

## LCQ14: Franchised bus routes running through Tai Lam Tunnel

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

There are views that, before the Government's takeover of Tai Lam Tunnel (TLT), the tolls for public single-decked buses and public double-decked buses using TLT were as high as \$180 and \$213 respectively, resulting in the fares of franchised bus routes running through TLT being significantly higher than those of other bus routes which do not run through TLT but have similar route lengths, ultimately adding to the financial burden of commuting on residents of Yuen Long District. With the takeover of TLT by the Government on 31st of last month, the toll for franchised buses has been substantially reduced to \$43, and there should be room for downward adjustment of the fares of bus routes running through TLT. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the following information about the various franchised bus routes running through TLT: (i) the current adult full fares, (ii) the full mileage of the routes, (iii) the number of trips running through TLT last year, (iv) last year's patronage, (v) last year's operating costs, (vi) the total amount of tolls paid last year, (vii) the proportion of tolls to the fares and (viii) last year's operating surplus or deficit (set out in a table);

(2) whether it knows the total amount of tolls paid by various franchised bus operators to the operator of TLT from January to 30th of last month this year, as well as the respective estimated amounts of tolls to be kept in the Franchised Bus Toll Exemption Fund each month since 31st of last month; and

(3) whether it has estimated the respective annual savings in tunnel tolls to be achieved by various franchised bus operators since the Government took over TLT on 31st of last month; whether the authorities will require franchised bus operators to directly distribute the full amount of toll savings to passengers; if so, of the anticipated rate of reduction in the fares of each trip of the franchised bus routes running through TLT; if not, the reasons for that, and how the authorities will motivate such operators to introduce other fare concessions and stabilise the fares of such routes, so as to alleviate the burden on passengers?

Reply:

President,

The fares of franchised bus services are to be charged according to a

scale of fares determined by the Chief Executive in Council. The fare level of individual bus routes depends on the route groups to which they belong, and the route groups are mainly distinguished by the nature of service and the length of journey, regardless of whether the routes in the group pass through tolled tunnels or roads. In other words, the fares of franchised bus routes passing through tolled tunnels or roads (such as the Tai Lam Tunnel referred to by the Hon Luk Chung-hung) are not linked to the toll levels of these tunnels or roads.

Having consulted the Transport Department (TD), our reply to the Hon Luk Chung-hung's questions is as follows:

(i) At present, the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (KMB), Long Win Bus Company Limited and Citybus Limited (Franchise for the Urban and New Territories bus network) operate a total of over 50 franchised bus routes that pass through the Tai Lam Tunnel. The full adult fares of these routes range from \$11.5 to \$47.2, with the full journey distances ranging from approximately 16.4 kilometres to 61.4 kilometres. In 2024, the actual number of trips of these routes through the Tai Lam Tunnel was about 1.12 million, with a patronage of about 74.4 million.

The operating accounts of the franchised bus operators (the operators) are calculated on the basis of overall expenditure and revenue. The TD does not maintain a breakdown of the operating costs, profits or losses of individual bus routes. The amount of tolls of the Tai Lam Tunnel paid by the above three operators totalled about \$240 million in 2024.

(ii) Based on the figures in 2024, it is estimated that the operators paid about \$100 million for the tolls of the Tai Lam Tunnel from January 1 to May 30, 2025.

The Government has exempted the operators from paying tolls when using government tunnels and control areas since February 2019. The operators have kept the tolls saved in the dedicated fund accounts they set up, i.e. the Toll Exemption Funds (TEF). When an operator applies for a fare increase and the Chief Executive in Council considers that there is a justifiable need to increase the fare, the operator is required to offset the increase by first using the balance in TEF. The magnitude of the fare increase shouldered by passengers will be lowered, and the passengers will be benefitted directly.

After the Tai Lam Tunnel became a Government tunnel on May 31 this year, the tolls of single-decker buses and double-decker buses were reduced to \$43. Tolls payable by the operators will be deposited into the TEF. Based on the figures in 2024, it is projected that the operators will need to deposit about \$4 million per month and about \$48 million per year into the TEF.

(iii) Based on the above projection, the operators will pay approximately \$190 million less in the Tai Lam Tunnel tolls annually. That said, as mentioned above, the fares of franchised bus routes are dependent on the overall operating situation of the franchised buses rather than the toll levels of the tunnels or roads that they pass through. In fact, the toll expenses account for less than seven per cent of the overall operating costs

of franchised buses. The reduction in tolls of individual tunnels (including the Tai Lam Tunnel) has a minimal impact on the overall operating costs.

