

LCQ2: Popularisation of electric vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

On promoting the popularisation of electric vehicles (EVs), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that there was only one EV in every 40 vehicles in the government fleet last year, whether it has assessed if the Government, with such a proportion, is able to take the lead in using EVs; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, of the specific measures in place to raise the proportion and the implementation timetable;

(2) given that as mentioned in the funding application submitted to this Council by the Government last month, only "not less than 30 per cent" of the car parking spaces in the two public car parks planned to be built by the Government would be provided with EV charging facilities, whether it has assessed if the Government, with such a proportion, is able to set an example for public car parks operated by the private sector; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, whether it will raise the proportion; and

(3) given that while the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (the Roadmap) has proposed a number of measures on the popularisation of EVs, quite a number of government officers and private car owners have relayed that they lack the desire to switch to using EVs as ancillary facilities for EVs are inadequate (e.g. only a small number of public car parking spaces are provided with charging facilities, or such spaces are only provided with standard charging facilities), whether it has reviewed if the Roadmap has put forward solutions to address the issues concerned, and provided adequate incentives to make private car owners switch to using EVs expeditiously, so as to meet the target of ceasing the new registration of fuel-propelled private cars in 2035 or earlier?

Reply:

President,

The Government announced in March this year the first Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (EV Roadmap). The key measures include no new registration of fuel-propelled private cars in 2035 or earlier, proactively promoting trials for electric public transport and commercial vehicles, expanding the electric vehicle (EV) charging network and promoting its marketisation, training for EV professionals, formulating a Producer

Responsibility Scheme for retired EV batteries, establishing a task force to examine the high-end development of new decarbonisation technologies globally, reviewing the strategies and targets of the EV Roadmap roughly every 5 years.

As regards the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien, having consulted the Development Bureau, the Architectural Services Department, the Government Logistics Department, the Housing Department and the Transport Department, my response is as follows:

(1) The Government has been keeping abreast of the latest technological development of EVs and encouraging departments to use EVs in replacing their vehicles due for replacement, subject to the availability of suitable models in the market and their performance in meeting departments' operational needs. As at end-2020, there are 133 EVs among the 1 130 saloon cars in the government fleet (i.e. 1 EV in every 8 saloon cars).

The battery capacity and range of electric cars have been enhancing significantly in the recent years and charging speed is also catching up. This renders electric private cars (e-private cars) suitable for daily use in Hong Kong generally. As more and more relatively affordable e-private cars enter into the local market, to demonstrate the Government's commitment in pushing forward Hong Kong's transition to EVs, we are prepared to switch our vehicle fleet to EVs at a faster pace, and have formulated a new policy to set EV as standard for small and medium government private cars to be procured or replaced, unless there are special circumstances such as operational needs that render the use of EVs infeasible. For other types of vehicles, the use of EVs and other more environmentally friendly vehicles will be accorded priority. Senior government officials will also take the lead in switching their saloon cars to EVs when their cars are replaced.

We will also advance in tandem with the global development in exploring electrification of other types of special purpose vehicles in the government fleet such as refuse collection vehicles and street washing vehicles, and will strike a balance between prudent use of public monies and taking the lead in using EVs.

(2) According to the requirements stipulated in the government circular on "Green Government Buildings", unless it is technically infeasible, all new government buildings should provide medium chargers in not less than 30 per cent of indoor parking spaces. The remaining parking spaces should be equipped with EV charging infrastructure including power supply, cables, distribution boards, switchgears, conduits and trunkings, for the timely installation of chargers at parking spaces subject to the evaluation of needs.

To further enhance charging support, we are planning to update the above-mentioned circular and relevant guidelines, to require all parking spaces for private cars, motorcycles and light goods vehicles within new government buildings to be equipped with medium chargers, unless there are extreme technical constraints. We are working out the details in consultation

with relevant bureaux and departments, for the proposed new amendments to be applicable to future new government buildings.

(3) Tying in with the measures to stop new registration of fuel-propelled private cars in 2035 or earlier, the EV Roadmap has set out strategies to extend the charging network with a multi-pronged approach.

Regarding private charging facilities, the Government's target is to have at least 150 000 parking spaces in private residential and commercial buildings to be equipped with EV charging infrastructure by 2025. To achieve the target, the Government will continue providing gross floor area concessions to car parks of new buildings that have EV charging infrastructure installed. Over 68 000 parking spaces have been approved. Furthermore, the \$2 billion EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme subsidises installation of charging infrastructure in car parks of existing private residential buildings. From its launch in October 2020 until now, the scheme has received more than 370 applications, involving over 88 000 private parking spaces.

