

# CHP investigates seven additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health announced that as of 0.00am, April 28, the CHP was investigating seven additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 756 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 755 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, six are imported cases and one is epidemiologically linked with local cases.

A total of 141 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (April 14 to 27), including 35 local cases (including one possibly local) of which 16 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the compulsory testing notice. The Regulation also requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to compulsory testing notices published in the Gazette. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop and undergo testing as soon as possible.

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website ([www.covidvaccine.gov.hk](http://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk)).

The CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps). After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link [wa.me/85296171823?text=hi](https://wa.me/85296171823?text=hi), they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

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## LCQ9: Growing of plants of ornamental value

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question:

Some members of the tourism industry have pointed out that quite a number of famous tourist hotspots around the globe have attractions showcasing spectacular scenery of beautiful blooms. During flower viewing seasons, the tourism sectors in those places launch promotional activities in a pro-active manner and have attracted tourists from various places (with quite a number of them being residents of Hong Kong) to visit those hotspots. Contrarily, local residents and visitors to Hong Kong in general have little knowledge of the growing of flowers and other plants of ornamental value in various districts of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will compile a flora map to promote flower beds of a considerable scale across the territory to facilitate members of the public as well as tourists to visit them in the right seasons for appreciation and photo-taking;

(2) whether it will grow more flowers and plants of ornamental value in various districts of Hong Kong to increase the attractiveness of Hong Kong to tourists; if so, of the species of plants to be grown; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will deploy additional manpower to enhance efforts on planning and caring of the landscapes in various districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President:

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Yiu Si-wing, in consultation with the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Home Affairs Bureau, my reply is as follows:

(1) To facilitate public's appreciation of flowering plants, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has created a dedicated webpage "Blossoms Around Town" (<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/green/blossoms.html>) to introduce common flowering trees and special ornamental plant species in LCSD parks as

well as to provide timely information for locals and visitors to appreciate flower blossoms in different seasons. Besides, the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section of the DEVB has published the "Tree and Landscape Map" ([www.greening.gov.hk/en/knowledge\\_database/map.html](http://www.greening.gov.hk/en/knowledge_database/map.html)) to introduce special trees and green spaces of each district, including information on flowering plants, with a view to providing a guide for the public to visit these attractions to enjoy the local green spaces and landscape assets.

The Tourism Commission (TC), in collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and the travel trade, has been promoting events and activities in local neighbourhoods with tourism appeal to visitors through various channels. As regards appreciation of plants and gardening in Hong Kong, apart from promoting the annual Hong Kong Flower Show on the DiscoverHongKong website, HKTB also makes use of its "Great Outdoor Hong Kong" platform to introduce natural scenery at various points of interest in different seasons, such as miscanthus (commonly known as silvergrass) at Sunset Peak, cherry blossoms at the Rotary Club Campsite on Tai Mo Shan, and Melaleuca leucadendra (commonly known as the paperbark tree) in Shing Mun Country Park. TC will, in collaboration with HKTB, continue promoting flowering appreciation events and activities arranged and organized by relevant departments to overseas visitors as appropriate.

(2) The Government is committed to promoting greening, landscape and tree management. In view of the growing interest of the public and visitors on flower appreciation in recent years, the Government has been identifying more appropriate locations for suitable planting in the 18 districts wherever possible. The introduction of plants in parks under the management of LCSD, such as cherry trees in Hong Kong Velodrome Park, Yellow Pui in Nam Cheong Park and water lilies in Shing Mun Valley Park, has attracted many visitors during their flowering seasons every year. In view of the growing public interest on and appreciation for autumn scenery, LCSD has also planted some seasonal trees in suitable parks. For example, species that can create autumn forest scenes such as Bald Cypress and Chinese Swamp Cypress are planted in Tsing Yi Park for public enjoyment. The Hong Kong Flower Show, held in March every year in Victoria Park, is an annual spectacular event in the city which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors.

(3) The Government has been rolling out various landscape and greening projects in an orderly manner, and will increase the manpower in accordance with the actual needs as appropriate, having regard to the new development projects of various departments as well as the progress of greening, landscaping and tree maintenance, to enhance the landscape planning and maintenance work in various districts.

