

立法會
Legislative Council

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**Paper for the House Committee meeting
of 16 November 2018**

**Questions scheduled for the
Legislative Council meeting of 21 November 2018**

Questions by:

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| (1) | Hon Jeffrey LAM | (Oral reply) |
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| (3) | Hon Vincent CHENG | (Oral reply) |
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| (5) | Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG | (Oral reply) |
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| (7) | Hon LUK Chung-hung | (Written reply) |
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| (9) | Hon Starry LEE | (Written reply) |
| (10) | Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan | (Written reply) |
| (11) | Hon Jeremy TAM | (Written reply) |
| (12) | Prof Hon Joseph LEE | (Written reply) |
| (13) | Hon Charles Peter MOK | (Written reply) |
| (14) | Hon Kenneth LEUNG | (Written reply) |
| (15) | Hon WU Chi-wai | (Written reply) |
| (16) | Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan | (Written reply) |
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| (18) | Hon Kenneth LAU | (Written reply) |
| (19) | Hon Tony TSE | (Written reply) |
| (20) | Hon Jimmy NG | (Written reply) |
| (21) | Hon Holden CHOW | (Written reply) |
| (22) | Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT | (Written reply) |

註 :

NOTE :

議員將採用這種語言提出質詢

Member will ask the question in this language

Adjustment of the demand-side management measures for the property market

(1) Hon Jeffrey LAM (Oral reply)

Some members of the public have relayed that with the interest rates rising gradually and the Sino-United States trade conflicts intensifying, the local property market may have entered a downward cycle in recent months, and the various demand-side management measures (commonly known as “harsh measures”) implemented by the Government to address the overheated property market have become outdated. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will examine relaxing the loan-to-value ratios for mortgage loans to make it easier for members of the public to acquire their first property or replace their existing property, and enable small and medium enterprises to get more operating capital through securing loans by collateralizing their properties;
- (2) whether it has assessed if the harsh measures will exacerbate the fall in property prices when the property market is in a downtrend; if it has assessed, whether it can submit the relevant report to this Council; and
- (3) given that a Hong Kong permanent resident who disposes of his or her only original residential property within 12 months from the date of acquisition of a new residential property may apply for a partial refund of the ad valorem stamp duty payable at the time of acquisition of the property which is equivalent to 15% of the property price, whether the Government will change such a taxation arrangement so that persons who acquire a new residential property as replacement are required to pay additional stamp duty only if they fail to dispose of their original residential property within 12 months, so as to alleviate their burden when acquiring properties; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

East Rail Line

(2) Hon CHAN Chun-ying (Oral reply)

It has been over a century since the Hong Kong section of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, the predecessor of the East Rail Line (“ERL”), came into existence. In recent years, incidents of disruptions of train service of ERL have happened from time to time. Earlier on, an overhead power line of ERL was damaged during the onslaught of super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong causing a train service disruption lasting nearly one day. Some members of the public have pointed out that ERL, which is a major means of transport to and from New Territories East, Kowloon and the Mainland, has become outdated, and its train compartments are also very crowded during peak hours. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the number of incidents of delay of train service of ERL lasting over one hour in the last decade and their causes and, among such incidents, the percentage of those caused by equipment failure;
- (2) whether it knows how the current passenger throughput of ERL during peak hours compares with the design capacity; if ERL is overloaded, of the authorities’ proposals to divert the passengers; and
- (3) whether it will consider expeditiously embarking on a study on the feasibility to construct, as a replacement of ERL, an entirely new express rail which is covered or underground; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Support for tenants in inadequate housing

(3) Hon Vincent CHENG (Oral reply)

According to the 2016 Population By-census, the number of people residing in inadequate housing was as high as 210 000. The findings of a recent survey with households in inadequate housing as targets revealed that 80% of the respondents were waiting for public housing, and one-third of them had been waiting for over five years. The support measures that the respondents most hoped the Government to provide were (in descending order): building more public housing, disbursing a rent subsidy and increasing supply of transitional housing. Regarding the provision of support for tenants in inadequate housing, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) how the Government supports community organizations in taking forward transitional housing projects; whether it will make public a list of government lands suitable for building transitional housing, and establish a dedicated fund to support the building of transitional housing;
- (2) given that the Hong Kong Housing Authority has planned, by making reference to the relevant practice of the Hong Kong Housing Society, to allow owners of its subsidized sale flats with premium unpaid to sublet their flats, of the details of the plan, including whether the owners may let the entire flats; and
- (3) given that at present, the Community Care Fund grants a rent subsidy only to CSSA recipients living in rented private housing, whether the Government will provide a rent subsidy or similar type of support to those tenants in inadequate housing who are not receiving CSSA?