As for public charging facilities, the Government's target is to have at least 5 000 public chargers provided by both the private and public sectors by 2025, and we plan to double the number in future. The Government has allocated \$120 million to add more than 1 000 medium chargers at government car parks by 2022, bringing the total number of chargers to 1 800. In addition, the consultant engaged by the Government has compiled a list of preliminary potential sites for setting up public quick charging facilities in the 18 districts in Hong Kong early this year and the Government will further study the sites. We will also explore the feasibility of progressively converting some existing petrol and liquefied petroleum gas filling stations to quick charging stations in the medium to long term.

With the ever-growing EV uptake, the Government will progressively marketise EV charging services in order to drive the private sector to provide more customerised EV charging services. Besides, we have extended the deadline of the first registration tax (FRT) concession arrangement for EVs (including the "One-for-One Replacement" Scheme) to March 2024, and raised the FRT concession cap of e-private cars under the "One-for-One Replacement" Scheme from \$250,000 to \$287,500, to promote EV adoption while not giving unintentional impetus to vehicular growth.

We will review the various strategies, measures and progress of the EV Roadmap around every 5 years to keep up with the relevant development, with a view to attaining the vision of "Zero Carbon Emissions" "Clean Air" "Smart City", and the target of zero vehicular emissions before 2050.

Thank you, President.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, May 12, 2021 is 100.7 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

LCQ10: Burial services and facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Chung Kwok-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

It has been learnt that burial services and facilities in Hong Kong, particularly that of public columbarium niches, have all along been in short supply. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the mortality rate of Hong Kong in each of the past two years and that projected for each of the coming five years;
- (2) of the projected number of new public niches to be provided by the Government in each of the coming five years;
- (3) according to the projections based on the mortality rates of Hong Kong, of the respective demand for (i) cremation services and (ii) niches in each of the coming five years; whether it has assessed if the total number of public and private niches to be supplied in the coming five years will be sufficient to meet such demand; and
- (4) given that the Government has since 2012 been taking forward the project involving the construction of funeral parlours, columbaria and crematoria at Sandy Ridge Cemetery, whether it has assessed, in respect of the burial services and niches to be provided under the project in the first 10 years upon project completion, (i) if they will then become the major source of supply of burial services and niches in Hong Kong, and (ii) their respective market shares; whether it has assessed the impacts on the medium and long term supply of burial services and facilities in Hong Kong in the event that the project cannot be completed as planned; if so, of the assessment outcome?

Reply:

President,

The numbers of deaths among the Hong Kong population in the past two

years (i.e. 2019 and 2020) were 48 706 and 50 653 respectively. Based on the population estimates published by the Census and Statistics Department in September 2020, the projected numbers of deaths for the next five years are tabulated below:

Year	Projected number of deaths
2021	52 200
2022	52 800
2023	53 500
2024	54 300
2025	55 100

At present, the majority of the public have accepted cremation as the mainstream mode of burial arrangements, with the number of cremation accounting for over 90 per cent of the number of deaths. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department estimates that there will be sufficient cremation sessions each year to meet the demand in the next few years. With a growing and ageing local population, the demand for cremation service will be on the rise. We need more such facilities to cater for the medium to long-term demand.

The prevailing practice after cremation is to store ashes in public or private columbaria. The Government is also putting in efforts to promote green burial by encouraging the scattering of cremated ashes at the Gardens of Remembrance or at sea.

The Government implements a district-based columbarium development scheme for the medium and long-term supply of public niches. Between 2011 and the end of 2020, the Government consulted the relevant District Councils on public columbarium projects at 14 sites, which would altogether provide around 600 000 new public niches. Among them, the projects at Diamond Hill in Wong Tai Sin, Cheung Chau, Wong Nai Chung Road in Wan Chai, Lai Chi Yuen in Mui Wo, Tsang Tsui in Tuen Mun and Wo Hop Shek Phase I have been completed, providing around 210 000 niches. The projects at Cape Collinson Road in Eastern District and Shek Mun in Sha Tin are underway for completion in 2022 and 2024, providing 25 000 and 40 000 niches respectively. In the next few years, with new columbarium projects being completed one after another, it is estimated that about 30 000 to over 40 000 new public niches will become available each year.

