

LCQ3: Insurance for taxis

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

Some taxi owners have relayed that recently, the comprehensive insurance premiums and third party risks insurance premiums for taxis have increased by 35 per cent and 20 per cent respectively when compared with the same period last year. Besides, insurance companies have charged additional premiums of 15 per cent to 25 per cent for taxis with high vehicle age and those driven by elderly drivers, and have substantially increased the amounts specified in insurance contracts to be paid by insured persons for contributing towards insurance compensation (commonly known as "insurance excess"). In addition, some insurance companies have refused to underwrite insurance for taxis reaching the vehicle age of 20, and some insurance companies have recently ceased to underwrite insurance for taxis, thereby lessening competition in the market. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of taxis in Hong Kong as at December 31 last year; the number of taxis which received annual examination last year, with a tabulated breakdown by results and vehicle age (i.e. 13 years and below, each of the years from 14 to 19, and 20 years and above); if there were taxis which failed to pass the annual examination, of the reasons for that;

(2) whether insurance companies have breached any law or regulation by refusing to underwrite insurance for taxis reaching the vehicle age of 20; of the measures in place to ensure that there will be insurance companies that are willing to underwrite insurance for such taxis; and

(3) as some insurance companies have pointed out that the increase in the number of traffic accidents involving taxis is one of the causes for the soaring insurance premiums, whether the Government will encourage (e.g. through subsidising taxi owners to install alarm system and equipment for preventing collision) the taxi trade to make good use of technology to reduce traffic accidents; if so, of the details; if not, the measures in place to reduce traffic accidents involving taxis?

Reply:

President,

The reply by the Transport and Housing Bureau, in consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) In accordance with the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374), all taxis are required to undergo and pass a vehicle examination conducted by the Transport Department (TD) before applying for their first vehicle licence. Thereafter,

every taxi, regardless of its vehicle age, must undergo an annual vehicle examination conducted by TD for applying for renewal of its vehicle licence. If a vehicle fails the examination, it has to undergo and pass the re-examination after repair, prior to application for renewal of its vehicle licence such that it can continue to be driven on the road.

As at December 31, 2019, there were a total of 18 132 licensed taxis in Hong Kong. In 2019, a total of 17 208 taxis underwent the annual vehicle examinations conducted by TD and all those taxis passed the examinations. A breakdown of the numbers of annual vehicle examinations of taxis by vehicle age is at Annex. As regards the remaining approximately 1 000 taxis, they were first registered in 2019, accounting for less than 10 per cent of all licensed taxis. The situation was similar to that in the previous three years. First registered taxis are also required to pass the vehicle examination conducted by TD and be covered by valid third party risks insurance before they can be driven on the road.

(2) According to the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Ordinance (Cap 272), it shall not be lawful for any person to use, or to cause or permit any other person to use, a motor vehicle on a road unless the vehicle concerned is covered by valid third party risks insurance. Such insurance policy is a private contract between the policyholder and the insurance company. Insurance companies determine the level of premiums and make the underwriting decision based on commercial principles and factors such as the operating environment, risks assessment and claim records. As far as the comprehensive insurance and third party risks insurance of taxis are concerned, the Insurance Authority notes that there are insurance companies in the market that are willing to underwrite taxis with vehicle age of 20 years or above.

The Government understands that the prevailing economic environment, especially the COVID-19 pandemic has brought severe operating pressure on the transport industry. To assist the trade in tiding over the difficult period, the Government has launched a series of relief measures under the two rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund. In particular, the Government would provide each registered vehicle owner of taxis a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$30,000 per vehicle. TD is issuing letters to inform all eligible registered owners of taxis of the detailed registration arrangements for the subsidy through an electronic platform. The deadline for registration is September 30, 2020. TD will disburse the subsidy to the applicant within two to three weeks upon verification of the submitted documents.

(3) In 2017 to 2019, there were 3 837, 3 916 and 4 198 traffic accidents involving taxis respectively. The contributory factors of these accidents are mostly driver-related, including driving inattentively, driving too close to vehicle in front and losing control of vehicles.