Arrangements for Legislative Council Members
to visit persons in custody to perform official duties

(4) Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung (Oral reply)

I notice that in recent years, the Correctional Services Department (“CSD”) has changed the arrangements for Members of this Council to visit persons in custody to perform official duties. In the past, a Member, irrespective of whether in the company of other persons (such as the Member’s assistant or a legal adviser of the person in custody), may visit a person in custody not in the hearing of CSD officers. At present, if a Member is accompanied by other persons in a visit to a person in custody, CSD officers will keep the door of the visit room open and even sit in on the visit and record the conversation in writing. In the past year or so, I have enquired for a number of times in writing about the reasons for the changes in the arrangements, but CSD has so far not made an official reply on the grounds that it needs to consult the Department of Justice. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) since when the arrangements of CSD officers sitting in on official visits and recording the conversation in writing have been implemented; of the uses of such records and their retention period, as well as the rank of the officers responsible for inspecting the contents of the records;
- (2) of the justifications and the legal basis for CSD officers to sit in on official visits and the guidelines those officers have to observe; as some Members have relayed that there are differences in the arrangements for handling official visits by various correctional institutions, of the reasons for that and the measures to ensure that the relevant arrangements are consistent; and
- (3) whether CSD will review the arrangements for official visits and reinstate the practice whereby Members and accompanying persons may visit persons in custody not in the hearing of CSD officers, so as to protect the privacy of persons in custody and safeguard their right to confidential legal advice?

Education on and promotion of
the country's Constitution and the Basic Law

(5) Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG (Oral reply)

In recent years, some young people have blatantly publicized in a high profile manner political advocacy contravening the country's Constitution and the Basic Law, such as "independence of Hong Kong". Also, quite a number of members of the public do not understand these two constitutional documents. Regarding the education on and promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the details of the work done by the Education Bureau, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee to promote the Constitution and the Basic Law among students, young people and teachers in the past three years, and the respective expenditures involved; the criteria adopted when the authorities carry out regular reviews of the effectiveness of such work and the findings of the latest review;
- (2) of the measures taken to ensure that teachers teach their students correct knowledge about the Constitution and the Basic Law; and
- (3) whether it will consider stepping up its efforts to promote the relationship between the Constitution and the Basic Law; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Diversion of tourists entering the territory
through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

(6) Hon Andrew WAN (Oral reply)

It has been reported that upon the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (“HZMB”) opening to traffic on the 24th of last month, a large number of tourists entering the territory via HZMB have flocked to Tung Chung, and the daily lives of the residents there have been greatly affected as a result. For example, daily commodities were snapped up and sold out, restaurants experienced an overflow of customers, and a large number of tourists waiting at Tung Chung Bus Terminus for buses heading for the Hong Kong Port caused obstruction to passageways and noise nuisances. Despite the introduction of a number of tourist diversion measures as announced by the Government on the 9th of this month, the situation has not been significantly improved. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has conducted an investigation into the number of tour groups entering the territory via HZMB, since HZMB opened to traffic, for which reception by a local travel agent had not been arranged; whether it has taken any law enforcement actions; if so, of the details;
- (2) of the new measures to further mitigate the current situation of Tung Chung being flooded with tourists; whether it will discuss with the Mainland authorities the following proposals: (i) introducing tour groups or bus routes destined for the HZMB eastern artificial island, which is located within Mainland waters, so that those Mainland residents who merely want to visit HZMB need not enter Hong Kong, and (ii) tightening the arrangement for issuing exit endorsements for Mainland residents to visit Hong Kong; and
- (3) given that the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (“TM-CLKL”) is expected to be fully operational in 2020 and by that time, it will take only about 10 minutes per trip for vehicles to commute between the Hong Kong Port and Tuen Mun, whether the authorities will, upon the commissioning of TM-CLKL, put in place appropriate measures to prevent recurrence in Tuen Mun the situation of a place being flooded with tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Adopting an updated assessment tool
to assess the care needs of the elderly

(7) Hon LUK Chung-hung (Written reply)