Regarding the supply of niches in private cemeteries, the columbarium projects at the Cape Collinson Chinese Permanent Cemetery, the Tsuen Wan Chinese Permanent Cemetery and the Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery under the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries are underway. These three projects are estimated to be completed in 2021, 2022 and 2024 respectively, providing a total of over 89 000 new niches.

We will take forward the work of burial facilities having regard to the circumstances.

LCQ7: Assisting the development of young people in the Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

The Chief Executive stated in the 2020 Policy Address that she hoped that young people could set their sights on the country, seizing the opportunities to study, work and live in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), so as to broaden the scope for realising their dreams. In recent years, the Government has introduced, through the Youth Development Fund and various other channels, a number of schemes to assist the young people of Hong Kong in studying, taking up employment and starting businesses in the Mainland cities of GBA. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the aforesaid schemes implemented by the Government in the past five years: (i) title, (ii) the responsible bureau/government department, (iii) commencement date and implementation period, (iv) the Mainland cities of GBA involved, (v) amount of subsidy, and (vi) the number of Hong Kong young people who received the subsidy (set out in the following table);

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
Studying schemes					
1.					
2.					
.....					
Employment schemes					
1.					
2.					
.....					
Entrepreneurship schemes					
1.					
2.					

.....					
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(2) whether it has established a mechanism to review the implementation progress and effectiveness of the schemes mentioned in (1); if so, of the details of the mechanism and the results of the review; if not, whether it will establish such mechanism; and

(3) whether it will, in the light of the effectiveness of such schemes, study the need to adjust the scale of the schemes, cease their implementation, or revise their contents and service targets?

Reply:

President,

Upon consulting the Education Bureau (EDB), the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan is as follows:

To encourage Hong Kong's young people to grasp the development opportunities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), the HKSAR Government has launched different schemes to facilitate them to study, work and start new businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

In terms of study schemes, at present, local youth who aspire to study at Mainland universities may participate in the "Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions" (Admission Scheme) implemented by the Ministry of Education since the 2012/13 academic year. Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme admit Hong Kong students based on their results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, hence obviating the need for them to take the Joint Entrance Examination for Mainland Institutions. A total of 127 Mainland institutions will be participating in the Admission Scheme in the 2021/22 academic year, including 18 institutions from four Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (i.e. Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhaoqing and Dongguan). The EDB assists the Ministry of Education in implementing the Admission Scheme in Hong Kong to provide local secondary school graduates with multiple study pathways and opportunities to connect with the country's development.

In addition, the EDB supports local secondary school graduates who intend to pursue further studies on the Mainland through the "Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme" (MUSSS) introduced in the 2014/15 academic year. The MUSSS comprises two components: a "means-tested subsidy" (whereby eligible students who have passed a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy or a half-rate subsidy, depending on their needs) and a "non-means-tested subsidy". For the 2020/21 academic year, the full-rate and half-rate "means-tested subsidy" are HK\$16,800 and HK\$8,400 per annum respectively; the "non-means-tested subsidy" offers a flat rate subsidy of HK\$5,600 per annum. The amount of subsidy granted under the MUSSS in relation

to Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai) and the number of students receiving the subsidy in the past five academic years are provided below:

Academic year	Amount of subsidy* (HK\$ million)	Number of students receiving the subsidy
2016/17	17.5	1 395
2017/18	21.8	1 859
2018/19	24.4	1 841
2019/20	23.4	1 779
2020/21#	26.3	2 003

* Figures are rounded up

As at April 29, 2021

As for effectiveness, the number of Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme as well as the number of applicants have been increasing every year. The MUSSS has also recorded a steady increase in the number of applicants and beneficiaries. The EDB will continue to implement initiatives to facilitate local young people in pursuing studies in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

In terms of employment schemes, the Labour Department (LD) launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (Youth Employment Scheme) in January 2021 to encourage more young people to work and develop their careers in the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities. The Youth Employment Scheme encourages enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to recruit and deploy university graduates in Hong Kong to work in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. 2 000 places are provided under the Scheme of which 700 are designated for innovation and technology posts. Participating enterprises shall employ the graduates at a monthly salary of no less than HK\$18,000. To compensate enterprises for the additional expenses on employing and training the graduates, participating enterprises will be given a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 for each graduate engaged for up to 18 months.

