

LCQ20: Infection of and treatment for elderly persons amid the epidemic

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

Amid the fifth wave of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, a large number of elderly persons (including quite a number of elderly persons living in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs)) have been infected or even died. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of elderly persons in RCHEs who were confirmed patients and forced into undergoing on-site isolation due to the shortage of beds at public hospitals since the outbreak of the fifth wave of the epidemic, as well as the number of RCHEs involved, and set out, by the names of such RCHEs in a table, their numbers and percentages of elderly persons who were confirmed patients;

(2) of the total number of elderly persons who had been classified as close contacts of confirmed patients and admitted, between January and April this year, to some of the exhibition halls of the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) which were temporarily used as an anti-epidemic facility and managed by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), and set out in a table the monthly relevant bed occupancy rate and the number of elderly persons who became confirmed patients while undergoing quarantine (and among such cases, the numbers of those that were critical cases and death cases); the healthcare facilities to which these elderly confirmed patients were transferred and the procedure involved; the minimum and maximum numbers of days between such elderly persons proved to be confirmed patients to their being transferred to a healthcare facility, and the reasons for such different time spans; whether it will streamline the referral procedure involved as a preparation in case a new wave of epidemic breaks out;

(3) of the total number of elderly persons who were confirmed patients and admitted, between January and April this year, to the community treatment facility set up in some of the exhibition halls of AWE and managed by the Hospital Authority, as well as their average length of stay and their conditions, and set out in a table the monthly relevant bed occupancy rate; among such elderly confirmed patients, the number of cases directly referred by the SWD-managed facility mentioned in (2) above and their conditions;

(4) of the number of elderly confirmed patients who have experienced long-term after-effects (commonly known as "long COVID") after their recovery, and the percentage of such number in the total number of long COVID patients;

whether it will provide dedicated out-patient services (including Chinese medicine out-patient services) and rehabilitation services for this type of elderly persons; and

(5) whether it will, in the near future, conduct a review on the anti-epidemic work targeting at elderly persons during the fifth wave of the epidemic, and adjust the relevant policies, as a preparation in case a new wave of epidemic breaks out; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Protecting the elderly is the top priority of the anti-epidemic measures in Hong Kong. Although the surge in the fifth wave of epidemic in Hong Kong during the first quarter of this year has clearly been curbed, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government would not let down its guard and will continue to give priority to the elderly with targeted measures, including boosting their vaccination rate, enabling more timely access to oral drugs by infected persons aged above 60, enhancing the treatment capacity of hospitals and encouraging the elderly to get tested for their better protection.

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), and the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the Hon Chan's question is as follows:

(1) In light of the geometric rate of increase in the number of confirmed cases in the fifth wave of the epidemic, the demand for isolation facilities has increased sharply. The HA has planned to admit new COVID-19 patients by several designated hospitals since early February, which started treating COVID-19 patients since late February to mid-March. In addition, the HA has also converted General beds (i.e. acute and convalescent/rehabilitation beds) to receive COVID-19 patients who are with relatively serious conditions or require medical care. Taking into account the first-tier and second-tier isolation beds, the total number of beds for treating COVID-19 patients increased to about 11 500 (about half of the General beds).

In addition, in order to expedite the turnover of hospital beds for more effective use of medical resources for urgent cases, experts of the HA discussed and updated the discharge arrangements for the cases from residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) on March 24 after balancing different factors such as the utilization of hospital beds at that time, the risk of transmission of the discharged confirmed elderly, and the operation of RCHEs. Medical staff will conduct rapid antigen test (RAT) for suitable elderly patients on day 7 after the onset of symptoms. Only elderly patients tested negative will be discharged from the hospital and return to their RCHEs for continued isolation. For those who are still positive, patients in stable conditions can be transferred to community isolation facilities (CIFs) or holding centres for continued isolation, and they can only be discharged from the hospital and return to their RCHEs until the RAT results are

negative.

In view of the gradual stabilisation of the epidemic situation, the HA tightened the discharge arrangements for the cases from RCHEs on April 29 in order to further minimise the risk of transmission in RCHEs. Confirmed elderly patients who have received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine could be discharged back to RCHEs if two negative RAT results are obtained consecutively on the sixth and seventh day after onset of symptoms (or any other subsequent two successive days). Those who have not received at least two doses need to undergo RAT after the 14th day after onset of symptoms, and only elderly with negative RAT results can return to their RCHEs.

