

LCQ 21: Youth Hostel Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 4):

Question:

The Government announced the implementation of the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS) in the 2011-2012 Policy Address, under which non-governmental organisations would be fully funded by the Government to construct youth hostels on sites owned by them. So far, seven projects have been launched under YHS. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that only one project has been completed since the launch of YHS, of the reasons for the delay in each of the remaining projects;

(2) whether it knows, as at February this year, the number of persons who have moved into the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups Youth Hostel PH2 in Tai Po under YHS, as well as the following information on each tenant: age, monthly income, total value of assets, reasons for moving in, term of residence, and whether they have applied for public rental housing (set out in a table);

(3) of the following information on each of the six projects under YHS that have not yet been completed: (i) the latest progress, (ii) the anticipated completion date, and (iii) the latest estimated number of hostel places (set out in the table below); whether it has drawn up a timetable for such projects; if not, of the reasons for that, and how it expedites the delivery of such projects;

Project	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
(a) Po Leung Kuk's project in Yuen Long	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€
(b) Tung Wah Group of Hospitals' project in Sheung Wan	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€
(c) The Hong Kong Association of Youth Development's project in Mong Kok	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€
(d) The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association's project in Jordan	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€
(e) The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council Limited's project in Yuen Long	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€
(f) The Salvation Army's project in Wan Chai	ã€€	ã€€	ã€€

(4) given that one of the objectives of YHS is to enable young people to

accumulate savings to pursue their medium-term aspirations in personal development, whether the Government will, in the light of the time required for the completion of the six yet-to-be-completed projects, introduce other measures to assist young people in buying homes and accumulating savings; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it has plans to launch more projects under YHS; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To meet the aspirations of some working youth in having their own living spaces and to unleash the potential of development sites, the Government has introduced the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS) under which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are fully funded by the Government to construct youth hostels on their under-utilised sites and, upon completion, operate the youth hostels on a self-financing basis.

A total of seven projects are currently in progress under the YHS, namely The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups' (HKFYG) youth hostel on Po Heung Street, Tai Po, which has been completed and has commenced operation; Po Leung Kuk's youth hostel in Ma Tin Pok, Yuen Long, the construction of which is nearing completion; The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association's project in Jordan and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals' project in Sheung Wan, both of which are under construction; as well as The Hong Kong Association of Youth Development's project in Mong Kok, the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council Limited's project in Yuen Long, and the Salvation Army's project in Wan Chai, all three of which are under planning. These projects can provide a total of over 3 400 youth hostel places.

Having consulted the Transport and Housing Bureau, our consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) and (3) The HKSAR Government has been actively taking forward the YHS. The above projects vary in size, building design and technical requirements, involving different planning and land procedures. For example, since the location of a project is close to declared monuments, it was necessary to conduct heritage impact assessment and undergo related consultation procedures. In addition, under the principle of "single site, multiple use", some projects aim to provide other self-financed facilities or government-funded facilities in addition to the youth hostel on the site. The NGOs responsible for the operation therefore needed time to complete the preparation and planning works for each of these facilities. The Home Affairs Bureau has been assisting individual NGOs in liaising with the relevant government departments to resolve technical issues and expedite the projects' progress. We will continue to work closely with the relevant NGOs to assist them in taking forward the projects.

The latest progress, number of hostel places and anticipated completion dates of the individual youth hostel projects are at Annex.

(2) HKFYG's youth hostel in Tai Po was completed and came into operation in March 2020, providing 80 hostel places. As at February 2022, a total of 90 young people are living/have lived in the youth hostel. According to the information provided by HKFYG, the average age of tenants is 25. The average monthly income and average total asset value are \$18,435 and \$116,704 respectively. Around 60 per cent of tenants have been living in the youth hostel since 2020 and the remaining tenants have lived for around one to two years. Around 30 per cent of young people have lived in the youth hostel because they want to have more personal space and achieve personal development. Around 25 per cent of them have lived in the youth hostel because of career or study needs. The remaining young people have lived in the youth hostel mainly due to a crowded living environment at home. Tenants are required to inform HKFYG and move out of the youth hostel within a reasonable period if they are allocated public rental housing, but they are not required to report to HKFYG in advance in respect of their applications for public rental housing.