In recent years, the Government has been actively promoting "Smart Mobility", and has planned to launch a \$1 billion Smart Traffic Fund in 2020-21 to provide funding support for research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology. In addition, the Government is open-minded about any innovation and technologies that could effectively improve road and

driving safety, and welcomes the introduction of new driver assistance systems by vehicle manufacturers for various classes of vehicles in this regard. It is noted that in recent years, a number of vehicle manufacturers have installed driver assistance systems, such as Collision Prevention Assist, Lane Keep Assist and Blind Spot Assist alerts, Stability Programme and Automatic Emergency Braking System, etc, on their vehicles. After assessing the technical details submitted by vehicle manufacturers in support of their applications for type approval, TD has already approved the installation of some of the above-mentioned systems on relevant vehicles registered in Hong Kong. Vehicle manufacturers may also consider introducing such systems to taxis with a view to enhancing driving safety.

Indeed, the Government has all along attached great importance to safe driving among taxi drivers and disseminates relevant messages through publicity and education programmes. For instance, TD has organised the Safe Driving and Health Campaign to arouse drivers' awareness of safe driving and their own health conditions. The Road Safety Council also conducts promotional campaigns with the theme of "driving attentively", to urge drivers to stay focused when driving.

With a view to enhancing the safety and quality of taxi services, starting from October 1 this year, applicants for a full driving licence to drive a taxi must have completed the specified pre-service course and obtained the course certificate before they are issued with such driving licence. The course covers knowledge on driving and road safety, etc, which helps enhance the awareness of safe driving among taxi drivers.

Through the Committee on Taxi Service Quality and regular meetings with the trade, we will continue to maintain close liaison with the trade and look into their needs so as to formulate appropriate measures for improving the trade's operating environment and vehicle safety.

Special visiting arrangement under Emergency Response Level

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (June 10) announced that a special visiting arrangement in non-acute hospitals will be implemented beginning next Wednesday (June 17).

The special visiting arrangement will initially cover 16 hospitals (as in appended table). Ward staff will begin contacting patients' family members today for scheduling the visits. Family members are not required to call the wards for booking themselves. Each patient will be allocated a one-hour session by one registered visitor each week, with the arrangement of the

hospitals.

The HA spokesperson said, "The HA activated the Emergency Response Level on January 25 to tie in with the infection control measures, and suspended all visiting arrangements.

"With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic around the world, the Emergency Response Level will likely be maintained for a while. Amid easing the situation locally, both the HA Central Command Committee and the HA Central Committee on Infectious Disease and Emergency Responses have deliberated and assessed the infection control risk associated with the visiting arrangement. It was agreed that a special visiting arrangement could be implemented in non-acute hospitals, such as infirmaries and convalescent hospitals.

"Long-stay patients rely more heavily on support from family members both psychologically and in their daily lives. The hospitals and wards concerned have not received any COVID-19 patients, and crowd control measures for visitors are physically viable."

The arrangement will be adjusted with due consideration of the latest epidemic situation, including the progressive extension of the arrangement to other hospitals and wards if the situation allows.

"Visitors entering public hospitals are required to comply with infection control measures, such as wearing surgical masks, temperature checks, and health declarations to safeguard the well-being of patients, staff and visitors.

"We hope the community can understand that visiting arrangements can only be made with certain restrictions under the current epidemic situation. Meanwhile, other acute hospitals and wards will continue to make compassionate arrangements and video-visiting as far as practicable," the spokesperson added.

In addition, the clinical attachment arrangement of medical, nursing, allied health and pharmacy grade students will resume gradually to dovetail with the academic schedules of universities and institutions.