(2) Within the four months between January and April this year, a total of 1 315 elderly persons who have been close contacts of confirmed cases were admitted to the Quarantine Centre (QC) managed by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) at Halls 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE). Among them, 362 elderly persons became confirmed cases during quarantine, while 255 elderly persons who were asymptomatic or with mild symptoms were transferred to Holding Centres (HC) with the HA providing medical support, and another 107 elderly persons with more severe symptoms or changes in health conditions were admitted to hospital for receiving treatment. No elderly person passed away during quarantine in QC. The SWD does not have records regarding the number of death cases after elderly persons' admission to hospital, and the shortest and longest duration of hospital treatment. From January to April this year, the monthly occupancy rate of QC and the number of elderly persons who became confirmed cases during quarantine are tabulated as follows:

Month	Number of beds in QC	Occupancy rate	Number of elderly persons becoming confirmed cases during quarantine
January 2022	320	7%	1
February 2022	640	64%	360
March 2022 (Note 1)	—	—	—
April 2022 (Note 2)	480	9%	1

(3) With the development of the epidemic, the HA has reactivated the standby community treatment facility at AWE (CTF AWE) on January 2, 2022. Following the government's anti-epidemic measures and with the support of the Mainland medical support team in mid-March, the HA further repurposed the facility into Treatment Centre for COVID-19 ((TCC(AWE))). Before the transformation, the CTF AWE was positioned to admit patients with mild symptoms who were independent in activities of daily living. At the peak in early February, the CTF AWE admitted and managed about 600 to 700 COVID-19 patients every day. Upon transformation, patients admitted to TCC (AWE) were generally older with more underlying diseases and lacking self-care ability. Majority of them were bed-ridden or suffered from various chronic illnesses, whose health conditions were further deteriorated by the COVID-19 infection that required

higher level of care. Since the fifth wave of the epidemic, the TCC(AWE) had provided clinical care to over 5 000 COVID-19 patients. After the transformation in mid-March, it had provided services to more than 1 000 elderly patients with average length of stay about 8.4 days. The TCC(AWE) did not establish a direct referral mechanism with the anti-epidemic facilities managed under the management of the SWD, and thus no relevant statistics could be provided. In addition, as the HA keeps review the contingency measures regularly from time to time and flexibly deploy facilities in response to the epidemic situation to increase the capacity of treatment facilities for receiving suitable confirmed patients, therefore the bed occupancy was close to affordable saturation during the period from January to April based on the level of care provision and available manpower in TCC(AWE).

(4) Chinese medicine (CM) has its advantages in rehabilitation as such treatment may reduce sequelae and the re-positive rate. With the facilitation and support of the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), the HA launched in April 2020 the Special CM Out-patient Programme to provide a maximum of ten free-of-charge sessions of CM general consultation out-patient rehabilitation services to COVID-19 infected patients who have been discharged from public hospitals and persons who have completed isolation, through the Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres in 18 districts across the city. The services have been well received by the public, with the participation of over 26 300 recovered patients involving over 73 300 consultations as at May 15, 2022. In view of the sharp rise in demand for services in the fifth wave of the epidemic, the HA has been increasing services through various measures to meet the demand.

Having regard to the severe impacts of the fifth wave of epidemic to residential care homes for the elderly, under the support by the FHB, the HA speedily took the lead in mobilising Chinese Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) to participate in the Chinese Medicine Services for Residential Care Homes for the Elderly programme through community CM service providers such as universities, CM sector, CMP academic associations and non-governmental organisations, etc. Telemedicine or outreach CM services will be provided to infected residents and staff of RCHEs. The service concerned has recently been further expanded to cover CM rehabilitation consultations, such that recovered RCHE residents can receive treatment at the RCHE without travelling. Since the launch of the service in February this year, 237 RCHEs have participated, with over 9 100 sessions of consultation conducted.

