in 2006.

Presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, this ISPA mid-year Congress gathers some 400 leaders from the arts and cultural industry, and professionals of performing arts from over 30 regions. The programme includes panel discussions, keynotes, performance showcases and more as the Congress explores topics such as the connection between artists and the community, the relationship between culture territories and performing venues, and the inheritance of culture and art tech. In addition, 10 innovative projects selected by the ISPA will be presented to the delegates at the "Pitch New Works" sessions of the Congress. Among the 10 selected works, four are by Hong Kong groups including KNG Studio, City Contemporary Dance Company, Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio and Hong Kong Dance Company.

Speakers from across the globe include conductor and composer Mr Tan Dun; the Chief Executive Officer of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Mrs Betty Fung; choreographer and art director Mr Shen Wei; Artistic Director of the Ronald O. Perelman Performing Arts Center in the United States Mr Bill Rauch; Artistic Director and Chief Executive of London's Sadler's Wells Theatre Sir Alistair Spalding; the Chief Executive Officer of the National Arts Council Singapore, Mrs Rosa Daniel, and many more.

Speaking at the opening of the Congress, the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan, said that Hong Kong is honoured to host this important international performance arts congress for the second time after the first hosting in 2006. Under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Central People's Government has supported Hong Kong as a hub for international arts and cultural exchanges, and as a springboard for enhanced networks between arts institutions and practitioners that brings new opportunities for intercultural collaboration in the region and worldwide.

Mr Chan said with the completion or imminent opening of a number of new or revitalised cultural projects, performance venues and facilities in Hong Kong, including the West Kowloon Cultural District, the East Kowloon Cultural Centre and the Tai Kwun, Hong Kong is about to turn a new page in its cultural development, striving to become vital connector between the Mainland and other global regions and as a hub, gathering creative inspirations and exploring infinite possibilities.

He said, "Through the many sessions of this virtual Congress, I am sure ISPA delegates will continue to connect and navigate as a community, enhancing mutual understanding, building a good foundation for closer collaboration in arenas outside the Congress and beyond."

The ISPA has established the ISPA Awards since 1975 to recognise outstanding individuals for their contribution to the performing arts and their communities. The 2022 award recipients were announced earlier. The "Distinguished Artist Award" went to renowned choreographer, dancer, artist and painter Mr Shen Wei, and the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor for Life of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Mr Yan Huichang. The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Ms Winsome Chow, was awarded the "International Citation of Merit", and the "Angel Award" was presented to veteran arts administrator Professor Tseng Sun-Man. The award ceremony will be broadcast via the virtual platform during the Congress period.

Founded in 1948, the ISPA is a global association of more than 500 arts management leaders from 56 regions, who come together with the shared goal of strengthening and developing the arts internationally. It achieves this by building leadership abilities, recognising and discussing field-wide trends and new developments, and deepening global exchanges through the arts. ISPA members include presenters, performing arts organisations, artist managers, funders, consultants and other professionals working in the performing arts.

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## **LCQ10: Quality Education Fund**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today

(May 25):

Question:

The Quality Education Fund (QEF) aims to support projects that are innovative and capable of enriching students' learning experiences and encouraging school-based initiatives. Regarding the QEF, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of staff members in the QEF Secretariat and, among them, the number of those who are responsible for handling applications for grants; the total payroll expenses for staff in the QEF Secretariat last year;

(2) of the following information of the projects financed by the QEF in relation to the seven priority themes for 2020-2021 (i.e. (a) STEM education, (b) Information Technology in Education, (c) Assessment Literacy, (d) Life-wide Learning, (e) Positive Values, (f) Students' Balanced Development and (g) Effective Leadership and School Management): (i) number of projects, (ii) amount of funding granted, (iii) highest per capita allocation and (iv) lowest per capita allocation (i.e. the per capita allocation among students directly benefitted from each project) (set out in the following table);

Priority theme	2020-2021 school year				2021-2022 school year to date				Total	
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(i)	(ii)
(a)										
...										
(g)										
Total										