In 2000, the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) implemented a Standardized Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services, under which accredited assessors use an internationally recognized assessment tool to assess the care needs of the elderly and match them with appropriate long-term care services. As some frontline service providers considered that the assessment tool was ineffective in identifying the cognitive and mental needs of those elderly persons with early-stage dementia, SWD commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong in 2013 to update the assessment tool to interRAI-HC (elderly health and home care assessment tool) version 9.3 (“the new version tool”). The Government indicated at the end of last year that the new version tool would be introduced within the current financial year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the progress of adopting the new version tool, including the launch date and the to-date number of accredited assessors who have attended training programmes for conducting assessment with the new version tool;
- (2) whether it has gained an understanding of the edge of the new version tool over the existing version of the tool in respect of identifying the cognitive and mental needs of those elderly persons with early-stage dementia;
- (3) whether the Government will accede to requests for conducting reassessment with the new version tool for those elderly persons who have been assessed by the existing version of the tool and found ineligible for subsidized long-term care services; and
- (4) whether it has assessed if more elderly persons will be identified to be in need of long-term care services after the adoption of the new version tool; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether it will increase the quotas for such services gearing to this situation; if so, of the details?

The nomination of the Hong Kong members of
the Committee for the Basic Law
of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

(8) Hon James TO (Written reply)

According to the Decision of the National People's Congress Approving the Proposal by the Drafting Committee for the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Committee for the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Under the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the Hong Kong members of the Committee for the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ("BLC") shall be Chinese citizens who are permanent residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region with no right of abode in any foreign country and shall be nominated jointly by the Chief Executive, the President of the Legislative Council and the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, for appointment by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ("NPCSC") for a term of office of five years. BLC was established on 1 July 1997, and the current BLC is of the fifth term. Regarding the nomination of the Hong Kong members of BLC, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

- (1) how the nomination procedure is activated;
- (2) the qualifications, apart from meeting the aforesaid requirements, that Chinese citizens must possess before they will be considered for the nomination, and whether self-recommended persons will be considered for the nomination; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) the number of nominees for each term of BLC and, among such nominees, the number of those who were not appointed by NPCSC (if any) and the reasons for that; whether a mechanism has been put in place for unappointed nominees to lodge appeals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons and the legal basis for that, and whether it will put forward a proposal to the Central Authorities for establishing such a mechanism?

Passenger embarkation fee levied on owners of cross-boundary ferries

(9) Hon Starry LEE (Written reply)

At present, the Marine Department levies, pursuant to the law, a passenger embarkation fee at \$11 per passenger from the owners of cross-boundary ferries, and such a fee is passed on to the passengers. There are comments that with the economies within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area growing and integrating in an increasingly fast pace, the governments of the three places have all indicated that they will actively remove the various obstacles for exchange and cooperation. However, among the three governments, only the Hong Kong Government collects a passenger embarkation fee, which is not conducive to the connectivity and economic integration of the three places. Moreover, there are views that as a similar passenger boarding fee has not been imposed on the various modes of cross-boundary land transport in Hong Kong at present, the embarkation fee is unfair to those passengers departing by sea. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of passenger trips departing by cross-boundary ferries and the total amount of embarkation fees collected in each of the past three years, with a tabular breakdown by ferry route;
- (2) of the measures taken by the Government in the past three years to promote sea transport connectivity among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as the effectiveness of such measures; and
- (3) whether it will review the current policy of levying a passenger embarkation fee, including whether that fee should be abolished; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Painting the shells of live turtles with oil paints

(10) Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan (Written reply)

It has been reported that painting the shells of live red-eared sliders (“painted turtles”) with colourful oil paints has become popular overseas in recent years, and this trend has spread to Hong Kong in recent months. Painted turtles are available for sale in some shops, and a red-eared slider fully painted in gold colour was found by some members of the public in a pond in Kowloon Park. Some experts have pointed out that the harmful substances in paints will enter the bloodstream of turtles through the shells; paints will hinder turtles’ absorption of sunlight, making it difficult for them to produce vitamin D and hence affecting their bone structures; and paints applied on the noses and heads of turtles may cause turtles to suffocate to death because of blockage of their airways. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of complaints relating to painted turtles received in the past 12 months, and whether follow-up actions were taken, by the authorities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether the acts of painting the shells of live turtles with oil paints and selling painted turtles are subject to regulation under the existing legislation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it has taken measures to curb the trend of painting the shells of live turtles with oil paints, e.g. calling upon members of the public and shops not to buy or sell painted turtles; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Combating bogus marriages