(5) Elderly persons are among the groups prone to highest risk in the epidemic, especially those elderly persons living in RCHs. The Government attaches utmost importance to the protection of elderly persons, who are our priority target group in anti-epidemic work. In order to enhance the overall capability of RCHEs and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) in fighting against the epidemic and in coping with a possible sixth wave of epidemic, the Government has set up an inter-departmental task force led by the LWB to examine the RCHs' capabilities and discuss effective and feasible improvement measures. Members of the task force comprises representative of the FHB, the Development Bureau, the SWD, the Department of

Health (DH), the Fire Services Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the HA.

The task force is discussing various measures to prepare for a possible next wave of epidemic, such as improvements to the ventilation of RCHs to minimise the risk of virus transmission within the premises concerned, enhancement of infection control in RCHs as well as improvements to the coordination between RCHs and Government departments. When appropriate, the task force will announce its work progress.

Furthermore, as elderly citizens face a high risk of death after COVID-19 infection, the Government has all along been calling on the elderly to get vaccinated as soon as possible. We have joined hands with the medical community to strengthen our explanatory work to the public, so that the elderly and their families can better understand the effectiveness of vaccines to allay their concerns. The Government has also introduced a basket of facilitative measures, including providing "same-day tickets" at Community Vaccination Centres to elderly persons aged 60 or above; launching the "Home Vaccination Service"; proactively reaching out to service users of the DH, the HA and the SWD to assist those in need to book for vaccination; and providing vaccination services through designated Elderly Health Centres under the DH, designated general outpatient clinics under the HA, as well as District Health Centres (DHCs) and DHC Expresses in each district.

Note 1: All QC beds were converted to HC beds in March to alleviate the shortage of hospital beds.

Note 2: In view of the epidemic condition at that time, after consulting the FHB, the DH and the HA, beds in some halls have been converted for quarantine purpose since April 25.

[LCQ5: Promoting development of digital economy](#)

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Kennedy Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

There are comments pointing out that digital economy has now become one of the key drivers for global economic growth. The country in particular attaches great importance to developing a digital economy and has elevated it to a national strategy, and it has promoted the development of digital economy at the national level. In contrast, Hong Kong is relatively lagging behind in this regard. Not only is the rate of adoption of digital economy

low due to the community not attaching sufficient importance to it, but the Government also lacks promotion policies and specific deployment plans and has not invested additional resources to promote the development of relevant infrastructure, causing such development to remain on the low side. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the efforts made by the Government in recent years to promote the development of digital economy;

(2) whether the Government has considered how it will strengthen co-operation with the Mainland authorities to jointly promote the development of digital economy; and

(3) whether the Government will consider setting up a matching fund or enhancing relevant support measures, so as to support the enterprises concerned to expedite the construction of infrastructure essential to the development of digital economy, such as radio base stations for the fifth generation mobile communications network; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

I am grateful to the concern and question raised by Dr the Hon Kennedy Wong in promoting digital economy development. In the global trend of innovation and technology (I&T) development, digitalisation is inevitable in driving the economy towards high-quality development. Hong Kong has to seize the opportunities brought by digital economy development. With our experience in the COVID-19 epidemic over the past two years and the distribution of consumption vouchers to citizens for the first time in Hong Kong last year, we could see that electronic payment and electronic consumption are becoming more popular. Digital economy of Hong Kong has great potential. In order to expedite the development process of digital economy in Hong Kong and promote digital transformation across different industries, the Government announced in this year's Budget that a Digital Economy Development Committee led by the Financial Secretary will be set up. Members of this Committee will comprise industry practitioners, experts, scholars, and representatives from relevant bureaux/departments (B/Ds). We are now taking forward the relevant preparatory work in full speed.

With co-ordination of the information provided by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB), my reply to Dr the Hon Wong's question is as follows:

(1) Over the past four years or so, the current-term Government has invested over \$150 billion in developing I&T, which includes promoting the development of digital economy. The National 14th Five-Year Plan also explicitly indicates clear support for Hong Kong to develop into an international I&T hub, injecting stronger impetus into Hong Kong's I&T development. Since inauguration of the current-term Government, we have been actively promoting

the development of digital economy and smart city through various measures based on a data-driven approach.

In this regard, the current-term Government published the first Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong (Blueprint) in December 2017 and further published the updated Blueprint 2.0 in December 2020, setting out over 130 initiatives under six smart areas to take forward the development of smart city and digitalisation in Hong Kong. B/Ds have been actively implementing such initiatives and will update their development goals in view of the latest progress in smart city and I&T.

