

LCQ3: Basic Law Test for newly-appointed teachers

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2021 Policy Address that starting from the 2022-2023 school year, newly-appointed regular teachers in public sector schools are required to pass the Basic Law Test (BLT) in order to be considered for appointment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will make public the number of teachers who obtained a pass in the first round of BLT held in January this year; if so, of such number, together with a breakdown by type of newly-appointed regular teachers (i.e. newly-joined teachers, and in-service teachers who were changing schools or switching to a regular teaching post), as well as the respective percentages of that number of passed teachers in the number of teachers who sat for BLT and in the number of teachers in public sector schools across the territory;
- (2) of the number, in the second round of BLT held this month, of those teachers who re-sat BLT as they had not obtained a pass in the first round of BLT, and when the Government will announce the results of this round of BLT; and
- (3) as some members of the education sector have relayed that May to July each year is the peak season for schools to conduct teachers recruitment, whether it has assessed if the two rounds of BLT conducted so far by the Government for teachers could meet the demand of schools; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, whether it will consider immediately arranging additional BLT sessions and allowing teachers to submit their BLT results later on, so as to help schools rationalise the procedure for teachers recruitment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Basic Law is the constitutional document for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) which enshrines the basic policies of the People's Republic of China regarding Hong Kong, provides a solid constitutional basis for the implementation of the concept of "one country, two systems" and the various systems in the HKSAR. It is closely related to our daily lives. The Basic Law has been a key element of the school curriculum. Students learn the related concept and its importance through diverse learning experience within and beyond the classroom. Besides, the

words and deeds of teachers have a far-reaching impact on students' growth. Teachers should be committed to nurturing students into quality citizens with a sense of social responsibility and national identity, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. In this regard, teachers should have a correct understanding of the Basic Law so that they could enlighten students and help them correctly understand the constitutional status of Hong Kong and develop positive attitudes towards the Basic Law and "one country, two systems". We require teachers to have a clear understanding of the Basic Law, and make it one of the entry requirements for teachers.

Starting from the 2022/23 school year, regular teachers in public sector schools are required to pass the designated Basic Law Tests (BLT) before they could be considered for appointment. This requirement is applicable to newly appointed regular teachers including newly-joined teachers, teachers changing schools, teachers switching to a regular teaching post from a teaching post outside the approved establishment and monthly-paid temporary teachers. Designated BLTs include the BLTs organised by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), as well as the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) newly introduced by the CSB in June 2022.

Our reply to the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) To tie in with the above requirement, the EDB conducted two rounds of the BLT on a pilot basis. The first round was held on January 8, 2022 with around 5 400 applicants. Around 4 200 candidates sat for the test and the attendance rate was about 80 per cent. Over 70 per cent of the attendees obtained a pass result in the test, which was similar to the results of the BLTs conducted by the CSB. The second round of the BLT, originally scheduled to be held in late February, was postponed to May 21 in light of the severe epidemic situation. There were around 9 100 applicants and the attendance rate was about 80 per cent. We are now speeding up the marking and checking processes and it is expected that the test results will be issued to candidates starting from late May to early June.

The objective of organising the two rounds of the BLT is to help teachers who plan to join a school and those changing schools in the public school sector in the 2022/23 school year to fulfil the relevant requirement. The test results will be recognised regardless of which rounds of the BLT the candidates joined or whether they joined the second round after failing to obtain a pass result in the first round. Therefore, relevant data analyses on candidates of these two rounds of test are not conducted.

Persons who join the above BLTs are required to possess a bachelor's degree or are to-be graduates with equivalent qualifications. However, there is no requirement that they must be newly-joined teachers or teachers changing schools. In fact, we do not have data on whether they will apply for joining a school or changing schools, or whether they have successfully joined a school or changed schools. Firstly, most schools have not started their recruitment exercise for the 2022/23 school year. More importantly, it is not meaningful to provide such data as whether candidates of the BLT will apply for joining a school or changing schools and whether their applications are successful depend on a number of factors. Currently, the BLT requirement

is only applicable to newly-appointed teachers within the approved establishment in public sector schools. As candidates who obtain a pass result may not necessarily join a school or change schools, it is not appropriate to compare the number of candidates passing the test with the number of teachers in all public sector schools in Hong Kong.

The EDB will consolidate the experience gained from the pilot tests, review in detail the relevant arrangements, including the mode of the test and the content of the test, and draw up the arrangements for the 2023/24 school year and thereafter.

