

LCQ11: Special allowances for staff members of the Hospital Authority

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

To cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, Emergency Response Level was activated in public hospitals on January 25 this year. The Hospital Authority (HA) subsequently announced that staff members engaging in high risk duties in response to the epidemic might be granted Special Emergency Response Allowance (with retrospective effect from January 25), and that those staff members performing duties in high risk areas who needed to rent hotel rooms or temporary accommodation might be granted Special Rental Allowance. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the eligibility criteria for receiving the aforesaid two allowances;

(2) whether it knows (a) the respective numbers of applications received, approved and rejected and (b) the respective amounts of expenses incurred, by HA in respect of the aforesaid two allowances in each month from January to May this year, with a tabulated breakdown by (i) hospital cluster, (ii) hospital, (iii) clinical department and (iv) grade;

(3) whether it knows if there is any channel for staff members whose applications for such allowances have been rejected to lodge an appeal; if there is, of the details; and

(4) as some HA staff members, who have retained their civil service status while working in HA, have indicated that they have not been disbursed such allowances so far, whether the Government knows the reasons for that and when they will be disbursed such allowances?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), I provide the following reply to the various parts of the question raised by Professor the Hon Joseph Lee.

The HA introduced a Special Emergency Response Allowance (SERA) arrangement on February 24, 2020 to provide staff engaging in high risk duties in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic with SERA as appreciation and recognition. The SERA is granted to eligible full-

time staff as well as permanent or contract part-time staff who have performed at least two-week duty in high risk areas or surveillance wards since the activation of Emergency Response Level in public hospitals on January 25, 2020 (to be eligible, part-time staff should work on a full-day or whole-shift duty similar to that of their full-time counterparts). The SERA is payable to eligible employees for the days they have worked in high risk areas or surveillance wards, and is set at 20 per cent of the daily basic salary of the staff or at a rate of \$500 per day, whichever is higher. The SERA is granted with retrospective effect from January 25.

The HA also introduced a Special Rental Allowance (SRA) on February 1 for staff working in high risk areas or surveillance wards with temporary accommodation needs. Eligible permanent or contract full-time staff: (i) who have performed at least two-week duty in high risk areas or surveillance wards, or (ii) whose only residency is in the Mainland; and not provided with suitable temporary accommodation by the HA or choosing not to use the accommodation provided with justifications and detailed records, may apply for the SRA, which is set at a fixed rate of \$500 per day.

The expenditure and number of claims for the allowances as at May 2020 are set out in the table below:

Cluster/ Head Office	SERA		SRA	
	Total expenditure (\$ million)	Number of claims	Total expenditure (\$ million)	Number of claims
Hong Kong East Cluster	21.6	3 270	6.2	645
Hong Kong West Cluster	11.1	1 738	4.6	553
Kowloon Central Cluster	31.0	4 779	13.9	1 371
Kowloon East Cluster	26.3	3 949	13.1	1 441
Kowloon West Cluster	40.0	5 135	12.2	1 283
New Territories East Cluster	31.5	5 370	10.1	1 030
New Territories West Cluster	34.6	5 945	9.8	1 022
Head Office*	0.1	13	0.1	6
Total	196.2	30 199	70.0	7 351

* The staff concerned have performed duties in high risk areas of cluster hospitals or worked in the HA's COVID-19 support team.

The HA does not maintain the number of unsuccessful applications for the SERA and the SRA. Staff may approach their division head or cluster human resources office/hospital human resources department for enquiries or other views regarding their application results.

Regarding civil servants working in the HA, the Government has granted permission for those engaging in high risk duties to receive the two special allowances. The Department of Health has notified the staff concerned via the HA and put the arrangement into effect. As with the staff of the HA, the SERA and the SRA are granted with retrospective effect from January 25 and February 1, 2020 respectively.

Fraudulent website related to Airstar Bank Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Airstar Bank Limited on fraudulent website, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the website concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the website should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

LCQ10: Public facilities being vandalised

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

Question:

Since June last year, some demonstrators have wantonly vandalised public facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of sets of traffic lights which were vandalised in the past 12 months; whether the Government will enhance the design of traffic lights to prevent them from being vandalised (e.g. installing them at a higher position);
- (2) of the number of roadside railings which were removed by lawbreakers in the past 12 months; as the authorities have indicated that they have enhanced the design of railings to make them more secure, of the details of the new design;
- (3) of the number of cameras of the closed-circuit television systems installed in government facilities and public places which were vandalised in the past 12 months; the measures in place to prevent lawbreakers from vandalising such facilities and thereby destroying evidence of crime;
- (4) of the area of paving blocks on footpaths which were dug up by demonstrators in the past 12 months; whether the Government will switch to other methods for paving footpaths;
- (5) of the number of litter containers and recyclables collection bins managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department which were sabotaged or used for blocking roads in the past 12 months; the measures in place to prevent such unlawful acts while taking into account, at the same time, the need of the members of the public to dispose of litter;
- (6) of the cost of the damaged public facilities as mentioned in (1) to (5), and the repair or reprovisioning cost concerned;
- (7) given that a number of major trunk roads were once blocked by objects which had been thrown from a height, what measures the Government has taken to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents; and
- (8) of the measures in place to step up efforts in combating the aforesaid unlawful acts and promoting law-abiding awareness among members of the public?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Security Bureau, the Food and Health Bureau, the Environmental Protection Department and other relevant departments, the consolidated reply is as follows:

- (1) From June 2019 to May 2020, a total of 740 sets of traffic lights were vandalised to different extent, involving cutting of the traffic light cables or blackening of the traffic lights. In some cases, the traffic lights had their components or traffic controllers damaged or even burnt. To guard against vandalism, relevant government departments have already implemented

protective measures for traffic lights at some major road junctions, including installing protective frames on traffic controllers and covering pedestrian traffic lights with protective meshes.

(2) From June 2019 to May 2020, some 60 kilometres of railings were removed. Having discussed with relevant departments, the Highways Department (HyD) has temporarily put up plastic chains to alert road users at locations where the railings have been removed. The HyD has been gradually reinstating the railings with enhanced design including strengthened connections between railings for better reinforcement. The HyD has been assessing the performance of the enhanced design and will evaluate its effectiveness.

(3) According to non-exhaustive computation, from June 2019 to May 2020, at least 177 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras installed in government facilities and public places were vandalized. Relevant departments will conduct site inspection from time to time at locations where CCTV systems were installed to check whether the facilities are functioning properly and will use more robust materials to enhance protection as appropriate.

(4) From June 2019 to May 2020, some 22 000 square metres of paving blocks of footpaths were removed. The HyD has rectified the damages and the department has been exploring various options for enhancing the design for footpath paving.

(5) From June 2019 to May 2020, about 1 320 litter bins and 130 recyclables collection bins were sabotaged. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has gradually reprovided the litter bins and recyclables collection bins and placed hanging litter bags at appropriate locations, as well as stepped up the frequency of emptying hanging litter bags as appropriate.

(6) The expenditure for repairing or reproviding the abovementioned facilities which were damaged or removed during the period between June 2019 and May 2020 are tabulated below:

Facilities	Expenditure for repair works or reprovisioning (\$ million)
Traffic lights	40
Railings	15 (Note)
CCTV cameras	1.57 (Some of the expenditure is covered by the maintenance clause of relevant contracts separately, there is no relevant breakdown.)
Paving for footpath	8
Litter bins and recyclables collection bins	1.68
	Total: 66.25 (Note)

(7) With a view to safeguarding public safety, the HyD has installed temporary protective fencing on some of the public footbridges to prevent throwing of objects onto the nearby roads, especially trunk roads.

(8) When conducting assemblies, processions and expressing their views, members of public must do so in a lawful, peaceful and orderly manner, and should respect other people's right. According to section 10 of the Police Force Ordinance (Cap. 232), it is the statutory duty of the Police to maintain public safety and public order. When unlawful acts occur, the Police must take actions to maintain public order and safeguard the lives and properties of the public.

On law enforcement actions against illegal acts, if there is any illegal act, violent act or act that is detrimental to public safety and public order, the Police will not tolerate and will definitely enforce the law resolutely. To step up enforcement actions, the Police will, having regard to operational needs, deploy suitable manpower to take all feasible and legitimate measures to prevent and detect crimes, especially targeting serious violent crimes and cases of recklessly causing serious casualties, such as arson, inflicting grievous bodily harm, hurling objects onto railway tracks, throwing miscellaneous objects onto major trunk roads and tunnel entrances from height, etc. Apart from enhancing intelligence gathering and conducting patrols at high risk locations, the Police will also make timely arrest actions with a view to curbing the culprits, thereby averting incidents of serious casualties.

With respect to publicity and education, the Police has been making use of the social media, issuing press release and producing videos to disseminate information to the public in a timely manner, so as to raise public awareness on crime prevention and law-abiding. These efforts also help explain the actions taken by the Police and actively clarify false information.

Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) established the "Police Facebook Live Cadre" in November 2019. The cadre conducts live broadcasts on social media and appeals to the public to avoid scenes of clashes. The live broadcasts will present the law enforcement actions by frontline officers, which would help clarifying false reports, increasing transparency and enhancing public trust in the Police.

Since May 2020, the Police has started publishing the sentencing of convicted criminal cases relating to public order events on various social media, so as to demonstrate the Police's determination in taking resolute enforcement actions. Members of the public are reminded to stay alert that regardless of their political stance, offenders of any illegal acts would be subject to criminal liability.

In addition, PPRB will continue to organise activities under "Junior Police Call" and "Senior Police Call" to promote fight crime messages and encourage members of the public to become partners of the Police in fighting crime.

Note: As the repair works on railings are still in progress, the final expenditure has yet been concluded. The figure is an estimate.