The Government has all along been closely monitoring the fare levels of franchised buses. When processing the fare increase applications last year, the Government has specifically considered the slight reduction in overall costs for operators after the decrease in the Tai Lam Tunnel tolls. At the same time, the Government sought to mitigate the fare increase through the TEF as far as possible. In the case of KMB, the overall rate of fare increase was reduced from 5.2 per cent to 4.3 per cent after a 0.9 percentage points mitigation effect by the TEF.

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## LCQ12: Urban renewal

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

The Urban Renewal Authority published in 2022 the District Study for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok – Information Booklet, which proposed a new planning tool called "transfer of plot ratio" (i.e. allowing the transfer of gross floor area from small sites with limited redevelopment potentials ("sending sites") to sizable redevelopment sites at strategic locations ("receiving sites")). Subsequently, the Town Planning Board launched a pilot scheme on transfer of plot ratio (the Pilot Scheme) with Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei as pilot areas, and the Sai Yee Street/Flower Market Road Development Scheme in Mong Kok is the first project. On the other hand, in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on March 19 this year, the Government indicated that it would study the feasibility of cross-district transfer of plot ratios (i.e. transferring the residual plot ratios of redevelopment projects in old districts for use in new development areas (NDAs)), so as to incentivise market participation in redevelopment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will draw on the experience of projects under the Pilot Scheme to allow developers to transfer the residual plot ratios of small redevelopment sites in old districts other than Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei for use in sizeable redevelopment sites in the same district or in other districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that there are views pointing out that the value of land in old districts is generally higher than that in NDAs, whether the Government will study adjusting the plot ratio to be transferred based on the price per square foot of the "sending and receiving sites" (e.g. allowing a higher

plot ratio for sites in NDAs with lower prices per square foot when receiving gross floor area from sites in old districts with higher prices per square foot), so as to attract developer participation in redevelopment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will consider requiring that a portion of land from the "sending sites" be allocated for Green Belt, Open Space, and Government, Institution or Community uses; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) completed the District Study for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok in 2021, which put forward a number of recommendations and new planning tools, including a pilot scheme for transfer of plot ratio (TPR) within the same district. To follow up on this recommendation, the Town Planning Board promulgated guidelines for the pilot scheme on TPR for Yau Mong Districts in July 2023, allowing the transfer of unutilised plot ratio from sending site(s) (SS) to receiving site(s) (RS) within the same Outline Zoning Plan to enhance redevelopment incentives. As mentioned in the question, the URA's Sai Yee Street/Flower Market Road Development Scheme in Mong Kok is the first pilot redevelopment project to adopt TPR, which consolidated and transferred the unutilised plot ratio of several small and scattered sites without redevelopment potential to a larger site for mixed development, so as to enhance planning gains and the commercial viability of the project.

To encourage and expedite urban renewal, the Development Bureau is conducting a policy study to examine the use of newly developed land to drive large-scale urban redevelopment projects, including cross-district TPR. Unlike the above-mentioned pilot scheme on TPR within the same district, we will consider allowing cross-district transfer of unutilised plot ratio from the SS to new development areas, and reducing the density of old districts. We will complete the policy study and put forward preliminary recommendations within this year.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit is as follows:

(1) Our preliminary view is to extend TPR to old districts other than Yau Mong Districts, so that more redevelopment projects can benefit. We are conducting an analysis on expanding the coverage of districts. Details will be provided when announcing preliminary recommendations within this year.

(2) As mentioned by the Member, the land value in old districts is different from that in new development areas, with the former typically higher than the latter. Therefore, one of the key design challenges is to address the land value difference across districts. The effectiveness will depend on whether the value transferred to the RS can reasonably reflect the value of the

unutilised plot ratio at the SS. Meanwhile, the mechanism should be simple and easy to implement, providing market certainty and avoiding unnecessary administrative burden. We will finalise the recommendations along such directions.

(3) Our goal is to encourage the URA and landowners holding old buildings in the market to take forward redevelopment in order to address the potential risks associated with ageing structures and improve the conditions of old districts. Premised on a balance between this policy objective and the project financial viability, we will also consider in the above policy study whether requirements to provide public open spaces and/or government, community, and institutional facilities should be imposed on the SS.