(3) The EDB issued a circular to schools and a press release to the public on November 11, 2021 announcing the above BLT requirement and relevant arrangements. The arrangements for the second round test were also announced through press releases on January 20, February 10 and April 11, 2022. The above documents are also uploaded onto the EDB webpage. When announcing the details of the second round test, we have clearly specified that it would be the last round of BLT organised by the EDB in this school year. As the test was postponed to May 21 due to the epidemic, application was reopened. For each round of application, while it was specified that the number of places was limited, we have arranged more test centres to provide more places to meet the needs of all the teachers. In the end, all applications were accepted. In other words, the EDB has announced clearly the test arrangements on many occasions and provided sufficient opportunities and places for interested applicants. Teachers who wish to change their working environment have been provided with ample opportunities to thoroughly consider if they would take the test. The two rounds of the test accepted a total of around 14 500 applications and the number of attendees is about 11 480. In addition, if persons who wish to join a public sector school or to change school have obtained a pass result in a BLT (Degree/Professional Grades) conducted by the CSB or the BLNST (Degree/Professional Grades) it organised from June 2022 will be considered to have met the relevant requirement. We expect that schools should not have recruitment difficulties due to the BLT requirement. If there are special situations of individual schools, we will consider on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you, President.

LCQ2: Regulation of online fundraising activities

Following is a question by the Hon JoePHY Chan and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher HUI, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

There are comments pointing out that currently, offline fundraising activities (e.g. flag sales and lottery ticket sales) may only be carried out after the applications have been vetted and approved by the relevant government departments. However, there is no dedicated legislation and government departments that regulate fundraising activities carried out online, resulting in a situation that fundraising activities are regulated if they are conducted offline but are not regulated if conducted online. It has been reported that during the riots in 2019, there were even people who conducted online fundraising for organising illegal activities that endangered national security. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of online fundraising activities allegedly carried out for Hong Kong affairs in each of the past three years and, among such activities, the respective numbers of those launched via crowdfunding platforms and the social media accounts of individuals/organisations; of the total amount of funds raised in such fundraising activities, and the number of activities the organisers of which had made public the amounts of funds raised and their accounts on expenses;

(2) whether the Government will consider establishing a standardised regulatory mechanism for various types of online and offline fundraising activities; if so, when the Government plans to submit the relevant proposals to this Council; and

(3) as it is learnt that some people carried out public fundraising under the guise of selling things (e.g. meal vouchers and gifts), how the Government prevents those fundraising activities which evade regulation by adopting this approach (especially those adopting an online approach)?

Reply:

President,

First, I thank the Hon JoePHY Chan for raising this question, giving us an opportunity to explain the approach of the Government in regulating crowdfunding activities.

Any funds raised, transferred and used, whether through internet or physical means, must abide by the law. If any person or entity engages in illegal acts, such as money laundering, fraud, theft, acts and activities that endanger national security, or incite, aid, abet or provide pecuniary or other financial assistance or property for other persons to commit offences endangering national security, he or she would be subject to criminal liability, including fine and imprisonment, in accordance with the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 455), the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance (Cap. 405), the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210), the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200) and the Hong Kong National Security Law. In addition, financial services-related activities involving an offer to the public for purchase of securities or money lending are regulated respectively by the

Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571), the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32) and the Money Lenders Ordinance (Cap. 163).

We however note that many online crowdfunding activities of diverse purposes and nature have emerged in Hong Kong in recent years, as mentioned by the Hon JoePHY Chan. While we have the law specified above, we do not have a dedicated legislation or government department or regulatory authority to deal specifically with the various kinds of online crowdfunding activities.

In this connection, I remarked last month that the Government has been reviewing the regulation of crowdfunding in order to provide clearer regulatory requirements, and to strengthen the transparency and accountability of crowdfunding activities, with a view to preventing illegal acts and protecting public interests. We plan to conduct a public consultation within this year which will cover the specific contents of the future regulatory framework, including the scope of crowdfunding activities to be regulated, regulatory requirements applicable to different types of crowdfunding activities such as whether application, registration, disclosure and account auditing, is required for the platform and fundraiser of crowdfunding activities, as well as the corresponding legislative work, regulatory agencies and enforcement arrangement.