[Polling date for 2020 LegCo General Election and date of prorogation of sixth-term LegCo](#)

A Government spokesman said today (June 10) that the Chief Executive has specified September 6, 2020, as the date for holding the general election for the seventh-term Legislative Council (LegCo). The decision has taken into consideration the relevant statutory provisions concerning the determination of a general election date and the nomination period preceding an election, and the practice adopted in the past public elections.

In light of the polling date, the nomination period for the 2020 LegCo General Election is scheduled for July 18 to July 31 this year. To ensure that all candidates (including those who are serving LegCo members) will compete on a level playing field, the Chief Executive has appointed July 18, 2020, which is the commencement date of the nomination period, as the date from which the sixth-term LegCo shall stand prorogued and its operation shall then be terminated.

The dates of polling of the LegCo general election and prorogation of the LegCo will be published in the Gazette on June 12.

[LCQ17: US policy towards Hong Kong](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

On the 28th of last month, the National People's Congress decided that its Standing Committee be entrusted to formulate laws relating to establishing and improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to safeguard national security. The Department of State of the United States (US) forthwith submitted a report to the US Congress stating that as the HKSAR had failed to

maintain a high degree of autonomy, it did not warrant special treatment. The US President then announced the commencement of the process for revoking the special treatment for Hong Kong, e.g. statuses as a separate customs territory and as a separate travel territory, and exemptions from the US export controls on dual-use technologies. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quantities and values of those high technology products which were exempted from the US export controls and imported from the US to the HKSAR in each of the past three years, with a tabulated breakdown by type of product; whether it has assessed, among such products, which types of products will require export licences in future before they may be imported into HKSAR;

(2) whether the Government and the relevant public organisations (including the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited) have assessed the impacts of the US authorities' revocation of the exemptions granted to the HKSAR regarding technologies export controls on the development of the local innovation and technology industry, and what corresponding measures will be put in place;

(3) whether it has assessed the impacts of the US authorities' revocation of HKSAR's statuses as a separate customs territory and as a separate travel territory on (i) the import, export and re-export trade of the HKSAR, and (ii) HKSAR residents' application for US visas;

(4) whether it has assessed the impacts of the US authorities' revocation of the special treatment for the HKSAR on Hong Kong's overall economy, and what corresponding measures the Government will put in place; and

(5) as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has indicated earlier that if countries such as the US and the United Kingdom impose sanctions or other measures on the HKSAR, China will take all necessary countermeasures, whether the HKSAR Government (i) knows the details of such countermeasures, (ii) has to take actions to dovetail with the implementation of such countermeasures, and (iii) has assessed the impacts of such countermeasures on Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB), our consolidated response to the question is as follows:

The US has gained much from the economic and trade activities with Hong Kong. In 2019, the total merchandise trade between Hong Kong and the US stood at HK\$517 billion (i.e. 6.2 per cent of Hong Kong's total merchandise trade), whereas Hong Kong's domestic exports to the US was HK\$3.7 billion, accounting for less than 2 per cent of local manufacturing output and less than 0.1 per cent of Hong Kong's total exports. But on the other hand, over the past decade (from 2010 to 2019), the aggregate merchandise trade surplus the US enjoyed over Hong Kong reached around US\$310 billion. In 2019 alone, the US

enjoyed a merchandise trade surplus of over US\$26 billion with Hong Kong, the highest among its trading partners.

While the US said it would change its policy towards Hong Kong, we need to examine its actual actions before we can make a substantive assessment. Generally speaking, if the US is to take any unilateral actions, while the associated uncertainties may cause some disturbances to business sentiment in the near term, the Hong Kong economy, with its resilience and sound fundamentals, including the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free and open trade policies and a level-playing field, will be able to overcome the challenges and remain on track for sustainable development.

In recent years, the Government and the industry and commercial sectors have been doubling efforts in diversifying markets, including focusing more on the fast-growing Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economies, which taken as a whole is Hong Kong's second largest trading partner, and economies along the Belt and Road. Further to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, Hong Kong has signed seven free trade agreements (FTAs) with different economies, including New Zealand, the Member States of the European Free Trade Association, Chile, Macao, ASEAN, Georgia, and Australia. Since January 2020, the geographical scope coverage of the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales has been extended from the Mainland and ASEAN to cover other economies with which Hong Kong has signed FTAs, so as to provide funding support to Hong Kong enterprises in developing these markets. The Government will continue to expand the FTA network with a view to securing favourable conditions for Hong Kong's goods and services to enter other markets.

In respect of strategic commodities, according to the statistics published by the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), US exports which are subject to export control and shipped to Hong Kong under BIS Licence Exception were about US\$400 to 500 million per year in 2016, 2017, and 2018, and they were mainly telecommunications and information security products and electronics. The impacts of these products in obtaining the US export authorisation will depend on the export control measures eventually taken by the US Government. ITB assesses that while any policy changes may have certain impact on related industries in the short term, the impact on the long-term development of Hong Kong's innovation and technology (I&T) would be relatively limited. In recent years, various I&T stakeholders in Hong Kong have been sourcing equipment and technology products from around the world, or developing related products and technologies locally. Hence, any policies adopted by individual regions should not have material impact on Hong Kong's I&T development.