Non-acute hospitals with special visiting arrangements (Commences on June 17, 2020)

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| Hong Kong East Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheshire Home, Chung Hom Kok• Wong Chuk Hang Hospital |
| Hong Kong West Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Fung Yiu King Hospital• The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital at Sandy Bay• MacLehose Medical Rehabilitation Centre |
| Kowloon East Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Haven of Hope Hospital |

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| Kowloon Central Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation Building, Kowloon Hospital • Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital • Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital |
| Kowloon West Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lai King Building, Princess Margaret Hospital • Paediatric Developmental Disabilities Unit, Wai Yee Block, Caritas Medical Centre |
| New Territories East Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire Home, Shatin • Shatin Hospital (except psychiatric wards) • Tai Po Hospital (except psychiatric wards) |
| New Territories West Cluster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tin Ka Ping Infirmary, Pok Oi Hospital • Siu Lam Hospital |

LCQ 15: Professional conduct of members of Moderation Committees

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

One of the questions in Paper 1 of the History subject of this year's Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination requested candidates to make reference to the information provided in the question and then answer whether they agreed to the following statement: "Japan did more good than harm to China in the period 1900-45". There have been public comments that since the invasion of China and atrocities committed by Japan in that period were too numerous to list, causing indelible pain to the country and nation, the statement obviously confounds right and wrong. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has responded that, as in the case of other HKDSE subject examinations, a moderation committee (MC) is responsible for setting questions and drafting marking guidelines for the History subject. The MC of the History subject comprises a chief examiner, a setter or co-setters, moderators and an assessment development manager of HKEAA. It has been reported that the manager concerned has repeatedly made biased remarks on social media. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows if HKEAA will initiate an investigation into the aforesaid incident, including whether any MC member has, having been affected by his or her personal political stance, set questions which confound right and wrong; if HKEAA will, of the relevant mechanisms for investigation and penalty;

(2) of the measures put in place by the Education Bureau (EDB) to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents, and whether the EDB will make improvement

recommendations on the composition and operation of MCs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it knows the number of MC members punished in the past five years for having violated the established mechanism or codes of professional conduct, and the details of the punishments; whether HKEAA will never appoint such persons as MC members again?

Reply:

President,

Question 2(c) of History Paper 1 of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination this year has aroused great controversy in society. When there are problems in the implementation of curriculum and assessment, especially those involving education and examination and assessment organisations, the Education Bureau (EDB) has the responsibility to safeguard the education profession, take corresponding rectifying actions in the interests of students and the public, as well as address the public concern. The EDB has already explained the relevant reasoning in its statement dated May 14, at the press conference on May 15 and in the paper for the Legislative Council Panel on Education on May 25. Currently, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) takes full responsibility for the work of the Moderation Committee (MC). The EDB has no knowledge of the relevant duties (including the list of members) as they are confidential. The EDB has referred Parts (1) and (3) of the question which involve confidential information on MC to the HKEAA. The related information is consolidated as follows:

(1) The EDB has asked the HKEAA to conduct an internal investigation on why there was the problematic History examination question in the HKDSE Examination this year. According to the existing information provided by the HKEAA, regardless of their background and personal belief, MC members have to comply with the HKEAA's established procedures and follow the curriculum and assessment requirements when setting examination questions to ensure that candidates are assessed by the examination papers in an effective and fair manner. MC will set questions and marking guidelines in accordance with the subject's Curriculum and Assessment Guide and Assessment Framework. The HKEAA has mechanisms in place for checking and proofreading the contents of examination papers at various stages of question setting to ensure the quality of examination questions.

Concerning the controversies caused by recent media's disclosure of messages posted by HKEAA staff in their personal social media accounts, the HKEAA reiterates that employees are bound by the HKEAA's relevant regulations, procedures, rules and policies when performing their duties. The HKEAA has a mechanism to follow up staff discipline issues. It will follow up the incident fairly and impartially having regard to the relevant facts, and its Employee Code of Conduct and regulations. An employee who is found to have committed negligence when performing his duties or compromised professional ethics, integrity and professionalism will be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with the gravity of the case and the

responsibility to be borne. For the sake of procedural justice, the HKEAA will not make further comment at this stage.