Regarding the Hon JoePHY Chan's question, in consultation with the Security Bureau, my reply is as follows:

(1) As it is now not always necessary to make prior application before the conduct of online crowdfunding activities, the Government does not possess a complete set of data in this aspect. However, the law enforcement agencies, in light of the actual circumstances, have constantly been monitoring the situation for any illicit fundraising activities and taking appropriate enforcement actions. For example, in the past three years, the Police have investigated and made arrests for those who were suspected of using funds gathered from online crowdfunding for illegal activities such as money laundering and fraud. In these cases, the arrested persons were suspected of using the proceeds raised from online crowdfunding for purposes different from the proclaimed purposes, and instead for personal consumption, investment and entertainment; or raising funds by impersonating social welfare and educational institutions. The Government will continue to combat the illegal use of proceeds raised from online crowdfunding.

(2) At present, physical fundraising activities are subject to certain regulations. For instance, a permit must be obtained from the Director of Social Welfare or the Secretary for Home Affairs, depending on whether the fundraising activity is charitable or non-charitable in nature, in accordance with section 4(17) of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228). In addition, the Government has implemented a series of administrative measures over the years to enhance the transparency of charitable fundraising activities, safeguard the interests of donors, etc.

When formulating our proposal on the regulatory framework for online crowdfunding activities, we will make appropriate reference to the above

existing measures, and consider the relationship between the regulatory arrangements for fundraising and crowdfunding activities conducted in different modes and the consistency of the measures, and protect the public interest. The public consultation we plan to conduct this year will cover these issues.

(3) There are four common types of crowdfunding activities. In addition to the financial-related ones such as equity crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending, there are also crowdfunding activities which the Hon Joeey Chan are concerned about, including donation-based crowdfunding, whereby funds are raised for making donations to charitable activities or other causes such as making donations for political activities; and reward or pre-sale-based crowdfunding, whereby fundraisers provide goods or services in return for funds provided by contributors. The above four types of online crowdfunding activities fall under the scope of our review, and we will put forward corresponding regulatory recommendations in the public consultation later this year to avoid any person making use of fraudulent crowdfunding activities for potentially illegal purposes.

Thank you President.

[LCQ11: Establishing dedicated tax regime for maritime industry](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

The Government proposes to amend the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) to provide for a dedicated tax regime to attract shipping commercial principals (namely ship managers, ship agents and ship brokers) to set up presence in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in order to ensure that only those entities which undertake the core income generating activities in Hong Kong would benefit from the dedicated tax regime, the Government proposes to stipulate that a qualifying shipping commercial principal must employ at least one full-time qualified employee in Hong Kong for meeting one of the minimum thresholds of the substantial activity requirement, of the difference between such a requirement and the relevant requirement in other jurisdictions (e.g. Singapore and the United Kingdom) (set out in a table);

(2) of (i) the number of enterprises engaged in ship management, ship agency

and shipbroking businesses in Hong Kong (with a breakdown by class of employment size (i.e. 1 to 50 persons, 51 to 100 persons, and 101 persons or above)) and (ii) the total number of their employees, in each of the past five years;

(3) as the Task Force on Commercial Principals has estimated that the dedicated tax regime will, over 10 years, (i) create direct and indirect employment of around 27 000 and 50 000-odd jobs respectively in the relevant sectors, and (ii) generate cumulative incremental business of about \$32.5 billion, of the calculation method for the numbers of the relevant jobs, the types and natures of the jobs concerned, as well as the assumptions and data based on which the cumulative incremental business is arrived at; and

(4) whether it will consider regularly compiling statistics on an annual basis on the numbers of new enterprises established and jobs created in the relevant sectors after the introduction of the dedicated tax regime, so as to evaluate the effectiveness of such policy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

â€‹To attract more maritime enterprises to establish presence in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board (HKMPB) set up a dedicated Task Force in 2020 to study the economic impact and details of providing tax concessions to specified shipping commercial principals, namely ship agents, ship managers and ship brokers. The Task Force has made reference to the work of introducing tax concessions for ship leasing and made recommendations on the tax concessions to the HKMPB. The recommendations include providing half-tax concessions (i.e. tax rate being 8.25 per cent, half of the profits tax rate for corporations at 16.5 per cent) for specified shipping commercial principals, with a view to facilitating the development of the maritime industry in Hong Kong and consolidating the overall capabilities of Hong Kong as a leading international maritime centre. With the HKMPB's endorsement of the relevant recommendations, the Government is working full-speed on the legislative amendment exercise, and has consulted the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Economic Development on the legislative proposal, targeting to introduce the relevant legislative amendment proposal to the LegCo in June 2022.