(4) Housing is not an issue for the youth only, but one that concerns the Hong Kong community as a whole. In view of the serious shortage of land supply, the Government has been taking various measures to identify land for housing development and make better use of the current resources in order to enrich the housing ladder. Apart from implementing the Home Ownership Scheme, we have also introduced the "Starter Homes" pilot projects, regularised the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme and the White Form Secondary Market Scheme, and accelerated the sale of unsold flats in the Tenant Purchase Scheme estates, etc. in recent years, with a view to supporting the Hong Kong people (including the youth) to achieve home ownership.

(5) The policy objective of the YHS is to better utilise the land held by the NGOs to provide an alternative to meeting the aspirations of some working youth in having their own living space, as well as to enable these young tenants to accumulate savings to pursue their medium term aspirations.

We will announce details of new projects when they are ready. We will closely monitor society's demand for youth hostels, progressively implement the individual projects and continue to liaise with NGOs that have expressed interest in the YHS, with a view to providing more youth hostel places.

Government follows up on positive

results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (May 4) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong had strengthened the sampling of sewage for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in many areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 220 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Tsuen Wan District – Rhine Terrace, Rhine Garden, Bellagio, Ocean Pointe and Lido Garden
- Islands District – The Visionary, Century Link, Century Link II and Ying Tung Estate
- Tai Po District – Fu Heng Estate
- Kwai Tsing District – Tai Wo Hau Estate, Sheung Man Court and Kwai Yin Court

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If

individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

Practise proper hand hygiene to halt the spread of communicable diseases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 4), in support of the annual Hand Hygiene Day tomorrow (May 5), appealed to the public to clean hands at the right times with the right techniques, so as to halt the transmission of infectious diseases including COVID-19 and contribute to reducing the global burden.

The CHP adopted "Clean Hands Wisely, Germs Leave Quickly" as the slogan for the promotional campaign for Hand Hygiene Day 2022 to remind the public to perform hand hygiene when appropriate and to get into a habit of doing so. Apart from before eating or after touching public facilities, the public should clean their hands whenever they find their hands dirty. The CHP hopes that hand hygiene can become part of everyone's daily routine.

Since 2005, Hong Kong has pledged support for the World Health Organization's advocacy of "Clean Care is Safer Care" by actively promoting hand hygiene in both healthcare settings and in the community. This year, the CHP invited a local artist to design and produce a short animation, a poster and a set of animated WhatsApp stickers to remind the public of the key health message.

The public may visit the CHP's Hand Hygiene Day 2022 webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/105581.html) for more information on hand hygiene.

Missing girl in Ngau Tau Kok located

A girl who went missing in Ngau Tau Kok has been located.

Wan Tsz-yin, Angel, aged 12, went missing after she left her residence in Kai Ching Estate on April 29 night. Her family made a report to Police on the next day.

The girl was located on Ning Tai Road in Ma On Shan last night (May 3). No suspicious circumstances were detected.

Government enforces "restriction-testing declaration" and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Ming Toa House, Ming Tak Estate, Tseung Kwan O

The Government yesterday (May 3) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 4pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tseung Kwan O (i.e. Ming Toa House, Ming Tak Estate, Tseung Kwan O, excluding Ming Tak Estate Property Service Management Office and social service unit thereat) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained.

In addition, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the building for more than two hours from April 27 to May 3, 2022 to undergo compulsory testing on or before May 5, 2022 even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect.

The Government finished the compulsory testing exercise at around 9am today (May 4) and is now carrying out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have undergone compulsory testing. The Government will further announce the revocation time of the declaration.

Starting from around 9am today, persons in the specified "restricted area" in Tseung Kwan O who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results or wear wristbands as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to

undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 9pm yesterday. 1 223 people within the "restricted area" had undergone testing, among which seven cases tested positive and three indeterminate cases were found. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will arrange to follow up.

The Government provided food packs for persons subject to compulsory testing so as to facilitate the meal arrangements of persons subject to compulsory testing. Rapid antigen test kits, as well as anti-epidemic proprietary Chinese medicines supplied by the Central People's Government, were also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

Regarding cases tested positive in the specified "restricted area", the Government has provided additional food packs, health advice for persons tested positive pending admission to hospitals or isolation facilities, disinfection products and surgical masks to these persons and their household members pending follow-up arrangement.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit 737 households, among which 118 households did not answer the door. The Government will take measures to follow up.

The Government reiterates that enforcement actions will be taken seriously. Any person who fails to present an SMS notification with a test result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone testing breaches the compulsory testing notice and may be liable to a fine of \$10,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him/her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.