To complement the development of digital economy and smart city in Hong Kong, the current-term Government has constructed various important digital infrastructure projects, including the Next Generation Government Cloud Platform, Big Data Analytics Platform and one-stop personalised digital services platform "iAM Smart". They gradually commenced services in 2020. Meanwhile, we are building a Shared Blockchain Platform to facilitate the implementation of smart government services using blockchain technology, it is expected to be launched in the middle of this year.

Data centre is also an essential infrastructure that supports the development of digital economy. To facilitate data centre's vibrant development in Hong Kong, the Government is committed to implementing various measures, including provision of land for building high-tier data centres, encouraging conversion of industrial buildings for use as data centres and development of high-tier data centres on industry lots, etc.

Furthermore, the fifth generation mobile technology (5G) also opens up vast potential for various innovative commercial services and smart city applications under the digital economy. Hong Kong launched commercial 5G services in the second quarter of 2020. 5G network coverage is now over 90 per cent, and the number of 5G users has exceeded three million. The CEDB has promoted 5G development on various fronts, which include supplying spectrum, opening up suitable government premises for base station installations, subsidising the extension of fibre-based broadband to remote villages, and subsidising the use of 5G technology, so as to lay a solid foundation for the use of 5G in society for the promotion of digital economy.

Another important initiative in supporting digital economy development by the current-term Government is the launch of the revamped open data policy in September 2018. The Government has since 2019 released government open data free of charge through the "data.gov.hk" portal to encourage more innovative applications in the market and maximise the benefits and convenience to citizens. This initiative has gained wide popularity by citizens and the industries. Last year, the download of the Government's open data exceeded 21 billion.

To actively promote digital transformation of government departments, we have implemented different measures. We have also launched the Technology Voucher Programme which supports local enterprises/ organisations to use technology services and solutions so as to assist small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) in digital transformation.

On financial aspect, the Government collaborates with relevant authorities in launching various measures to promote fintech development in Hong Kong. On financial infrastructure, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) is actively developing the Commercial Data Interchange (CDI). It seeks to allow financial institutions, with the consent of enterprises (especially SMEs), to obtain commercial data for conducting credit analysis more accurately, thereby enabling SMEs to utilise their own data to receive more convenient and effective financing services.

The CDI is now at pilot stage and is expected to be formally launched by the end of this year. The FSTB works closely with the HKMA to explore covering more commercial data sources in the CDI, including data kept by government departments, thereby expanding its functionality, and further enriching the data-centric financial services ecosystem.

The HKMA and the Insurance Authority are also actively promoting the implementation of the Open Application Programming Interface for the banking and insurance sectors, with a view to allowing third-party service providers to gain programmatic access to the internal IT systems and data of banks and insurance companies, including information of products and services, and aggregate the relevant information under the same website/application, thereby enabling more innovative financial products and customer experience.

(2) Through the Hong Kong/Guangdong Expert Group on Co-operation in Informatisation (EGCI), the Government has been co-ordinating and promoting the development and application of information and communications technology between Guangdong and Hong Kong and driving the development of digital economy industries. The work of EGCI includes strengthening innovative development of new generation digital technologies such as 5G, big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and blockchain in the region. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the People's Government of Guangdong Province are exploring to promote the development of smart cities and digital economy in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) by facilitating cross-border data flow through consolidating Hong Kong/Guangdong open data resources (such as cross-boundary-related transportation data) and adopting appropriate digital technologies.

The Innovation and Technology Commission will continue to operate the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme (TCFS) with relevant Department/Commission of Guangdong and Shenzhen to encourage collaboration among universities and research institutes in Hong Kong and Guangdong/Shenzhen on applied research and development (R&D) projects. In recent years, those themes covered by the TCFS which are related to core technologies of digital economy include artificial intelligence, blockchain and fintech, Internet of Things, etc. which could be a new driving force of developing digital economy in the GBA.