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## LCQ1: Allocation mechanism of ward offices in Housing Authority's public housing estates

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question :

At present, Legislative Council (LegCo) Members and District Council (DC) members may apply for leasing flats in housing estates and courts under the Housing Department (HD) for use as members' offices (ward offices). Under the current mechanism, the HD allocates ward offices according to the following four categories of priority: DC member returned by the DC constituency in which the flat is located, other DC members of the DC district in which the flat is located, LegCo Members returned by the LegCo geographical constituency in which the flat is located (directly elected Members), and LegCo Members returned by LegCo functional constituencies (Members returned by FCs). DC members may lease one ward office with a maximum area of 35 square metres, and LegCo Members may lease multiple ward offices with an aggregate area not exceeding 140 square metres. In December 2019, the Office of The Ombudsman (the Office) released a direct investigation report entitled Allocation Mechanism of Ward Offices under Housing Department (the Report), which pointed out the deficiencies of the allocation mechanism. For example, when a vacant ward office is available for application, a directly elected Member who has successfully leased another ward office in the district still enjoys priority over a Member returned by FC who has not been allocated any ward office. Regarding the allocation mechanism of ward offices, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Report showed that the leasing rate of ward offices exceeded 96 per cent as at May 31, 2019, of (i) the number of ward offices leased to the Member who had leased the most ward offices then, and (ii) whether all ward offices were then leased out without competition;

(2) as it was stated in the Report that the HD had sought views separately from Members of different political parties on the proposal of priority allocation of ward offices to those Members who had not been allocated any ward office, but quite a number of Members have relayed to me that the HD staff have never sought their views, of the details of the views collection exercise (including the dates on which views were sought, the number of Members of each priority category from whom views were sought, and the information provided to these Members);

(3) given that the HD assigns the lowest allocation priority to Members returned by FCs on grounds that there is no restriction on constituencies for such Members when they apply for leasing ward offices, and that they have the

most choices and may lease multiple offices, but there have been views that there is a need for some Members returned by FCs to maintain close contact with members of the public in certain districts, and yet the HD may not have ward offices available for lease in such districts that meet the requirements, whether the HD will review the allocation priority of such Members;

(4) although the Report stated that upon commencement of the last term of DCs and the current term of LegCo, the success rate of Members returned by FCs (who belong to the fourth priority category) being allocated ward offices was higher than those of the second and third priority categories, there have been views that such situation was only due to the lower proportion of Members returned by FCs applying for allocation of ward offices (i.e. 12 Members out of 35), whether the Government has gained an understanding as to whether the relatively small number of Members of that priority category applying for allocation of ward offices was due to their being accorded the lowest allocation priority and the poor quality of the remaining ward offices available for them to choose; and

(5) given that in the light of the recommendations of the Office, the HD has revised the arrangements for leasing ward offices to Members under joint tenancies by categorising joint tenants of ward offices into primary and secondary tenants, and stipulated that if the primary tenant is not re-elected or terminates the tenancy before it expires, the secondary tenant may retain the ward office until the end of his/her term provided that the aggregate area of the ward offices leased to him/her does not exceed his/her maximum entitlement, whether the Government has studied if such practice will reduce the chance of Members returned by FCs to apply for a ward office successfully?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Steven Ho is as follows:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has all along been leasing, as far as practicable, suitable non-domestic premises in its public housing estates (PHEs) to District Councilors (DCs) and Legislative Councilors (LCs) as ward offices for them to serve and keep in touch with the residents during their term of office. Under the current allocation mechanism, the HA allocates ward offices in accordance with the following order of priority:

Priority	Nature of Office
First	The elected DC of the constituency concerned
Second	Other DCs of the district
Third	LCs returned from the geographical constituency concerned
Fourth	LCs returned from functional constituencies

Furthermore, a DC can only lease one ward office up to the size of 35 sq m in HA's PHEs. A LC may lease more than one ward office in HA's PHEs provided that the total size does not exceed 140 sq m. Councilors may also lease ward offices under joint tenancies.

As at March 31, 2021, the HA had let about 320 ward offices in 196 PHEs/subsidised sale flat courts. As at May 31, 2019, councilors who had leased most ward offices had leased six ward offices in HA's PHEs at the same time, including those held under sole tenancies and joint tenancies.

According to the established procedures, when ward offices in PHEs are available for letting, the HA will invite applications from DCs and LCs through their respective secretariats. If more than one application is received, the HA will allocate the ward office according to the order of priority. If there is more than one applicant with the same priority, allocation will be determined by ballot. Such arrangement can ensure the rational utilisation and equitable allocation of resources. The HA does not keep statistics on the number of applications received in each invitation.