â€‹Having consulted the Inland Revenue Department and the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), our reply to various parts of the Hon Holden Chow's question is as follows:

(1) The tax concession proposal includes specifying the coverage of tax concessions and incorporating anti-abuse features so as to safeguard the integrity of the tax system and comply with international tax rules. In determining whether a preferential tax regime provided by a jurisdiction meets the international standards on countering base erosion and profit shifting, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will take into account whether the regime has incorporated substantial

activity requirements to ensure that only those entities which undertake the core income generating activities (CIGAs) in the jurisdiction would benefit from the regime. To satisfy the substantial activity requirements, one of the requirements is that an entity should employ an adequate number of full-time qualified employees for carrying out the CIGAs in the jurisdiction. It is understood that the OECD Forum on Harmful Tax Practices conducted reviews of the shipping supporting services-related tax regimes devised by two jurisdictions and the minimum threshold requirements on the number of employees prescribed under the tax regimes are as follows:

Jurisdiction	Year of review	Tax regime concerned	Threshold on the number of employees
Greece	2002	Ship Management Offices	Not less than four (specified in 2019)
Singapore	2017	Maritime Sector Incentive Scheme Shipping-related Support Services Award	Not less than five

To promote the development of shipping commercial principals in Hong Kong, we propose introducing the tax concessions to make our tax regime more competitive vis-à-vis our key competitors. Having consulted the trade and taken into account the operational needs of some start-up companies, we propose that a shipping commercial principal must employ at least one full-time qualified employee in Hong Kong. However, this is only the minimum requirement that a shipping commercial principal must satisfy in order that the CIGAs are regarded as having been carried out in Hong Kong. In accordance with the OECD's requirement, we are also required to introduce the "adequacy test" for shipping commercial principals regime in the legislative proposal to ensure that the number of full-time qualified employees employed by a principal in Hong Kong must be adequate, compared with the principal's business scale and operation, types and level of business activities, amount of profits earned, etc.

(2) The number of business establishments engaging in ship agency and ship management, and ship broking by size and their total number of employees in the past five years are tabulated below:

Number of establishments	Size (number of employees)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Ship agents and managers	0-50	232	249	245	251	254
	51-100	13	17	16	11	17
	>100	18	17	15	14	13
	Sub-total	264	283	276	276	284

Ship brokers	0-50	47	39	42	54	61
	51-100	0	0	0	0	0
	>100	0	0	0	0	0
	Sub-total	47	39	42	54	61
Sum of the above	0-50	279	287	286	305	315
	51-100	13	17	16	11	17
	>100	18	17	15	14	13
	Total	311	321	317	330	345

Total number of employees	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Ship agents and managers	7 590	7 506	7 325	6 751	6 318
Ship brokers	204	141	238	230	219
Sum of the above	7 793	7 646	7 563	6 981	6 537

Note: There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the tables due to rounding.

Source: The C&SD – Annual Survey of Economic Activities

The C&SD does not maintain separate statistics on ship agency and ship management businesses.

(3) The Task Force comprises tax, financial, legal and maritime experts. According to the economic assessment conducted by the Task Force, if the proposed new tax regime for qualifying ship agents, ship managers and ship brokers is put in place, comparing to the case with no introduction of tax measure, over 10 years it would bring about cumulative incremental ship agency, ship management and ship broking business receipts of approximately some \$32.5 billion, as well as direct employment of approximately some 27 600 jobs and indirect employment of some 50 000 to 55 000 jobs. The Task Force's assessment has made reference to the trends in global shipping commercial principal businesses and the current situation of Hong Kong amid the global maritime services scene. Assuming that the relevant tax measures would be introduced, the Task Force anticipated that over the next ten years, Hong Kong would be able to capture a larger global market share in these shipping commercial principal businesses, thus deriving the incremental amount of business receipts under normal economic conditions (e.g. barring protracted impediments to global business activities or unexpected economic impacts brought about by COVID-19). Making reference to the operating statistics of relevant maritime enterprises, the approximate incremental employment and value added were estimated. Based on the structure of shipping and maritime industries in Hong Kong, the incremental indirect employment was crudely estimated. The natures of the jobs created cover various maritime and other business services, including all ranks of staff working in relevant industries such as marine insurance, ship finance, equipment repairs and maintenance, etc.