(11) Hon Jeremy TAM (Written reply)

It has been reported that some cross-boundary bogus marriage syndicates provide one-stop services. Such services include: arranging bogus marriages for their clients to facilitate their application for Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as One-way Permits (“OWPs”)), and taking care of the divorce procedure on behalf of their clients after they come to settle in Hong Kong. On combating bogus marriages, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of divorces and the divorce rate in each of the past five years in respect of those couples who were both Hong Kong permanent residents (“HKPRs”), with a breakdown by duration of marriage (namely, two years or below, three to four years, five to six years and seven to nine years);
- (2) whether it will start compiling statistics on the number of divorces and divorce rates in respect of those couples one party to which is a person who came to Hong Kong for settlement on OWPs, broken down by such persons’ year of residence (namely, two years or below, three to four years, five to six years and seven to nine years) in Hong Kong, for comparison with the corresponding figures in (1); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) whether OWP holders who have settled in Hong Kong for less than seven years will, for the reason of their divorce with HKPRs, have their Hong Kong identity cards and residence status invalidated by the Immigration Department (“ImmD”) and be subject to repatriation to their places of origin;
- (4) among the 1 542 suspected bogus marriage cases investigated by ImmD in the past three years, of the number of those in which ImmD decided, after proactively analyzing the relevant situation, to initiate investigations;
- (5) of the statistics on convictions in each of the past five years involving offences related to bogus marriage (set out in the table below); and

Year	Number of defendants convicted on own plea (A)	Number of defendants convicted after trial (B)	Number of defendants acquitted after trial (C)	Conviction rate after trial (B)/[(B)+(C)]	Conviction rate including guilty plea [(A)+(B)]/ [(A)+(B)+(C)]
Magistrates’ Court					
2013					
2014					
2015					
2016					
2017					
District Court					
2013					
2014					
2015					

2016					
2017					
Court of First Instance					
2013					
2014					
2015					
2016					
2017					

- (6) of the number of spot checks by home visits conducted by ImmD in the past five years for investigating suspected bogus marriage cases; the respective numbers of offenders who were arrested, prosecuted and convicted as a result of the evidence obtained from (i) such operations and (ii) all operations other than such operations, and the percentages of those figures in the total number of suspected bogus marriage cases?

Hospital accreditation programme

(12) Prof Hon Joseph LEE (Written reply)

From April 2009 to January this year, the Hospital Authority (“HA”) had implemented a hospital accreditation programme (“the accreditation programme”) by phases in public hospitals, with a view to enhancing the accountability of hospitals for service quality and safety. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

- (1) the (i) expenditure incurred and (ii) manpower resources deployed (including the respective numbers of staff members and working hours involved, broken down by staff grade) in each of the past five years by public hospitals for implementing the accreditation programme, with a tabulated breakdown by name of hospital and the cluster to which the hospital belonged; and
- (2) the service quality improvement initiatives identified, by HA in each of the past five years, during the implementation of the accreditation programme, and whether HA allocated, in respect of such initiatives, additional financial and manpower resources to the various public hospitals; if HA did, of the details with a tabulated breakdown by name of hospital and the cluster to which the hospital belonged; if not, the reasons for that?

Plugging loopholes in electronic payment services

(13) Hon Charles Peter MOK (Written reply)

It has been reported that loopholes were uncovered in the procedure for binding credit cards or bank accounts with stored value facilities (“e-wallets”). As the binding procedure of some credit cards did not include a two-factor authentication via mobile phone short message service (“SMS”) for identity verification, fraudsters could complete the binding procedure using an anonymous mobile phone card (commonly known as “prepaid SIM card”). Also, as there were loopholes in the process for e-wallet users to set up direct debit authorization (“eDDA”) through the Faster Payment System, fraudsters could set up eDDA using prepaid SIM cards and stolen bank account information and then steal money through money transfers. Moreover, some members of the public have relayed to me that the frequent uncovering of security loopholes in the procedure for binding credit cards or bank accounts has undermined their confidence in electronic payment services and the development of financial technologies. After completing a review on the eDDA setup process at the end of last month, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (“HKMA”) requested e-wallet operators and banks to refine such process. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of (i) the total number of reports on frauds involving e-wallets received by the Police and HKMA since January this year and the total amount of money involved, and (ii) the details of the follow-up actions taken on such cases, including the investigation progress and the respective numbers of persons arrested and prosecuted;
- (2) of the details and effectiveness of the measures taken to refine the eDDA setup process;
- (3) whether it had required e-wallet operators and card-issuing banks to conduct security risk assessments before they launched e-wallets; if so, whether the scope of such assessments included if reliable identity verification arrangements were in place for the procedure for binding credit cards with e-wallets;
- (4) whether it will stipulate that the procedure for binding credit cards with e-wallets must adopt a two-factor authentication (such as via SMS verification) or other effective measures for identity verification, in order to eradicate the aforesaid frauds; and
- (5) as HKMA, in collaboration with the Mainland authorities, is introducing measures to facilitate cross-boundary electronic payment services (e.g. the trial use of Hong Kong’s e-wallets on the Mainland), whether HKMA has assessed the risks posed by such measures to the personal data privacy of Hong Kong residents; if so, of the outcome and the corresponding measures; in view of the differences in the laws and regulations between the two places, how the authorities protect the