In response to the recommendations of the Office of The Ombudsman (OMB), the HA revised the arrangements of letting ward offices under joint tenancies in 2018 with a view to preventing councilors from leasing the ward offices indefinitely by continuously adding/deleting joint tenants or deciding on his/her own the successor of the ward office. Under the revised arrangement, tenants leasing ward offices under joint tenancies are classified as primary tenant and secondary tenant. If the primary tenant is not re-elected or terminates the tenancy before its expiry for any reason, the secondary tenant is allowed to retain the ward office concerned for occupation under licence until expiry of his/her current term of office provided that the space allocation standard is not exceeded. The ward office will have to be returned to the HA upon expiry of his/her current term of office.

In 2018, the OMB also advised the HA that they had received comments that some councilors who had already succeeded in leasing offices could still lease vacant ward offices again by virtue of their higher priority over other councilors who had not been allocated any offices, thereby resulting in difficulty for councilors with lower priority (such as LCs returned from functional constituencies) to be allocated ward offices. The OMB indicated that there were also suggestions that higher priority should be accorded to councilors who had not been allocated any ward office in HA premises when allocating vacant ward offices. In this connection, when the HA separately contacted councilors of different political parties through meetings or telephone discussions in June and July 2018 to brief them on the above revised letting arrangements, the HA took the opportunity to seek their views on the suggestion of according higher priority in allocating offices to councilors who had not been allocated any office. As the suggestion was not supported by the councilors, the HA did not implement such measure.

As a matter of fact, there is no limit on the geographical areas in which LCs returned from functional constituencies could be allocated a ward office. Since they have more choices, they are accorded with a lower priority than LCs returned from the geographical constituencies. There are individual

LCs returned from functional constituencies who have leased multiple offices in HA's PHEs at the same time (including those under sole tenancies and joint tenancies), which reflects that the prevailing allocation mechanism has not hindered them from being allocated one or even multiple ward offices.

Due to keen demand for HA's non-domestic premises to provide various types of services and limited non-domestic space in PHEs, the HA has to accord priority in providing facilities, such as retail and welfare facilities, to meet the daily needs of residents. Therefore, the HA is not able to satisfy the demands of all DCs and LCs for leasing ward offices in PHEs. In fact, there may not be HA's PHEs in each and every constituency. The HA is only offering an option and councilors may decide whether to lease the premises.

The OMB also acknowledged in the direct investigation report published in December 2019 that the prevailing mechanism for the allocation of ward offices (including the above revised letting arrangements) had already taken into account the needs of councilors of different categories and constraints, and the allocation arrangement was generally appropriate. The HA will continue to keep in view the arrangements concerned and will endeavor to provide more ward offices in PHEs where practicable.

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## LCQ5: Compulsory testing

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question:

The Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) has been implemented since November 15, 2020 to cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic. The Government may invoke the Regulation to issue compulsory testing notices (CTNs) requiring the relevant groups or persons to undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing by a specified deadline. Moreover, the Government may delineate "restricted areas" and make restriction-testing declarations (RTDs) requiring that all persons within the restricted areas stay in their premises and undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing in accordance with the Government's arrangement, and they may leave only after the test results have mostly been ascertained. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council, since November last year:

(1) of the number of CTNs issued by the Government, the total number of persons who underwent compulsory COVID-19 testing as required under CTNs and, among them, the number of those confirmed to have contracted COVID-19;

(2) of the number of law enforcement operations conducted by the Government to check whether the persons concerned had complied with the requirements of CTNs; the number of persons found during such operations to have breached the requirements, and the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued to them;

(3) of the number of restricted areas delineated by the Government, the number of persons within such areas who underwent the testing and, among them, the number of those confirmed to have contracted COVID-19; and

(4) of the number of law enforcement operations conducted by the Government to check whether the persons within the restricted areas had complied with the requirements of RTDs; the number of persons found during such operations to have breached the requirements, and the number of FPNs issued to them?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been adjusting its anti-epidemic strategies in view of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic, among which, extensive testing with a view to achieving "early identification, early isolation and early treatment" helps identify asymptomatic infected persons, and cut the transmission chains in the community as far as possible. The Government will strive to achieve the target of "zero infection", so the public can resume their normal life as early as possible.

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Starry Lee is as follows:

(1) Since the implementation of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) (the Regulation) on November 15, 2020, the Government had conducted more than 2.87 million compulsory tests as at April 23, 2021, of which 4 318 samples or 0.15% were tested preliminarily positive.