(3) of the average time taken by the QEF to vet and approve an application for grant in the past three years; whether it has assessed if the length of time taken for vetting and approving applications will affect the effectiveness of schools in enhancing the quality of education; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that for the year ended August 31, 2021, the QEF's expenditure on grants only amounted to about \$300 million but its accumulated surplus stood as high as about \$10.5 billion, some members of the public have queried that the resources under the QEF have not been properly utilised, and that the Fund's objective has changed from promoting quality of education to making investments or savings, whether the Government has examined the reasons for the presence of a huge surplus in the QEF; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) of the total number of projects with national education-related themes that were financed by the QEF in the past five years and the amount of

funding involved, and set out, by project name in a table, the name of the applicant organisation, the year in which the funding was approved and the amount of funding approved; and

(6) whether the Education Bureau will consider setting national education as one of the yearly priority themes of the QEF, and adding under QEF funding programmes that are related to enhancing the quality of national education; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Quality Education Fund (QEF) was established in 1998 to fund projects that aim to raise the quality of school education and to promote quality school education at all levels. The Permanent Secretary for Education Incorporated (PSEdI) holds the QEF upon trust. Being the trustee of the QEF, the PSEdI approves funding for worthwhile projects and signs with individual grantees an agreement setting out the terms and conditions of the funds. The PSEdI sets up a steering committee under the QEF to set policies for the allocation of funds, and make recommendations to the Government on all funding applications. The steering committee is supported by a secretariat. Since its establishment, the QEF has funded over 12 700 projects with a total funding amount of over \$6.1 billion.

Our reply to the Hon Chan Yuet-ming's question is as follows:

(1) The QEF Secretariat, set up under the Education Bureau (EDB), has overall management responsibility for the QEF. Besides providing secretarial support to the steering committee, it is also responsible for various duties such as processing applications, monitoring progress of projects, and disseminating good practices and experiences of funded projects. Currently, there are 22 staff members of the QEF Secretariat mainly responsible for processing applications. As the staff salary expenditure of the QEF Secretariat is subsumed in the overall expenditure of the EDB, a breakdown is not available.

(2) – (4) Initiatives implemented on a school-based pilot basis in kindergarten, primary, secondary and special education, with a view to enabling students to attain all-round development and develop positive values and attitudes as well as enhancing the professional capacity of teachers, will raise the quality of education and are worthy of the QEF's funding support. Schools, educational bodies, tertiary institutions, non-governmental organisations as well as individuals can apply for a one-off funding from the QEF to carry out projects that meet the needs of schools and contribute to the improvement of the quality of school education.

Starting from 2003, the QEF has introduced priority themes which address the needs of education. The QEF reviews the priority themes from time to time and makes adjustment on a need basis so as to meet the needs of education development in Hong Kong. In the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school year, the QEF has introduced seven priority themes, including STEM Education, Information

Technology in Education, Assessment Literacy, Life-wide Learning, Positive Values, Students' Balanced Development and Effective Leadership and School Management. The priority themes may not be exhaustive. Hence, apart from the priority themes, the QEF also provides funding support to other quality projects that meet the needs of schools.

Besides, the QEF has also launched theme-based funding programmes in recent years, including the Dedicated Funding Programme for Publicly-funded Schools for schools to implement school-based curriculum design and/or student support measures; the "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme to facilitate schools to nurture positive values and attitudes among students; and the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme to further support schools to promote national education, national security education as well as media and information literacy education, with the application procedures for the latter two programmes being further streamlined. Schools can, with due regard to their own context and students' needs, devise school-based project proposals and apply to the QEF for funding. The above-mentioned theme-based funding programmes are welcomed by the school sector. Since its launch in the 2018/19 school year, an accumulative total of over 2 000 applications under the Dedicated Funding Programme for Publicly-funded Schools have been received. As for the "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme and the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme subsequently launched, more than 1 200 applications have been received in total.

Upon the implementation of various theme-based funding programmes, schools provided with more options might not necessarily apply for funding under the priority themes. In the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school year, the number of priority themes projects funded by the QEF with breakdown by theme and the respective funding amount are set out as follows:

Priority themes	Number of projects funded by the QEF	Amount of funding (about \$ million)
STEM Education	18	21
Information Technology in Education	15	13
Assessment Literacy	2	2
Life-wide Learning	10	8
Positive Values	23	29
Students' Balanced Development	6	7
Effective Leadership and School Management	2	2
Total	76	82