consumer rights and interests as well as personal data privacy of those Hong Kong people who use cross-boundary electronic payment services?

Opening and maintenance of bank accounts by enterprises

(14) Hon Kenneth LEUNG (Written reply)

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (“HKMA”) issued guidelines for a number of times in the past two years to request banks to take measures to improve customer interfacing in the account opening processes, including streamlining the account opening processes and adopting customer due diligence (“CDD”) that is proportionate to the risk level. Besides, HKMA launched a Mystery Shopping Programme (“MSP”) in December 2017 to assess the effectiveness of such measures and banks’ compliance with HKMA’s guidelines and requirements. However, some members of the accounting sector have recently complained to me that their customers still encounter quite a number of difficulties in opening and maintaining bank accounts. The process of document submission and CDD involved in the account opening applications are quite complicated and time-consuming, thereby hindering the normal operation of the enterprises concerned. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows (i) the respective numbers of account opening applications from new enterprise customers received, approved and rejected by banks in each month of the past three years, and (ii) the average processing time in respect of those applications the vetting and approval of which have been completed;
- (2) of the total number of complaints received by HKMA in the past three years about banks’ (i) refusal to open accounts for new enterprise customers, and (ii) cancellation of accounts of individual or enterprise customers; the major types of enterprises involved in those complaints, and the reasons for refusal to open accounts/cancellation of accounts;
- (3) of the details and results of MSP; whether HKMA has, in the light of the results of MSP, (i) given comments, advices or warnings to the banks concerned, and (ii) adjusted the relevant measures and guidelines; and
- (4) whether HKMA has plans to issue clearer guidelines to banks to stipulate that banks must formulate arrangements for risk assessments and CDD which are proportionate to the type, business nature, and operation scale of the customers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Compilation of statistics on mortgage loans

(15) Hon WU Chi-wai (Written reply)

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (“HKMA”) indicated that the debt-servicing ratio (“DSR”) for the new residential mortgage loans (“RMLs”) approved in the second quarter of this year was 34%, and that this ratio had factored in the repayments for all additional mortgage loans obtained by the borrowers from third parties other than banks (“third-party mortgages”). However, HKMA’s data on third-party mortgages were not directly provided by the finance companies offering such mortgage loans, but were estimations based on figures provided by banks and outcome of sampling checks on the land records. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of cases in which the borrowers were granted mortgages on the same residential property both by a bank and by a third party/third parties, the amount of the loans involved and the percentage of such amount in the total amount of new RMLs approved throughout the year, in each of the past three years, as well as the average (i) loan-to-value (“LTV”) ratio, (ii) loan amount and (iii) DSR in respect of those cases; the average (iv) LTV ratio and (v) loan amount of the third-party mortgages involved in those cases;
- (2) in respect of the new RMLs approved in each of the past three years by (i) banks and (ii) finance companies not associated with banks and developers, whether it knows (a) the number of such loans, (b) the total amount of loans involved, (c) the average LTV ratio and loan amount, and (d) the average, the highest and the lowest interest rates charged;
- (3) whether it knows the following details of the new RMLs approved in each of the past three years by finance companies under developers:
 - (i) the number and total amount of such loans, with a breakdown by LTV ratio, interest rate and whether or not income tests were conducted;
 - (ii) the average, the highest and the lowest interest rates charged; and
 - (iii) the average DSR;if not, whether the Government will request the finance companies concerned to submit such information direct or through the banks;
- (4) as the interest rates charged on the mortgage loans provided by finance companies under developers will usually be raised substantially after a number of years, whether HKMA has grasped the situation where the borrowers concerned have applied to banks for remortgaging/loan refinancing for full repayments of the mortgage loans provided by such finance companies; if so, of the respective numbers of such applications received, approved and rejected by banks in each of the past three years; if not, whether HKMA will request the banks to compile and provide such statistics; and