(4) Every year, the C&SD conducts the Annual Survey of Economic Activities on major economic sectors. The survey aims to provide statistical information for gauging the business performance and operating characteristics of different economic sectors and for evaluating their contribution to Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product. Amongst others, the survey on the transportation, storage and courier services sector compiles the statistics on the business establishments and number of employees etc. engaging in the ship agency and ship management, and ship broking sectors. The statistics may be used for monitoring the trends in operating performance of relevant sectors after the implementation of the new tax regime.

LCQ5: Promoting development of innovation and technology

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

The National 14th Five-Year Plan has expressed clear support for Hong Kong to develop into an international innovation and technology (I&T) hub. On promoting I&T development, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest plans and measures put in place by the Government to achieve the goal of developing Hong Kong into an international I&T hub, and whether clear performance indicators have been formulated for the relevant work;

(2) in respect of nurturing I&T talents, as there are views that currently STEM education (i.e. courses relating to science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is not an independent subject in local primary and secondary schools, which has resulted in problems of insufficient lesson time and difficulties in articulation into university programmes, whether the Government will improve the planning for STEM education in primary and secondary schools; if so, of the details and timetable; and

(3) of the measures put in place by the Government in the past two years to deepen the I&T co-operation between the Mainland and Hong Kong (including facilitating Hong Kong's young people to go to the Mainland for participating in I&T development), and the effectiveness of such measures?

Reply:

President:

Thank you very much for the Hon Tang's question. Our reply to the Hon Tang's question, having consulted the Education Bureau (EDB), is as follows:

(1) Promulgated last year, the 14th Five-Year Plan (the 14-5 Plan) supported Hong Kong to develop into an international innovation and technology (I&T) hub. The Government has been attaching great importance to the development of I&T, and set out eight major areas in the 2017 Policy Address to develop I&T, formulated clear policies and put forward respective measures. In the same year, the Government has also adopted the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Innovation and Technology to establish well-defined key performance indicators (KPIs).

In the past five years, the current-term Government has unprecedentedly invested over \$150 billion to support I&T development. Various initiatives are gradually taking effect, and the overall I&T ecosystem is becoming more vibrant. For example, the gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) has increased by more than 45 per cent in the past five years; the number of start-ups rose from around 1 500 in 2015 to around 4 000 in 2021; the venture capital investment substantially increased from \$3.4 billion to over \$40 billion during the period. We have also witnessed the birth of more than 10 unicorns in the same period. The flagship project, InnoHK research clusters, has successfully attracted over 30 world-renowned universities and research institutes to collaborate with local partners in setting up 28 research laboratories. Hong Kong also ranked first in Asia and second worldwide in the World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2021.

In the 2021 Policy Address and 2022-23 Budget, the Government has put forward a number of forward-looking and ground breaking initiatives. In terms of land supply, having regard to the continuous increase in Hong Kong's demand for land dedicated to scientific research and advance industries, the Government is continuing to increase infrastructure, including consolidating the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park (HSITP) in the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the areas around Lok Ma Chau/San Tin to form the San Tin Technopole, building landmark I&T facilities with a scale comparable to Cyberport in Lau Fau Shan, reviving the Ma Liu Shui reclamation project, planning for the construction of the second Advanced Manufacturing Centre, etc.

As for talent, the Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enlarging the I&T talent pool through attracting, nurturing and retaining talents with a series of initiatives. For example, the Global STEM Professorship Scheme has supported over 60 outstanding scholars and their teams to conduct research and teaching activities in Hong Kong so far.

In terms of R&D, to complement the country's development of frontier scientific research fields such as life and health disciplines, the Government has earmarked \$10 billion to provide more comprehensive support in the longer run for the development of life and health scientific research, including setting up an InnoLife Healthtech Hub in the HSITP. The Government will also double the maximum annual funding support under the Innovation and

Technology Fund for the 16 State Key Laboratories in Hong Kong and 6 Hong Kong Branches of Chinese National Engineering Research Centres, and set up a dedicated fund to finance local universities or research institutes to participate in national R&D projects.

The Government will update the KPIs timely, as well as review the policies, enhance and introduce more measures in line with the country's plan and society's development, so as to continue to promote I&T development.