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## **LCQ9: Provision of sports facilities**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

While the Government has indicated that it has all along been committed to promoting "Sports for All", there are views pointing out that there has been a persistent short supply of sports venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), and in particular, popular sports facilities such as badminton courts and basketball courts are in high demand. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective usage rates of the LCSD's major sports facilities in various districts during peak hours (i.e. at or after 6pm from Mondays to Fridays, and any time on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) in the past three years;

(2) whether the LCSD has short, medium and long-term plans in place to increase the number of sports facilities in the community to encourage more members of the public to participate in sports; if so, of the plans; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the Government launched the "Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme" (the Scheme) in 2017 to encourage schools to open up their school facilities for leasing to sports organisations, of the implementation situation of the Scheme in the past year, including the number of schools participating in the Scheme, the total number of occasions in which and duration for which the facilities were leased out, as well as the total amount of subsidies disbursed; and

(4) as there are views that at present, the Scheme is exclusively available

for facility rentals by specific sports organisations and limits its ability to benefit more members of the public, whether the Government will gradually open up the eligibility criteria of the Scheme to allow more community groups (e.g. District Council members and the District Services and Community Care Teams) to use the facilities, as well as study the feasibility of opening up school facilities for booking by members of the public through the LCSD's intelligent sports and recreation services booking and information system "SmartPLAY", thereby increasing the provision of sports venues in various districts in the long run; if so, of the specific plan and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Education Bureau, the reply to the questions raised by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming is as follows:

(1) The usage rate of major land-based sports facilities under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) during peak hours in the past three years are at Annex 1.

(2) To encourage broader public participation in sports, the LCSD has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enhance different types of sports and recreation facilities to promote sports development.

The LCSD is actively implementing the five-year plan for upgrading football pitches to provide more football pitches meeting international standards. As at end-April 2025, out of the 61 works projects commenced, 59 were completed. The LCSD will continue to work with relevant works departments to conduct technical feasibility study for other improvement projects for gradual implementation with a view to promoting the development of football in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the LCSD is implementing the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities and the 10-Year Development Blueprint for Sports and Recreation Facilities, which include 41 works projects. So far, out of the 25 projects commenced, 13 have been completed or partially completed. In addition, technical feasibility studies for 16 projects have been completed or are in preparation. We are reviewing the order of priority of the works projects under planning with a view to using the public resources more effectively to plan for new sports and recreation facilities and improve existing ones continuously.

Besides, the LCSD plans and takes forward works projects in collaboration with other government departments to increase and improve existing sports and recreation facilities. For instance, the re-provisioned skateboard ground at the On Lok Mun Street Playground in Fanling, which opened in April 2025, has been upgraded to meet the relevant international standards.

The LCSD will continue to increase and improve sports and recreation

facilities with a view to meeting the demand of the public and fostering a strong sporting culture.

(3) The data for the "Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme" is as follows:

	2023/24 school year
Number of participating schools	225
Number of schools paired with sports organisations	116
Number of programmes	535
Total duration of programmes (Note)	12 840 hours
Total amount of subsidies disbursed	\$15.56 million

Note: Calculated on the basis that the 535 programmes successfully held in the school year have each accessed the relevant facilities for a cumulative total of 24 hours at minimum in the school year.

(4) The Government encourages schools to open up their facilities for outside sports organisations to hold sports programmes after school hours through the "Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme". To ensure that the sports organisations have the capability to effectively conduct sports programmes at schools, the Scheme is currently opened for National Sports Associations recognised by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China and their affiliated club members, district sports associations, and sports organisations subvented by the LCSD. Other organisations that are interested in participating in the Scheme and meeting the specific criteria (see Annex 2) may also apply to the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau for participation.

The main purpose of school premises is for students to learn and engage in extracurricular activities. Opening up school facilities to all organisations and/or members of the public would involve complicated administrative arrangements. In addition to management, security, health, and liability insurance concerns, many schools are concerned about the additional costs arising from opening up school facilities. The Education Bureau has been encouraging schools to assume social responsibility by opening up, as far as practical, their school facilities and premises to public groups. However, given that the education sector remains conservative about opening up school facilities to all organisations and/or members of the public, the Government has no plan to open up school facilities to all organisations and/or members of the public for direct bookings at this stage.