- (5) of the details of the sampling checks on the land records conducted by HKMA (including the sampling method and proportion); whether HKMA will consider conducting a comprehensive check on all the land records in respect of the transactions in the past three years of newly completed residential properties, so as to fully grasp the data on third-party mortgages; whether it has assessed the impacts of this type of mortgages on the stability of the property market and the banking system; if so, of the outcome; if not, whether it will conduct such an assessment expeditiously?

Support for non-Chinese speaking students in learning Chinese History

(16) Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan (Written reply)

Since 2014, the Education Bureau (“EDB”) has implemented the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework to step up the support for non-Chinese speaking (“NCS”) students in learning Chinese. In addition, the Chief Executive has announced in this year’s Policy Address that from the 2019-2020 school year onwards, additional resources will be provided for public sector secondary schools to support NCS students in using the Chinese language to learn Chinese History. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) given that Chinese History has become a compulsory subject at junior secondary level since September this year, of the number of cases, received by EDB since the commencement of the current school year, in which teachers sought assistance as they had encountered difficulties in teaching NCS students Chinese History; the immediate measures put in place to assist those teachers in overcoming the difficulties;
- (2) of the outcome of the discussions and the support measures formulated by the Ad Hoc Committee on Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learning Chinese History and Chinese Culture since its establishment in May this year;
- (3) as some teachers have pointed out that since all of the teaching materials for Chinese History available on the market are compiled for Chinese-speaking students, such materials are not suitable for NCS students whose cultural backgrounds and proficiency in the Chinese language are different from those of Chinese-speaking students, and hence the schools have to compile teaching materials by themselves for NCS students and provide explanations in English when teaching the subject, whether EDB currently provides assistance to the schools concerned in compiling such teaching materials;
- (4) whether EDB has formulated a Chinese History curriculum framework and learning/examination assessment guides especially for NCS students; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (5) whether EDB has issued guidelines to the schools concerned on how they may utilize the aforesaid additional resources to provide support for NCS students?

The work and performance of the Joint Office

(17) Hon Paul TSE (Written reply)

In 2006, the Buildings Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (“FEHD”) set up a Joint Office (“JO”) dedicated to handling reports on water seepage in buildings. It is learnt that for over a decade, members of the public have incessantly criticized JO’s work efficiency and effectiveness. The following situation occurred whenever officials of JO attended on invitation district seminars concerning water seepage problems in buildings: members of the public who were not satisfied with the officials’ explanations surrounded the officials to air grievances and lodge complaints on the spot. Despite the initiative taken by the Audit Commission and the Office of The Ombudsman (“The Ombudsman”) to investigate the work of JO and put forward improvement proposals, public grievances on JO’s poor performance are still increasing steadily. Recently, some staff members of FEHD have even unexpectedly complained to the Public Complaints Office (“PCO”) of this Council about JO’s low efficiency due to its poor system and administration. From 2016 to September this year, The Ombudsman received a total of 360 complaints against JO’s failure to properly handle water seepage problems. Among the over 100 000 reports JO received from 2015 to 2017, only 17% of the cases had the source of water seepage identified. It is learnt that whilst JO relies mainly on the colour water test in identifying the source of water seepage, the practice is so ineffective that some cases have remained unresolved for as long as a decade. Even though JO is aware of a number of technologies, measures and methods for identifying the source of water seepage, its work efficiency has not been improved so far. Quite a number of members of the public consider that JO’s performance is extremely poor and its operating cost is high, and they question why the Government has not ceased the operation of JO and used the full amount of the funds originally earmarked for its operating expenditure to directly engage or subsidize members of the public to engage private water seepage investigation companies to take up the relevant work instead. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total number of reports on water seepage received by JO in the past three years, together with a breakdown of the figures and their percentages by the testing method adopted for handling the cases (i.e. (i) colour water test, (ii) infrared camera scanning and (iii) microwave tomography scanning);
- (2) of the respective average unit costs of the aforesaid three testing methods;
- (3) given the significant increase in the expenditure of JO year on year in recent years, with its 2018-2019 estimates of expenditure standing high at \$108 million, whether the Government has reviewed why it still significantly increased the estimates of expenditure for JO under the circumstances of many members of the public having criticized JO for its

work efficiency and the Audit Commission and The Ombudsman having taken the initiative to investigate the work of JO;