(2) In view of the grave public concern over the History examination question in the HKDSE Examination, the EDB will assign a team of officers who are familiar with the curriculum and quality assurance to the HKEAA to study the question setting, vetting and approval mechanism under the HKDSE Examination and whether the mechanism has been strictly complied with in the process of question setting and question moderation of the History examination paper this year. In addition to the EDB officers, members of the education sector and representatives of the HKEAA will also participate in the review. The EDB will also review the existing mechanism and fulfil its monitoring role in the HKDSE Examination, with a view to ensuring the sustained quality of the HKDSE Examination and examination questions. Upon completion of the review, the task force will recommend follow up actions and improvement measures.

(3) According to the information provided by the HKEAA, no MC member was penalised in the last five years for violation of the established mechanism or codes of professional conduct.

EMSD announces test results of LPG quality in May 2020

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (June 10) announced that the department collected eight liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) samples from auto-LPG filling stations and LPG terminals on a random basis in May 2020 for laboratory tests. The results show that the LPG quality of all these samples complied with auto-LPG specifications.

The detailed test results are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/rl/lpg_sample_analysis_simple). Enquiries can also be made to the EMSD's hotline on 2333 3762.

In addition, the EMSD has been vetting independent third-party test reports submitted by LPG supply companies for each shipment to ensure that the quality of imported LPG complies with the specified requirements.

LCQ1: Environment issues in Lung Kwu

Tan

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam Sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

Some Lung Kwu Tan residents have relayed that quite a number of obnoxious facilities and heavy industries (including two power plants, a landfill, a columbarium, sludge incinerators, a steel mill and a cement plant) are located in the vicinity of their residences, causing serious air and noise pollution, as well as odour and traffic congestion problems. They are worried that the Government's plan for reclamation at Lung Kwu Tan may aggravate such problems. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has regularly monitored the air quality of Lung Kwu Tan and its vicinity, including the concentrations of various types of air pollutants (i.e. respirable suspended particulates, fine suspended particulates, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone) and if such concentrations have exceeded the limits of the Air Quality Objectives, as well as the sources of the pollutants; whether it has assessed if the health of the local residents has been affected as a result; if it has assessed, of the details, and whether it will publish the assessment outcome; if it has not assessed, the reasons for that;

(2) of the current average daily quantity of municipal solid waste received by the West New Territories Landfill, as well as the quantity and percentage of such quantity delivered by land transport; the average daily vehicular traffic flow of Lung Kwu Tan Road and, out of such figure, the respective numbers of trips made by heavy vehicles and refuse collection vehicles; the details of the daily cleaning work carried out at Lung Kwu Tan Road, including the frequency, schedule, methods and effectiveness; and

(3) as the Government has indicated that when selecting reclamation sites, it will attach importance to the impacts on the community and fully consider the views of residents, whether the Government will undertake not to take forward the Lung Kwu Tan reclamation plan before it has formulated effective solutions for tackling the aforesaid problems, so as to allay the concerns of the residents?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Kenneth Lau, with the Development Bureau consulted, my consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) To improve the air quality of Hong Kong (including Tuen Mun District), the Government has been working hard to reduce the local emissions of

pollutants and strengthen the collaboration with the Guangdong Provincial Government to tackle the regional air pollution problems. The major measures implemented in recent years include progressively phasing out pre-Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles; further tightening the emission standards for vehicles; strengthening the control of emissions of petrol and liquefied petroleum gas vehicles; further increasing the use of natural gas for power generation and progressively tightening the emissions of power plants; and regulating the vessels to use low sulphur fuel, etc. With the implementation of the above emission reduction measures, the average concentrations of the major air pollutants (including respirable suspended particulates, fine suspended particulates, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide) in the ambient air and at roadside have dropped by about 20 to 50 per cent in the past five years (i.e. between 2015 and 2019), except ozone level which is still on a rise owing to the regional pollution problem. This reflects the local emission reduction and control measures implemented in recent years have been effective.