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## LCQ18: Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreational Facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

In the 2017 Policy Address, the Government proposed the "Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities" to launch 26 projects to develop new and improve existing sports and recreation facilities. However, the Government indicated in its reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2025-2026 that four out of such 26 projects are still under planning. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of the aforesaid four projects still under planning, of (i) the dates when they were proposed, and (ii) the time lag to date since their proposal (set out in a table);

(2) as the Government has advised that among the aforesaid four projects, the project of Sports Ground and Open Space with Public Vehicle Park in Area 16, Tuen Mun (TMA16 Project) can only proceed after the depots of two franchised bus companies currently at the site concerned are relocated, and that the Government will actively co-ordinate in expediting the implementation of the depot relocation plans for the two franchised bus companies, of the latest progress of the relevant work, and how the Government will push forward the commencement of the TMA16 Project; and

(3) whether it will consider proceeding to tendering for the engagement of engineering consultants for the TMA16 Project as the first step, so as to kick-start the engineering design and submission of the planning applications as early as possible, thereby compressing the overall timeline of the project; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government announced in the 2017 Policy Address the "Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities" with a view to commencing 26 projects to increase and improve sports and recreation facilities. Among which, 13 projects have been opened or partially opened for public use while four projects are still under planning. Having consulted the relevant policy bureaux and departments, my reply to the questions raised by the Hon Holden Chow is set out below:



(1) In order to make optimal use of land resources, the Government announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the principle of "single site, multiple uses" would be adopted when implementing public works projects. In view of the public demand for parking spaces in the relevant districts, the Government has proposed to incorporate public vehicle parks into four sports and recreation facility projects under planning to meet the public needs for sports and recreation facilities and alleviate the demand for parking spaces in the districts concerned. The latest progress of the four projects is set out below:

Project	Date of obtaining support from the District Council (DC) upon revision of the proposed project facilities	Number of years since the date of obtaining support from the DC and current progress (up to 2025)
Sports Ground and Open Space with Public Vehicle Park in Area 16, Tuen Mun (TMA16 Project)	Support was obtained from Tuen Mun DC in February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around six years</li> <li>• The relevant site is currently used for several temporary purposes, including bus depots of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (KMB) and the Citybus Limited (Citybus), the Tuen Mun Training Ground and Testing Centre of the Construction Industry Council, as well as a fee-paying public vehicle park. The two bus companies have preliminarily identified new sites and submitted their applications for short-term tenancy (STT) to the Lands Department with a view to relocating their bus depots and returning the site for taking forward the project.</li> </ul>
Football-cum-Rugby Pitch with Public Vehicle Park in Area 33, Tai Po	Support was obtained from Tai Po DC in November 2018.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around six years</li> <li>• The Government consulted the DC about the conceptual design of the project on September 4, 2024.</li> <li>• "Design and build" (D&amp;B) model will be adopted for the project. The Government will take the project forward in accordance with public works procedures.</li> </ul>

Sports Facilities with Public Vehicle Park in Tung Tau Industrial Area, Yuen Long	Support was obtained from Yuen Long DC in January 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around six years</li> <li>• D&amp;B model will be adopted for the project. The Government will take the project forward in accordance with public works procedures.</li> </ul>
Open Space with Public Vehicle Park in Area 17, Tuen Mun	Support was obtained from Tuen Mun DC in June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around six years</li> <li>• The Government has engaged a consultant to undertake the design and planning applications for the project.</li> </ul>

The Government will continue to review the order of priority of works projects under planning and update their works schedules as appropriate for using public resources more effectively.

(2) Regarding the TMA16 Project, relevant government departments have been actively assisting franchised bus operators in identifying sites for relocating the bus depots so as to vacate the site early for taking forward the project. Both the KMB and Citybus have submitted STT applications to the Lands Department for the use of government sites at the southern and northern ends of Ho Wo Street respectively for relocating the bus depots currently located at Area 16, Tuen Mun. The site at the southern end of Ho Wo Street was handed over to the KMB in March 2025. The KMB will carry out site formation and associated works as soon as practicable to expedite the commencement of the new bus depot thereat.

As for the site at the northern end of Ho Wo Street which Citybus has applied for, its underground drainage facilities pose certain technical constraints on the use of the land, including the feasibility of setting up petrol stations and vehicle-washing machines at the site. In this regard, relevant government departments are actively liaising with Citybus and exploring possible solutions. Upon the granting of STT, Citybus will commence the preparatory work for relocating its bus depot.

Relevant bureaux and departments will continue to co-ordinate and assist the two bus companies in the relocation exercise to ensure that the bus depots can be moved out and the site can be cleared as soon as practicable. Meanwhile, other preparatory work will continue to be carried out so that the works can be commenced immediately after the tender exercise is completed and funding approval is obtained from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

(3) To implement the TMA16 Project, the Government will adopt the D&B model under which bids for design works and building works will be invited under a single contract. The successful contractor is required to engage construction and design teams to carry out detailed design for the project simultaneously

to shorten the overall construction period as well as make best use of its expertise and experience on building materials and construction techniques to enhance the design quality and cost-effectiveness of the project.