(2) According to the information provided by the EDB, the Government has been committed to promoting STEM education in primary and secondary schools for all students (i.e. STEM for ALL) through ongoing renewal of curriculum, enhancement of teacher training, providing resource support and life-wide learning activities to cultivate students' creativity, scientific investigation and problem-solving skills from an early age, and enhance their interest and learning motivation in I&T. In addition to learning in the Science, Technology, Mathematics and primary General Studies curricula, students also participate in STEM-related cross-curricular hands-on and minds-on activities both inside and outside the classroom. These activities help them lay a solid foundation in learning, and strengthen their ability in integrating and applying STEM-related knowledge and skills. Schools are now implementing STEM education progressively and have achieved considerable results. In respect of senior secondary electives, STEM-related subjects have all along been popular among the students. More Applied Learning courses on applied science and technology have also been provided. The Government will continue to follow up on the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee on STEM Education to enhance the strategies for promoting STEM education and provide schools with various support measures.

Moreover, starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has provided a recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant with an annual provision of \$900 million for public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools to support them in taking forward more life-wide learning activities, including STEM education related activities. Furthermore, the Quality Education Fund has included STEM education as one of the priority themes and, from the 2018/19 to 2020/21 school years, approved over \$800 million for around 840 projects related to information technology in education and STEM education through the Priority Themes Funding Programme and the Dedicated Funding Programme for Publicly-funded Schools.

(3) Thanks to the country's staunch support for I&T in Hong Kong, the 14-5 Plan, for the first time, incorporated the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Co-operation Zone (Co-operation Zone), comprising the HSITP and Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone, as one of the four major platforms of co-operation in the Greater Bay Area (GBA). Hong Kong will continue to make good use of the GBA platform and seek to strengthen the co-operation with various provinces and municipalities. Last year, Hong Kong signed Memorandum of Co-operation with the governments of Sichuan Province, Hubei Province and Shanghai Municipality respectively to deepen the co-operation between Hong Kong and relevant provinces and municipalities in various fields including I&T, such as promoting the commercialisation of R&D results,

exploring the establishment of mechanism for jointly nurturing I&T talents, etc.

To better leverage on the complementary advantages among different cities in the GBA, the Government is actively facilitating the effective flow of innovative elements with the Mainland. On talent front, the Government has encouraged young people in Hong Kong to seize the I&T opportunities in the GBA through the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme. So far, over 250 enterprises have provided I&T jobs, benefiting more than 300 graduates. The Government will also explore the extension of the Immigration Arrangement for Non-local Graduates to cover those Hong Kong universities' campuses in the GBA. As for funding, over \$760 million from Mainland were approved for local universities and R&D institutions so far. The Government has also implemented joint funding schemes with the Central Government and various provinces and municipalities. In terms of resources, so far, four Mainland branches established by Hong Kong's universities were approved by the Ministry of Science and Technology as pilot units which were able to lodge applications independently for exporting human genetic resources to Hong Kong for research purpose.

The delegation for introducing the 14-5 Plan suggested at a seminar last year to make good of use of Hong Kong's unique advantages to jointly develop the international I&T hub, and subsequently announced a number of measures benefitting Hong Kong. For instance, regarding opening up more national-level science and technology programmes to Hong Kong, the National Key Research and Development Programme and the Sci-Tech Innovation 2030 –"Brain Science and Brain-like Research" Major Project were opened up to the designated R&D institutions in Hong Kong for applications.

Besides, the government of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have signed a co-operation agreement on developing the Co-operation Zone and putting forward a joint policy package last year. The Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation will also launch the GBA InnoAcademy and GBA InnoExpress at its branch in Shenzhen in July this year, and work with the local universities which have campuses in the GBA to establish incubator networks in those campuses, so as to support start-ups to develop in the GBA.

President, once again I am grateful for the Hon Tang's question, and am looking forward to continuing co-operation with LegCo Members in promoting the I&T development of Hong Kong. Thank you, President.

Assessment Committee for the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing

Projects by Non-government Organisations convenes meeting

A meeting of the Assessment Committee for the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations, chaired by the Under Secretary for Transport and Housing, Dr Raymond So Wai-man, was convened via video conferencing this morning (May 25).

The Assessment Committee agreed to subsidise the transitional housing development at Lau Fau Shan, Yuen Long, by Tung Wah Group of Hospitals. With a total funding of \$678.15 million, it is expected to provide 1 233 units.