As at April 30, the Youth Employment Scheme has received nearly 2 400 job vacancies from 321 enterprises. For the majority of these vacancies, the recruitment process was underway. The LD and the Innovation and Technology Bureau have been closely monitoring the implementation of the Youth Employment Scheme and will review its effectiveness upon conclusion.

In terms of entrepreneurship schemes, the HAB has introduced, under the Youth Development Fund, the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Entrepreneurship Scheme) and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and

Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Experiential Scheme), which cover the nine Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. Both schemes were launched with a view to encouraging Hong Kong young people to make optimal use of the innovative and entrepreneurial bases in the Greater Bay Area and helping them develop their businesses in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The application results were announced in February 2021.

About \$130 million has been granted under the Entrepreneurship Scheme, the funded NGOs are now in the process of recruiting youth start-ups. Capital subsidy will be provided to about 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs) and entrepreneurial support and incubation services will be rendered to about 4 000 young people under the Entrepreneurship Scheme. As for the Experiential Scheme, about \$5 million has been granted, the funded NGOs are now progressively rolling out relevant online activities such as online briefings, seminars, and training courses. Subject to the development of the pandemic, the NGOs will kick-start the physical cross-border experiential projects (with a duration between 6 to 28 days) when it is safe and practicable to do so. Around 700 young people are expected to benefit from the projects.

It is stipulated in the respective application guidelines for the Entrepreneurship Scheme and the Experiential Scheme that a funded NGO is required to submit relevant activity report(s), progress report(s), financial report(s), an auditor's report, and so forth to the Youth Development Commission (YDC) to report the progress, financial situation and outcomes of its funded project. Moreover, members of the YDC will conduct visits and meetings to understand the effectiveness of the entrepreneurial support and incubation services provided by the funded NGOs and the operation of the short-term experiential projects, as well as to communicate with the start-ups and make suggestions for improvement. In particular, in respect of the start-up capital component under the Entrepreneurship Scheme, it is stipulated in the application guidelines that a funded NGO must formulate suitable phased indicators (for example, "having successfully built product prototypes", "having completed product development", "having successfully launched products in the market", "having opened physical shops", etc.) having regard to the nature of its project, and help selected start-ups develop their businesses by guiding them to achieve these indicators. The funded NGO should disburse the start-up capital in phases to the selected start-ups only after they have met the agreed indicators. The HAB will continue to work closely with the YDC to monitor the operation and effectiveness of the two schemes, and formulate the way forward.

[LCQ18: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

testing services

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

Currently, the Government has set up distribution points at designated general outpatient clinics under the Hospital Authority (outpatient clinics), post offices and MTR stations for members of the public to obtain deep throat saliva specimen collection packs (collection packs). Members of the public may return the deep throat saliva specimens (specimens) collected by themselves to designated specimen collection points (collection points) at specified hours for free Coronavirus Disease 2019 testing (testing). Some members of the public have relayed that since February this year when the Government started requiring the persons-in-charge of catering businesses and some scheduled premises to arrange for their staff to undergo testing once every 14 days, there has been a shortage of collection packs at various distribution points, rendering those persons who have to complete testing at a scheduled time unable to obtain collection packs in time. They have also pointed out that a majority of those persons who are required to regularly undergo testing do not know that, apart from obtaining collection packs and returning specimens, they may also go to the Community Testing Centres for free testing. Moreover, there are often long queues at the mobile specimen collection stations set up by the Government in the vicinity of the restricted areas/specified premises set out in the relevant mandatory testing declarations/notices. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) in respect of the various distribution points set up at (i) outpatient clinics, (ii) post offices and (iii) MTR stations, of the average (a) respective daily and monthly numbers of collection packs distributed, and (b) daily time taken to finish distribution of all collection packs after commencement of distribution, since January this year;
- (2) whether it will set up additional distribution points and increase the quantities of collection packs for distribution at the various distribution points;
- (3) whether it will extend the time for collecting specimens at the various collection points to facilitate the return of specimens by members of the public;
- (4) whether it will step up publicity on the categories of persons to whom the Community Testing Centres are providing free testing, so as to alleviate the demand for collection packs; and
- (5) whether it has reviewed the situation of queuing for testing at those

mobile specimen collection stations set up in the vicinity of the restricted areas/specified premises, and whether it will increase the manpower for those stations, so as to avoid a rise in the risk of the epidemic spreading as a result of members of the public waiting for a long time for testing?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along been providing convenient testing services to the public through various channels to encourage and facilitate members of the public to undergo testing, so as to achieve the objective of "early identification, early isolation and early treatment" and cut the transmission chains as early as possible.