On November 21, 2020, the Government exercised the power under the Regulation for the first time and issued a compulsory testing notice (CTN) requiring persons who fell within the specified category to undergo a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 within the specified period in compliance with the requirements and procedure set out in the CTN. During the period from November 21, 2020 to April 23, 2021, the Government issued a total of 197 CTNs in implementing the virus testing strategy of compulsory testing on a mandatory basis.

(2) For buildings or workplaces included in CTNs, the Government will conduct enforcement actions to check the test records of the persons subject to compulsory testing so as to ensure their compliance with the CTN requirements. During the period from December 24, 2020 to April 23, 2021, 30 such operations were conducted and more than 200 fixed penalty notices (FPNs) of \$5,000 were issued to those who had failed to comply with CTNs.

(3) To achieve the target of "zero cases" in districts, the Government has actively conducted a number of large-scale compulsory testing operations. The Government may make restriction-testing declarations (RTDs) and delineate restricted areas under the Regulation requiring all persons within the restricted areas to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the Government's arrangement, and they may leave only after the test results have mostly been ascertained. A total of 41 RTD operations were successfully completed in a number of districts between January 23 and April 23, 2021, during which about 37 000 persons were tested and 22 confirmed cases were found.

(4) In all of the above RTD operations (except the one on April 16), the Government conducted enforcement operations in the areas concerned upon completion of compulsory testing arrangement so as to ensure that those persons within the restricted areas had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the restriction and testing requirements. During these enforcement operations, about 40 FPNs of \$5,000 were issued to those who had failed to comply with CTNs.

During the RTD operation conducted on April 16, a preliminary positive case with the test result involving the N501Y mutant strain was found in the building concerned. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health considered it necessary to take prudent infection control measures. Hence, after all residents of the building within the restricted area had undergone compulsory testing, those without symptoms were taken to quarantine centres for compulsory quarantine, so as to prevent the potential risk of spreading the N501Y mutant strain to the community.

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## [LCQ7: Promoting development of maritime and port industries](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question:

Hong Kong's overall ranking in the 2020 Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Centre Development Index Report has fallen from the second place of the preceding year to the fourth place. Some members of the maritime industry have pointed out that although the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address proposed to promote and facilitate the development of Hong Kong's maritime services and the Government successively introduced tax concessions for the ship leasing and marine insurance industries in the 2020-2021 financial year,

the Government's efforts to promote Hong Kong's maritime industry are still inadequate when compared with competitors. On the contrary, Singapore, which continues to top the list in the aforesaid report, announced last month that it would increase the subsidies provided to the local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaging in maritime technology business, and is committed to developing the maritime industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the achievements of the Government's work in the past three years on attracting maritime enterprises to establish their bases in Hong Kong (including the increase in the number and the scope of business of such enterprises, as well as the number of new jobs and the economic benefits brought to Hong Kong); whether it has set any target for its work in the future (e.g. attracting a certain number of maritime enterprises to establish their bases in Hong Kong in the coming decade);

(2) given that the Government is studying the provision of tax concessions to commercial principals of the maritime industry (e.g. ship management companies, ship brokers and ship agents) to attract them to establish their bases in Hong Kong, thereby promoting the development of high value-added maritime services, of the progress of the relevant study and the timetable for implementing the relevant proposals; whether, apart from tax concessions, the Government will consider, by making reference to the practice of the Singapore Government, providing subsidies to SMEs of the maritime industry; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as some members of the maritime industry have pointed out that the maritime and port industries are one of the important pillars of the Hong Kong economy, but the existing relevant policies are rather fragmented, lacking a set of complete and target-oriented policies, whether the Government will establish a statutory authority with decision-making and enforcement powers to formulate a long-term development blueprint for Hong Kong's maritime and port industries; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has been committed to upholding Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre and further consolidating our strengths in high value-added maritime services.

Indeed, the Central Government has all along been supporting the development of the maritime and logistics industry, including the consolidation of Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre. The "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" as endorsed by the 13th National People's Congress on March 11, 2021 and the "Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" as promulgated in February 2019 also support the

development of high value-added maritime services in Hong Kong for better integration into the country's development course.