- (4) as I have learnt that, in response to the complaints lodged by some FEHD staff members to PCO of this Council about the poor system and administration of JO, the Government will form a high-level inter-departmental group to thoroughly investigate the situation, of the progress of the relevant work;
- (5) as it has been reported that while JO has still failed to identify the source of water seepage at the ceiling of a residential unit in To Kwa Wan after conducting investigations by means of colour water test for six years, the private water seepage investigation company hired by the newspaper organization concerned has taken only half an hour to identify the source of water seepage by making use of infrared camera scanning device and the method of water quality test, whether the Government will approach the newspaper organization and residential unit concerned to gain an understanding of the case, and study why there is such a huge difference between the testing efficiency of JO and that of the private water seepage investigation company; and
- (6) whether it will, from the perspectives such as cost effectiveness and target orientation, consider ceasing the operation of JO in an orderly manner, and use the funds originally earmarked for its operating expenditure to engage private water seepage investigation companies to take up the relevant work instead; if not, of the reasons for that?

Impacts of microplastics on the ecosystem and human health

(18) Hon Kenneth LAU (Written reply)

It has been reported that the findings of a number of overseas studies have revealed that microplastics (i.e. plastic pellets or flakes of less than 5 mm in diameter or length, including plastic fibres as minute as having a diameter or length of only 1 μm) are widely found in bottled water, tap water, seawater, edible salt, marine life and human waste. Some researchers have pointed out that microplastics, given their very tiny size, may enter human vascular and lymphatic systems, thereby jeopardizing human health. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has monitored on a regular basis the concentration of microplastics in the water bodies of the reservoirs and rivers of Hong Kong; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) as the Government said in November last year that the Water Supplies Department had engaged consultants to conduct a review on the risks of plastic fibre materials on drinking water safety, of the progress of that review; whether it has evaluated the impacts of drinking water containing microplastics on human health; if so, of the details;
- (3) whether it compiled statistics and conducted researches in the past three years on the concentration of microplastics in Hong Kong waters and marine life; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) of the microplastics removal capability of the sewage treatment processes in various sewage treatment works, as well as the relevant performance indicators; and
- (5) as the authorities said in April this year that they had commissioned consultants to conduct a one-year study to examine the impacts of microplastics on Hong Kong's environment, and to gain an understanding of the bans imposed by places outside Hong Kong on personal care and beauty products containing microplastics, so as to formulate regulatory proposals applicable to Hong Kong, whether the authorities will, before the study is completed, introduce measures to reduce microplastic materials entering the natural environment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Approach for relaxing the demand-side management measures
for the property market

(19) Hon Tony TSE (Written reply)

In order to address the overheated property market and maintain financial stability, the Government (including the Hong Kong Monetary Authority) has implemented a series of demand-side management measures since 2010. There are comments that the continuous fall in property prices in the past two months is reflective of the gradual emergence of the impacts of factors such as the trade war between China and the United States and the setting off of a cycle of rising interest rates, and property prices may drop by 30% to 70% from their peaks. It is therefore recommended that the Government expeditiously relax the various demand-side management measures (commonly referred to as “reduce the ‘curb’ measures”). However, there are other comments that if the timing, strength, priority or management of public expectation is inappropriate when reducing the curb measures, such a move might instead exacerbate the drop in property prices, thereby causing members of the public with lower risk appetite to become owners of properties with negative equity. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective (i) dates of introduction and (ii) contents of the various demand-side management measures, as well as (iii) the respective amounts of taxes collected (if any) so far under such measures (set out in a table);
- (2) whether it has formulated objective criteria for reducing the curb measures; if so, of the considerations in formulating the criteria and the details of the criteria; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it has assessed the timing, strength, priority and public expectation in reducing the curb measures and made preparation accordingly (including the formulation of contingency plans); if so, of the details?