With regard to the Hon Kwok Wai-keung's question, our reply is as follows:

(1) to (3) Starting from late July 2020, to facilitate individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure or experience mild discomfort to undergo free testing, they can collect and return specimen bottles at 22 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority (HA) for free. The HA has for several times increased the number of GOPCs distributing specimen collection packs, extended the distribution hours of specimen collection packs and installed multiple vending machines. Moreover, since end-November and early-December, more distribution points of specimen collection packs have been set up at post offices and MTR stations to further facilitate members of the public to obtain specimen collection packs.

Currently, there are 188 distribution points in 18 districts offering free specimen collection packs to the public. Members of the public can obtain deep throat saliva specimen collection packs at 47 HA GOPCs, 121 post offices or vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations for free, and return their specimens at designated hours to the 47 HA GOPCs, 13 clinics of the Department of Health or 23 specimen collection points at Government premises.

Since last July, the number of specimen collection packs distributed in Hong Kong has been increased substantially. In April 2021, a daily average of around 33 000 specimen collection packs were distributed by the Government, equivalent to 27 times the number last July and August during the third wave of the epidemic (a daily average of around 1 200 packs). Over the past few months, the number of specimen bottles collected by the Government is around half of the amount distributed. The Police earlier received intelligence that someone made profit through resale of specimen collection packs obtained from distribution points on online trading platforms, and arrested one male suspected to be in connection with the case after investigation. The Government calls on the public and organisations to refrain from collecting more sets of packs than needed or making a profit through resale, so that others in need can also obtain specimen collection packs for testing.

Starting from April 29, under the relaxed social distancing measures

under "vaccine bubble", staff of catering businesses operating under Types C and D and six types of scheduled premises (namely bars or pubs; clubs or nightclubs; bathhouses; party rooms; karaoke establishments; and mahjong-tin kau premises) who are unfit to receive vaccination because of health reasons must submit a declaration form and present a medical certificate to the employer, and undergo a nucleic acid test using combined nasal and throat swabs every seven days. In other words, they have to undergo testing and specimen collection by combined nasal and throat swabs at community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations, and cannot use specimen collection packs to self-collect deep throat saliva specimens. The above arrangement will alleviate the demand for specimen collection packs and make it easier for individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure or experience mild discomfort to obtain specimen collection packs for testing.

(4) to (5) Due to the surge of demand for regular testing from staff of catering business, scheduled premises and construction sector within a short period of time, the number of specimen collection packs distributed was relatively high in late February this year. In view of the surge in demand, we have set up two more community testing centres in March 2021; and the number of tests available for appointments at community testing centres has been increased from the original over 20 000 each day to more than 26 000 and 32 000 in late February and early March respectively, and further increased to more than 38 000 per day now, with more manpower deployed to serve the public. In addition, the Government have worked with testing operators to increase mobile specimen collection stations in a number of districts to divert the demand of different sectors.

At present, persons of certain targeted groups (including employees of scheduled premises and catering businesses, construction site personnel, school staff), residents and workers subject to compulsory testing, as well as persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification may receive free testing at community testing centres. The Government announces the relevant information through press releases and the latest lists of such eligible persons are posted at the community testing centres. Moreover, about 20 mobile specimen collection stations are in operation to provide free testing to the public (see the locations and service scope at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/station/). Some of them are dedicated to providing free services to staff of catering businesses and scheduled premises, and local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing.

To enable the working population to undergo testing on their rest days or before/after work, the community testing centres are open daily from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm, even on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Meanwhile, mobile specimen collection stations are generally open daily from 10am to 8pm. The Government would take into account various factors such as the number of persons subject to compulsory testing when issuing compulsory testing notices to ensure that persons subject to compulsory testing would have sufficient time to undergo testing. They may also choose to undergo testing via different routes, and it is not a must to complete testing at particular time slots or locations. When making

restriction-testing declarations, the Government would also make arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the restricted area as soon as possible, with the aim to complete testing of all identified persons and confirm the results by morning next day in order to keep the disturbance to residents' daily lives to the minimum.