The QEF launched a variety of funding programmes for applications by various sectors of society (including school and non-school organisations as well as individuals). Applicants can devise project details (including

funding amount sought, number and types of beneficiaries, etc) on their own accord with due regard to the needs of schools. The QEF considers each application according to the prevailing assessment criteria with due consideration to its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of school education as a whole, instead of evaluating an application merely based on per capita allocation. Projects funded by the QEF cover diversified aspects of school education, including learning and teaching, student support and development, teachers' professional development, home-school co-operation. In general, project activities are implemented by grantees using a whole school approach and the beneficiaries, apart from students, often include different stakeholders such as teachers and parents. Implementing project activities funded by the QEF not only benefits students' learning and development, but also brings positive impact on teachers' professional development, home-school co-operation, school culture and atmosphere, etc. All these outcomes are not quantifiable. The per capita allocation calculated based on the funding amount and the number of student beneficiaries could neither fully reflect the actual circumstances of project implementation nor the project impact on school education; it might also lead to unnecessary misinterpretation.

In the past three years, the QEF had received more than 3 000 applications. Individual applications were processed in accordance with the prevailing procedures and assessment criteria. In view of the difference in magnitude, complexity and funding amount sought, the time required for processing individual applications varies. In general, the processing time for projects of a smaller scale is relatively shorter. For those schools' applications lacking sufficient details, the QEF Secretariat would have to follow up with the schools for clarification and supplementary information on a need basis, leading to longer processing time. However, the related process allows schools to further review and refine the project proposals, improve the project design and enhance the overall effectiveness of project implementation. Hence, there is no direct relationship between the amount of the processing time and the effectiveness of the project on enhancing the quality of school education.

The accumulation of surplus of the fund is not a result of ineffective use of available resources. As long as the applications submitted to the QEF will contribute to the improvement of the quality of school education, they will be supported by the QEF regardless of their scale. The accumulated surplus of the QEF is mainly from the gains from investment over the years. The Director of Accounting Services is responsible for handling the investment of the QEF with the objective of generating a reasonable growth in the value of the funds whilst producing recurrent income to meet funding needs. The QEF has been adopting a prudent strategy in diversifying its investment with proper risk management. The surplus recorded is mainly attributed to favourable investment returns. As at August 31, 2021, the balance of the QEF is around \$10.5 billion which has to be earmarked to cover a number of current funding programmes. Just the Dedicated Funding Programme for Publicly-funded Schools (\$3 billion earmarked), the e-Learning Funding Programme (\$1.5 billion earmarked) and the e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme (\$500 million earmarked) have accounted for a total of \$5 billion

being set aside, not to mention other programmes requiring funding support of the QEF including the Priority Themes Funding Programme, the "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme (funding cap of \$200,000 for each publicly-funded school and kindergarten joining the kindergarten education scheme), and the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme (funding cap of \$300,000 for each publicly-funded school and \$150,000 for each kindergarten joining the kindergarten education scheme). These funding programmes are currently under implementation.

(5) National education being an integral part of values education includes the understanding of Chinese culture, Chinese history, national affairs, the Constitution, the Basic Law and the concept of national security, as well as to cultivate students' identity with Chinese culture and the nation, and strengthen the awareness of teachers and students of their common responsibility to safeguard national security. In the past five years, 189 applications related to national education had been approved with total funding amount of around \$97 million. From the 2017/18 to 2021/22 school year, the number of applications in relation to national education funded by the QEF in each of the school year and the respective funding amount are set out as follows:

School year	Number of applications funded by the QEF	Amount of funding (about \$ million)
2017/18	17	10
2018/19	22	21
2019/20	13	14
2020/21	14	22
2021/22+	123* (497 applications are under processing)	30* (Applications with total amount of funding sought of around \$130 million are under processing)
Total	189*	97*

As a prevailing practice, the QEF does not disclose the names of individual organisations to avoid labelling effect and piece-meal interpretation of individual applications and results.

+ As at mid-May 2022

\* Facilitating measures for the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme have been launched by the QEF with the application deadline extended to end of January 2024. Hence, schools are still making applications. As at mid-May 2022, the QEF has received a total of 618 applications with total amount of funding sought of around \$150 million. According to records, over 90 per cent of applications under the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme were approved with funding support.

(6) The EDB has been optimising the usage of the QEF to support schools'

development needs and enhance the quality of education with the priority themes reviewed regularly and theme-based funding programmes introduced on a timely basis. To support schools to nurture students' positive values and attitudes, the QEF has included Positive Values encompassing national identity as a priority theme. The QEF also launched the Enhanced "My Pledge to Act" Funding Programme last year for schools' application for additional funding to step up measures to promote values education, including national education and national security education.