On financial aspect, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the HKMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 2021 to provide a one-stop

platform for financial institutions and technology companies to conduct pilot trials of cross-boundary fintech initiatives concurrently in Hong Kong and the GBA cities in the Mainland. The platform allows financial institutions and technology companies to obtain early feedback from regulators and users, thereby expediting the launch of products and lowering development costs. The HKMA and the PBoC have since concluded the implementation details, and have written to invite applications from financial institutions and technology companies for using the one-stop platform. Furthermore, the second phase of the proof-of-concept for connecting Hong Kong's eTradeConnect with the PBoC Trade Finance Blockchain Platform was completed in October 2021, covering the use case of "exporting from Hong Kong into Mainland China". The HKMA will continue to work closely with the PBoC with a view to providing importers and exporters of both places with more convenient trade finance services.

(3) The Government actively facilitates infrastructural development to promote digital economy. In assisting operators to install 5G base stations, the Office of the Communications Authority launched a pilot scheme and has in total opened up about 1 500 suitable government premises for operators to install base stations with a streamlined application process and nominal rental (\$1 per year) so as to extend 5G network coverage. Also, the Government has established mechanisms to facilitate the installation of base stations by operators at sheltered bus stops and public payphone kiosks to further help refine the 5G network coverage.

President, I am eagerly looking forward to more exchange and cooperation with LegCo Members in promoting the digital economy development of Hong Kong. Thank you, President.

SCED speaks to the media

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session after attending the Legislative Council meeting today (May 18):

Reporter: Could we know the importance of the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting for you to attend personally?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: APEC meetings have been held online for the past few years. This year, with Thailand as the host, they are going to have physical meetings. I will be departing Hong Kong tonight for the APEC ministerial meeting to be held this weekend. This is also tying in with the time when Hong Kong reopens ourselves and coming back to normalcy. As we relaxed certain social distancing measures in Hong Kong and are bringing back more vibrant economic activities, we are also reaching out to our partners. APEC has always been our significant partner. I think APEC economies have captured more than the lion's share, I would say over 80 per

cent, or nearly 90 per cent, of our total trade, not to mention that within APEC, 15 member economies of which are also the members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. I will be taking this opportunity to attend the meeting, to join the discussion on how to achieve a more open, connected and balanced economic region, with a view to enhancing freer trade, and opt for more liberalisation of trade. At the same time, I will be bringing to the APEC economies the message that Hong Kong is struggling hard, with certain success in overcoming the recent pandemic wave. We are heading towards reopening ourselves with maximum caution and protection, so this is part of our outreach efforts. In addition to attending the APEC meeting, I will hold some events in Bangkok because Thailand is a very close partner of Hong Kong. We are mutually major trading partners and there is also quite a significant Hong Kong investment interest in Thailand and vice versa. I will be hosting an event, meeting with senior Thailand officials as well as the business leaders in Bangkok.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

LCQ1: Improving environment of Tsuen Wan waterfront

Following is a question by the Hon Nixie Lam and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

While Phase 1 of the "Enhancement of the Tsuen Wan Waterfront project" ("the enhancement project"), implemented by the Government through the dedicated funding for harbourfront enhancement, was completed and opened to the public in April last year, the details of the project's Phase 2 are not yet available. On the other hand, the seawater odour problem at the Tsuen Wan waterfront, which has been causing distress to the residents of Tsuen Wan West, remains unresolved. On improving the environment of the Tsuen Wan waterfront, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that the Harbourfront Commission once put forward proposals for improving the Tsuen Wan waterfront, including the provision of jogging trails, greening and covered leisure facilities, whether the Government has incorporated such proposals in its plans for the enhancement project in future; if so, of the details and the latest progress; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the latest schedules for the works projects for resolving the seawater odour problem at the above location; whether it will consider concurrently

adopting the method of using oyster shells for purification of the seawater to help resolve the problem; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that the discharge of polluted water into the stormwater drainage system of the Tsuen Wan District is the cause of the seawater odour problem at the Tsuen Wan waterfront, whether the Government will establish comprehensive big data on sewage discharge in order to eradicate the problem by nipping the problem in the bud; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

First of all, I would like to thank the Hon Nixie Lam for her question and concern about the Tsuen Wan waterfront and near-shore odour problem. On April 28, the Environment Bureau, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Drainage Services Department (DSD) conducted a site visit with the representatives of residents of Tsuen Wan Bay to explain the details of the Government's various odour mitigation measures and projects, and received their positive feedback. My reply to the Hon Lam's question is as follows:

(1) The Government has been striving to enhance the Victoria Harbour waterfronts, and has dedicated \$6.5 billion funding to develop new promenades and open space, as well as to enhance the harbourfront. Among various projects, the Enhancement of the Tsuen Wan Waterfront (Phase 1) was completed in April last year and has been opened to the public. The Development Bureau is currently taking forward the project for Enhancement of the Tsuen Wan Waterfront (Phase 2) (the Project), which aims to enhance the waterfront facilities and design and improve the connectivity of the waterfront from surrounding areas. The Project comprises a 530-metre long promenade for the public to jog and stroll, and a waterfront space project covering an area of about 12 000 square metres. The project will provide a variety of leisure facilities, including fitness and recreational facilities, restaurants, shelters and green zones. The facilities would blend in the landscape design for public to enjoy the beautiful scenery and the Tsuen Wan waterfront space in different ways.

The Architectural Services Department is currently conducting consultant selection process for the detailed design for the Project. The selection process is expected to be completed by the middle of this year. We plan to conduct consultation work, including consultation with the Harbourfront Commission and the district on the detailed design once it is ready. We target to invite tenders for the construction works by the end of 2023 and aim to seek funding approval from the Legislative Council and commence construction works in mid-2024. The Project is expected to be completed in phases from the end of 2025, bringing a new experience to the public at the Tsuen Wan waterfront.

(2) Similar to many developed areas in Hong Kong, Tsuen Wan is a densely

populated district packed with new and old buildings and vibrant city activities. This results in some polluted surface run-off draining into the near-shore waters via the stormwater drainage system and causes the emanation of odour. To resolve the odour problem at the Tsuen Wan waterfront area, the Government has formulated a series of improvement plans, including the following:

- To enhance clean-up of refuse black spots in the district and conduct regular dredging of drainage channels so as to reduce the discharge of pollutants or sediment into the near-shore waters through stormwater drains;
- To deploy large curtains and apply "odour-control hydrogel" at the outlets of box drains along the coast so as to inhibit odorous gas emission;
- To investigate and rectify foul sewer misconnections to the stormwater drainage system so as to segregate sewage and stormwater flows and prevent sewage pollution in the coastal area; and
- To carry out multiple items of projects on pollutant interception, sewerage system and sewer rehabilitation in the district so as to reduce near-shore pollution discharge, with details as follows:

Advance works on pollution source interception

The Government is constructing dry weather flow interceptors (DWFI) at five unsewered rural areas of Tsuen Wan, including Kwong Pan Tin Tsuen, San Tsuen (Northeast), Fu Yung Shan, Hon Man Squatter Area and Sam Tung Uk, to intercept sewage and prevent it from draining into Tsuen Wan Bay. The works is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Village sewerage systems

In order to increase the amount of sewage interception, the Government is planning village sewerage systems for nine unsewered villages in Tsuen Wan. We will submit a funding application to the Legislative Council for the concerned works in Lo Wai and Chuen Lung in June this year, targeting for completion in 2025. We will progressively initiate gazettal and land resumption procedures for the respective works in the remaining seven villages.

Sewer rehabilitation

In addition, the DSD is conducting condition survey for about seven kilometers and rehabilitating about 1.3 kilometres of sewers and the associated manholes in Tsuen Wan. The works are targeted for completion in stages between 2022 and 2025.

Newly designed DWFI

For long-term improvement of the water quality at Tsuen Wan waterfront, the Government is planning to construct newly designed DWFI near the outlets of the Tai Ho Road and Ma Tau Pa Road box culverts to intercept residual

pollutants carried by them. The project had been included in the public works programme in 2020, and the work on site investigation and finalisation of site selection is now in full swing. We will conduct district consultation on the proposed works within 2022. After completion of the relevant procedures and funding approval by the Legislative Council, we will commence construction works as soon as possible in 2024. The facility is targeted for completion in 2028.