Under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, the existing large-scale facilities located in Lung Kwu Tan, such as power plants, T&SPARK (sludge treatment facility), steel mills and cement plants, etc., are required to apply for the Specified Process Licences issued by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) for their operation. The licences stipulate that the best practicable means shall be in place to reduce air pollution emissions for protection of air quality. In addition, the EPD has required the setup of air quality monitoring stations under the licensing conditions of power plants to monitor the air quality of nearby areas. The EPD will also send inspectors to these facilities to conduct inspections from time to time and require the licence holders to conduct emissions monitoring for ensuring their compliance with the licence requirements.

The CLP Power Hong Kong Limited has set up air quality monitoring stations in the vicinity of the power plant, including Lung Kwu Tan Village, in accordance with the requirements of the Specified Process Licence to monitor the potential impacts of the concentration of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emitted from the power plant on the nearby areas. The concentrations of the air pollutants recorded at the Lung Kwu Tan Village monitoring station in 2019 are set out in the Annex. The data shows that the sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide concentrations recorded in the area not only comply with the current Air Quality Objectives, the nitrogen dioxide concentrations are also better than the concentration levels recorded at the general air quality monitoring stations in urban areas.

(2) In 2019, the total amount of solid waste received by the West New Territories Landfill is around 8 400 metric tonnes per day, of which about 70 per cent are transported by sea while the remaining 30 per cent (about 2 700 metric tonnes of waste) are transported by land to the West New Territories Landfill. The total number of vehicles passing through Lung Kwu Tan Road exceeds 2 600 per day, of which about 10 per cent (about 300 vehicles) are vehicles carrying waste to the West New Territories Landfill, including about 200 heavy vehicles, 60 enclosed refuse collection vehicles and about 40 refuse collection vehicles and other vehicles.

The EPD has been in close contacts with the villagers of Lung Kwu Tan Village to collect their views on improving the environment nearby Lung Kwu Tan Road. In view of the fact that the vehicles passing through Lung Kwu Tan Road would bring in silt and dirt, the EPD has been determined to improve the road cleaning method for Lung Kwu Tan Road. After consulting the villagers in late 2019, the EPD has introduced new model of road cleaning vehicles to clean the road surface and the roadside silt and dirt, and clear the ponding on the road surface, as well as stepped up its cleaning work at Lung Kwu Tan Road. In accordance with the villagers' requests, in addition to washing the Lung Kwu Tan Road once a day, the EPD's contractor also arranges cleaning of Lung Kwu Tan Road three times every day at noon, 4pm and 8pm respectively. In addition, the EPD will arrange contractors to carry out deep cleaning work on the sidewalks along the road sections close to Lung Kwu Tan Village from time to time where necessary. They will not only clean up the accumulated silt and dirt on the pavement but also the railings and the street signs. The EPD staff will also carry out inspections to these road sections twice a day to ensure the environment is clean and hygienic.

(3) The Development Bureau has been striving hard to increase land supply through a multi-pronged approach for land supply strategy. Lung Kwu Tan and its neighborhood are located in the westernmost of Tuen Mun. There are currently various industrial facilities in the area including two power plants. The Development Bureau plans to carry out a comprehensive planning and engineering study on Lung Kwu Tan and west coast of Tuen Mun, in order to provide land for diverse economic activities in a focused, orderly, and more land-use-efficient manner. The land uses will include provision of space for relocating the existing industrial facilities in Tuen Mun West and some brownfield operations which will be affected by the development. These land uses can create jobs which will benefit the local community.

The Development Bureau will explore feasible urban planning options in the proposed study, carry out environmental impact assessment in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, and conduct community engagement programme in order to collect views of the Lung Kwu Tan villagers and other stakeholders. The Government is planning to construct a new road in the reclamation area as an alternative route to the existing Lung Kwu Tan Road, so that the heavy vehicles currently passing through the Lung Kwu Tan village can be diverted away from the village in the future. The Government will also study the upgrading of Lung Mun Road and explore the connection of Tuen Mun West transportation network to the proposed Tuen Mun South Station, in order to enhance the accessibility of the coastal developments in Tuen Mun West.

Thank you, President.