To enhance Hong Kong's status as an international maritime centre and attract more maritime service companies to establish business presence in Hong Kong, the Government enacted the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Ship Leasing Tax Concessions) Ordinance 2020 in June 2020 to offer tax concessions to qualifying ship lessors and ship leasing managers at 0 per cent and generally 8.25 per cent tax rate respectively, with retrospective effect from April 1, 2020. Another bill, the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Profits Tax Concessions for Insurance-related Businesses) Ordinance 2020, was also enacted in July 2020 to reduce profits tax rate by 50 per cent (i.e. 8.25 per cent) for specified insurance businesses, including eligible marine insurance businesses, in Hong Kong.

On enhancing Hong Kong's position in the international maritime arena, with the concerted efforts of the industry and the Government, the International Chamber of Shipping established its first-ever overseas office in Hong Kong in 2019. The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) published the BIMCO Law & Arbitration Clause 2020 in September 2020, which includes Hong Kong as the fourth named arbitration venue, alongside London, New York and Singapore. Meanwhile, we have gradually established the Hong Kong Shipping Registry (HKSR) Regional Desks in selected overseas and mainland Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) so as to widen the HKSR's service network, provide more direct and prompt support for shipowners and strengthen the promotion of HKSR's services. The first batch of HKSR Regional Desks in London, Shanghai and Singapore have been up and running since late 2019. The Marine Department will continue to set up four more Regional Desks in other overseas ETOs, including Sydney, San Francisco and Tokyo in 2021, and Toronto in 2022. By then, services of the HKSR will have been extended to cover almost all major parts in the world regularly visited by Hong Kong registered ships.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government spared no effort in promoting Hong Kong's role as an international maritime centre and its quality high value-added maritime services. In 2020-21, the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board (HKMPB) proactively supported and participated in various local and international promotional activities such as the Lloyd's List Hong Kong Ship Finance & Law Forum, the Young Professionals in Shipping Network's global start-up competition "The Captain's Table", the 2nd Annual Capital Link Hong Kong Maritime Forum, and The Economist's Asia Trade Week 2021. Amid keen competition, the Government will continue to bolster the growth of high value-added maritime services, facilitate port operations and step up promotion and publicity of Hong Kong's maritime and port industry for consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international maritime centre.

Our reply to various parts of Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) The trading and logistics sector is one of Hong Kong's four key economic pillars, accounting for approximately one-fifth of Hong Kong's GDP in 2019 and providing over 670 000 jobs. The maritime industry, though contributing

only 1.1 per cent (HK\$30.8 billion) to Hong Kong's GDP and over 80 000 jobs, serves as the cornerstone underpinning the development of the trading and logistics sector. There are nearly 900 shipping-related companies operating in Hong Kong, providing a great variety of quality maritime services, including ship owning and operating, ship agency and management, ship broking, ship registration, ship finance, marine insurance, maritime legal and arbitration services, classification societies, making Hong Kong the ideal city for international maritime enterprises to receive various kinds of maritime services. In the past three years, there has been an increase of around 70 maritime enterprises in Hong Kong, with business ranging from ship owning and operating, ship agency and management, ship broking, ship finance, marine insurance, maritime legal and arbitration services, classification societies, etc. We will continue to promote the strengths of Hong Kong as a maritime centre and attract more maritime enterprises to establish business presence in Hong Kong.

(2) To further promote the development of the high value-added maritime services sector, with reference to the ship leasing tax concession exercise, a dedicated Task Force on Commercial Principals has been formed under HKMPB to study tax concession measures and advise on the economic impacts and details of the tax concession proposals, with a view to drawing up the legislative framework for introducing tax concessions for shipping commercial principals (such as ship managers, agents and brokers). It is anticipated that the study will be completed in the second half of 2021. Subject to the outcome of the study, the Government will conduct consultation with industry stakeholders and introduce relevant legislative amendments to the Legislative Council accordingly. As for the suggested provision of subsidies to small and medium enterprises of the maritime industry, the Government will continue to maintain communication with industry members to understand their actual situation and needs, and will explore ways to provide appropriate support to the industry.

(3) Regarding the establishment of a new statutory authority, the HKMPB, together with its three Subcommittees, have been operating smoothly since their inception. Thanks to the valuable suggestions and support offered by the Board members, we have implemented many new policies and initiatives in recent years, such as the new tax regime for ship leasing and the arrangements for enhancing the services of the HKSR. Whilst for the proposal of setting up a statutory maritime body, key issues such as financial sustainability and whether statutory power is required to perform the proposed functions, would have to be sorted out first. Without a stable source of income, it would be difficult for the proposed maritime body to operate on a self-financing basis. The Government is open to the suggestion for establishing a statutory maritime body as a long-term arrangement, and will study further arrangements as appropriate.