To conclude, the odour problem at the Tsuen Wan waterfront is mainly caused by sewage or pollutants being discharged into the bay area through stormwater drains, and the primary solution is to intercept the pollution. Although deployment of oyster shells for building ecological seawalls or artificial oyster reefs in near-shore area can enrich biodiversity and enhance the ecological environment, it has limited effect on treating sewage and pollutants from storm drains. Therefore, the Government will focus resources to implement the above-mentioned pollution interception, sewerage and sewer rehabilitation works in Tsuen Wan.

(3) Apart from the aforementioned unsewered rural areas, some sewer misconnections in the Tsuen Wan urban area are also sources of sewage in the stormwater drainage system. In this regard, the EPD has been proactively tracing pollution sources and identifying pollution caused by misconnections in Tsuen Wan with an aim to controlling and intercepting pollutants from entering the stormwater system at source. In parallel, we will continue to collect and collate information and data of pollution sources, and make timely update, with a view to systematically following up on the progress of misconnection correction work.

Thank you, President.

LCQ3: Strengthening the cooperation with the Council after the improvement of the electoral system

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 18):

Question:

The current-term Legislative Council (LegCo) is the first LegCo formed after the improvement of the electoral system. The number of seats has increased by 20 from the previous term and an Election Committee constituency is newly added. Nearly 40 Members of LegCo are non-partisan. Some analyses

have pointed out that the discussion atmosphere in LegCo has changed from one where two political camps were in confrontation with each other in the past to one where issues are examined in greater depth, with more refined proposals being put forward to the Government. In addition, the new Council structure and composition of Members have enabled reforms and government motions which are genuinely in the interest of the community at large to stand a better chance of gaining the support of the Council. In the past few months, the cross-party and multi-disciplinary collaboration among Members from different backgrounds on various livelihood issues has played a positive role in driving the Government to make policy improvements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the commencement of the current term of LegCo, how the Government, under the new situation, makes good use of the new Council culture after the improvement of the electoral system to actively resolve some of the thorny livelihood issues for Hong Kong;

(2) under the new situation, how the Government steps up its efforts on consulting and explaining to various sectors of the community and members of the public government policies, so as to boost the Government's credibility and public support; and

(3) under an executive-led political system, how the Government engages in healthy interaction with LegCo which focuses on the quality of deliberation and the standard of proposals, so that the governing team can embrace high quality proposals from Members as an integral part of its governance of Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

By reconstituting the Election Committee (EC) and endowing it with new functions, the improved electoral system has increased the balanced and orderly political participation in the Hong Kong society and to make the political system more broadly representative. In addition, the scale of the Legislative Council (LegCo) has been enlarged with the number of Members being increased from 70 to 90. In terms of composition, Members returned by the EC, functional constituencies and geographical constituencies through direct elections have resulted in a wider and more balanced coverage of the LegCo and a greater diversity of voices and opinions. At the same time, a qualification reviewing mechanism has been established to ensure that candidates meet the requirements of being a patriot, thus forming a new democratic electoral system that is in line with the actual situation in Hong Kong and carries Hong Kong's characteristics. Under the new system, the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is fully implemented, enabling the executive and the legislature to resume rational interaction, so that the HKSAR Government can practically resolve various deep-rooted problems in the society relating to people's livelihood and the economy, and achieve good governance and long-term stability.

On December 19 last year, the 2021 LegCo General Election was conducted in accordance with the law in a fair, open, honest and efficient manner. Over 1.3 million electors cast their votes and 90 Members were elected from 153 candidates of different backgrounds and political views, demonstrating the broad representation, political inclusiveness, balanced participation and fair competition of the new electoral system.

In response to Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung's question, having consulted the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Information Services Department, our consolidated reply is as follows.

(1) A strong executive-legislature relationship with healthy interactions is essential to achieving good governance of the HKSAR. The Government is delighted that the seventh-term LegCo has been effectively fulfilling and observing the constitutional functions of the Legislature under the Basic Law. This enables the realisation of "restoring order from chaos, bringing prosperity by governing" in Hong Kong, and also ensures the steadfast and successful implementation of "one country, two systems".

Since the commencement of the current-term LegCo on January 1 this year, Members have offered valuable and constructive views and suggestions on various policy purview and issues which are of public's concern.