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## **LCQ3: 1823 Contact Centre**

Following is a question by the Hon JoePHY Chan and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

Last year, the Government optimised the services of the 1823 Contact Centre by fully introducing artificial intelligence (AI) technology to enhance its effectiveness. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current respective ratios of application of AI technology in the various service aspects of the 1823 Contact Centre, such as case triage, automated responses and handling of citizens' voicemail messages and enquiries;

(2) of the respective numbers and proportions of cases in which the handling was directly completed by the 1823 AI chatbot and those which required referral to staff for handling in the past 12 months; the respective numbers and proportions of citizens who opted for the 1823 self-service options (e.g. AI chatbot service) and those who chose to contact hotline staff directly in the past 12 months; whether a survey has been conducted on citizens' overall satisfaction with the 1823 AI chatbot service; and

(3) as it is learnt that Beijing has deepened its reform of immediate public complaint processing in order to implement the people-centred concept by adopting a "precise classification and intelligent assignment" mechanism to enhance the overall capacity of the Beijing 12345 citizen hotline for processing public complaints, whether the Government will draw upon such experience to further utilise technologies such as big data to optimise 1823 services and extend their application to non-telephone channels such as email and mobile applications, so as to comprehensively enhance service efficiency and address livelihood issues, thereby strengthening citizens' sense of fulfilment, happiness and security; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon JoePHY Chan is

as follows:

Operated by the Digital Policy Office, the 1823 one-stop platform provides 24-hour cross-departmental customer service to help answer public enquiries about the services of 23 government bureaux/departments (B/Ds), and receive complaints and service requests for all B/Ds. In addition to telephone hotline, citizens can now use 1823 service through channels such as mobile app, website, email and e-form. In 2024, the total usage volume of 1823 reached 7.55 million.

Generally speaking, upon receipt of public enquiries or complaints from various channels, 1823 will classify them into two broad types for processing. For public enquiries concerning participating B/Ds, 1823 will answer them directly; for complaints regarding government services, 1823 will refer them to the relevant B/Ds for relevant follow-up.

Currently, 1823 has widely adopted artificial intelligence (AI) and other innovative technologies in various service areas to make its work process more automated and smart. These measures include:

- (1) At the case triage stage, 1823 employs AI speech recognition technology and algorithms to analyse the content of citizens' incoming calls and written submissions, automatically assigning cases to staff familiar with the respective subject matter, thereby enhancing work efficiency. For cases that require referral to other departments, 1823 also uses a business rule engine integrated with the Lands Department's geographic information platform to swiftly refer cases to designated units of relevant departments based on factors such as case nature, time and location;
- (2) For written enquiries handled directly by 1823, we use generative AI technology to assist 1823 staff in drafting responses, thereby enhancing the case processing speed;
- (3) 1823 adopts AI speech-to-text technology to transcribe voice messages into text and thus expedite the work process; and
- (4) Since 2023, 1823 has progressively introduced and enhanced self-service channels, including an AI chatbot, a smart interactive voice response system, and online self-service enquiry service. These channels handle citizens' general or common enquiries in real time, while allowing resources to be focused on more complicated cases.

The above measures demonstrate that we have integrated AI into the major operational areas of 1823 to enhance the efficiency of case intake, triage, referral, handling and resolution. The proportion of citizens using the related smart services has also increased.

In 2023, the usage volume of 1823 digital self-services was nearly 3.9 million, surpassing traditional manual services (i.e. calls, emails, e-forms, text messages, etc, that require manual processing) for the first time. The usage volume of self-services continued to increase by 10 per cent to 4.26 million times in 2024, which accounted for about 56 per cent of

total. Taking the 1823 AI chatbot as an example, it now handles over 10 000 enquiries monthly, which is a two-fold increase compared to 2023, with a resolution rate of over 90 per cent.

The effectiveness of technological applications in enhancing 1823 service performance is also reflected in our customer satisfaction survey. On a five-point scale, the 1823's overall customer satisfaction score in 2024 was 4.60, up from 4.56 in 2023 and 4.52 in 2022.

The enhancement of 1823 service will continue. We will further strengthen the 1823 mechanisms for case classification, triage and referral, focusing on operational data analysis and case handling process. In addition, we will further expand the use or trial of AI in different service areas and interfaces. For example, we will use AI to capture case information from emails for inputting to the case management system; provide digital self-service for case progress tracking; and enhance the question-answering capabilities of chatbot, etc, to improve operational efficiency and user experience.

Thank you, President.