When it comes to taking forward legislative proposals, the Government has introduced a total of ten Bills into LegCo, including the two Bills to be introduced for First and Second Reading later on at today's Council meeting. These ten Bills include legislative proposals that, in light of the rapidly rising epidemic, the Government introduces to step up the support to the members of the public and businesses who were affected by the epidemic. Three Bills have been scrutinised and passed by LegCo so far under its efficient operation.

The current term Government would strive to introduce about 10 other Bills which seek to improve people's livelihood and promote economic development before the end of its term on June 30 this year. These legislative proposals include, inter alia, the Residential Care Homes Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill and Copyright (Amendment) Bill 2022. These are among the legislative proposals set out in the Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address. They reflect the results of the extensive consultations conducted by relevant bureaux with their stakeholders in the sector as well as LegCo Members. We believe that LegCo will surely continue to complete scrutinising the Bills in a serious, detailed and efficient manner for their early enactment, so as to actively resolve some of the social, economic and livelihood issues for Hong Kong.

On the 4th of this month, the LegCo passed by an overwhelming majority the first Budget after improving the electoral system. During the scrutiny process, Members fully demonstrated the new atmosphere of rational and professional deliberation and healthy interaction between the executive and the legislature. With the enhanced cooperation between the Government and the

LegCo, the various relief measures in the Budget can be implemented early, giving impetus to the Hong Kong economy, which has been badly hit by the fifth wave of the epidemic, to stimulate consumption and boost the economy. Separately, in regard to financial proposals, as at 29 April 2022, the Finance Committee (FC) has approved in total seven funding proposals amounting to around \$95.3 billion, including convening additional meetings to consider the injection of \$27 billion and \$43 billion into the Anti-epidemic Fund for implementing the sixth round of relief measures and 2022 Employment Support Scheme respectively. Owing to the support of the FC, the Government was able to secure the funding expeditiously to provide timely support for the businesses and individuals hard hit by the epidemic. In the remaining term of office of the current term Government, the Government will continue to submit other funding proposals relating to people's livelihood to the FC, including the establishment and financial proposals in relation to the re-organisation of the Government structure, for the Council's scrutiny and consideration.

The HKSAR Government will continue to engage in in-depth exchanges with the LegCo so as to safeguard the constitutional order of Hong Kong and the overall interests of the society, thereby ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

(2) Senior officials of the HKSAR Government have been actively explaining the Government's policies to different sectors of the community, and have been widely promoting them through various channels, including explaining to the public the policy considerations, implementation details, impact on the society and the public, in the hope of gaining public trust and support, in order to enhance the administrative effectiveness and benefit the public. All bureaux and departments closely monitor public opinion and information disseminated on different platforms in order to make appropriate responses. For rumours and inaccurate information, the Government will take the initiative to clarify and refute the fallacies promptly through various means, such as press releases, online and social media platforms or briefings. The Government will continue to strengthen and work on the policy promotion and information dissemination.

(3) Under the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", Members of the new term LegCo shoulder the important responsibility of participating in the governance of Hong Kong together with the HKSAR Government. The Government attaches great importance to the executive-legislative relationship, and will work closely with LegCo Members to facilitate their work, including scrutinising bills, funding approval, raising questions and motion debates, so as to promote the positive and interactive executive-legislative relationship for the benefit of all Hong Kong people.

The Chief Executive regularly attends Question and Answer Sessions and Question Time to respond directly to Members' questions. Also through the Chief Secretary for Administration's regular meetings with Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the House Committee, the Government maintains close liaison and communication with the LegCo. The Government's entire political team will continue to actively liaise and interact with the LegCo, and will

conduct formal or informal exchanges with Members as early as possible in the policy formulation process. The relevant LegCo Panels will be consulted. The team will incorporate feasible suggestions with an open and pragmatic attitude and strive to balance the interests of different sectors and social strata, with a view to forging a consensus in the community and building a brighter future for Hong Kong.

The Government will make its best effort, together with all Members, to protect the sovereignty, security and development interests of our country, and also strive to enhance the effectiveness of the HKSAR's governance for serving members of the public in a pragmatic manner and seeking happiness for them. We will win public recognition by achieving actual outcomes under the improved electoral system. The new system shall give full play to its superiority, so as to fully demonstrate the new landscape of executive and the legislature administering Hong Kong with one mind under "patriots administering Hong Kong".