Food safety issues concerning online food ordering platforms

(20) Hon Jimmy NG (Written reply)

In July this year, the Centre for Health Protection announced that seven persons had fallen ill after consuming takeaway food from a food premises. It was reported that the food in question was bought from that food premises by an online food ordering platform upon receiving orders from its customers, and then collected by the customers within a specified time at a designated pickup point set up by the platform on the street. Some members of the public are concerned that as online food ordering platforms are currently not subject to regulation, it is difficult to ensure that the food is stored at a proper temperature and free from contamination during transportation and while awaiting collection. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective current numbers of (i) operators selling non-prepackaged food online without physical premises and (ii) online food ordering platforms;
- (2) of the number of complaints received by the Government in the past three years concerning the quality of food sold by online food ordering platforms;
- (3) given that currently food factories selling restricted food online must obtain relevant permits, and the licensing conditions include certain regulations about food safety (e.g. the food must be obtained from lawful sources and stored at a proper temperature at all times, and the permittees must take measures to prevent the food from cross-contaminating during transportation), whether the Government has plans to expand the scope of such permit system to cover (i) online food ordering platforms and (ii) the various types of non-prepackaged foods in order to ensure food safety; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) whether it will use the Measures for the Supervision and Administration of Food Safety in Online Catering Services promulgated by the China Food and Drug Administration as a blueprint for regulating issues relating to food safety of online food ordering platforms; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (5) given that currently various online food ordering platforms have posted on their websites limitation of liability clauses (e.g. they are not liable for the quality of food supplied by a third party, and the amount of compensation payable to a customer is capped at the value of the order), rendering it difficult for customers to seek reasonable compensation, whether the Government will consider establishing a mechanism to protect the consumer rights and interests of those customers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Implementation of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance

(21) Hon Holden CHOW (Written reply)

The Customs and Excise Department has been adopting a three-pronged approach (i.e. compliance promotion, law enforcement, as well as publicity and education) for implementing the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) (“the Ordinance”). Some frontline staff members have relayed that the Ordinance has an extensive scope and the relevant workload is heavy, but the manpower for implementing the Ordinance has not increased in the past three and the current financial years, which has been maintained at 190 persons. As a result, their work pressure has been increasing day by day. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) on law enforcement for the Ordinance, of the respective numbers of (i) prosecutions and (ii) convictions during the period from October last year to October this year;
- (2) of the respective manpower currently deployed for performing work on (i) compliance promotion, (ii) law enforcement and (iii) publicity and education, in respect of the Ordinance; and
- (3) whether it has plans to increase, in the next financial year, the staffing establishment for implementing the Ordinance?

Statistics on and screening services for breast cancer

(22) Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT (Written reply)

Breast cancer is the most common cancer with the third highest mortality rate among women in Hong Kong. In 2016, breast cancer accounted for 26.6% of all new cancer cases among women in Hong Kong. Besides, Hong Kong is one of the regions in Asia with high incidence of breast cancer, with the number of cases of women diagnosed with breast cancer rising by three times in the past two decades. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the public healthcare institutions which currently provide mammography and breast ultrasound scanning for women; the number of units providing such services and the average charge for each test (with a breakdown by District Council district);
- (2) whether it knows, in each of the past five years, the number of person-times, age distribution and waiting time of women who received mammography and breast ultrasound scanning which were provided by public and private healthcare institutions; if it does not have such figures, whether it will compile such statistics;
- (3) whether it knows the number of new confirmed breast cancer patients in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by stage of breast cancer and age distribution;
- (4) given that public hospitals provide appropriate services for breast cancer patients through their multi-specialty teams while surgeons and clinical oncologists will make appropriate treatment arrangements, whether it knows the current ratio of the number of specialists responsible for treating breast cancer in public and private healthcare institutions to the number of patients;
- (5) given that the Chief Executive indicated in the Policy Address she delivered last month that a study to identify the risk factors associated with breast cancer for local women was expected to be completed in the latter half of next year, and that the Government would closely monitor the scientific evidence and outcome of the study to review the type of screening suitable for women of different risk profiles, of the details (including the timetable) of such work;
- (6) given that the number of new breast cancer cases and the number of deaths caused by breast cancer among women have been increasing year after year in recent years, and some cancer experts have suggested that breast cancer screening should be carried out for women at increased risk of developing breast cancer (e.g. those who have a family history of breast cancer), whether the Government (i) knows the current number of women at increased risk of developing breast cancer, (ii) will review the mechanisms for and measures on preventing breast cancer in order to help such women take preventive actions, and (iii) will launch a screening programme specifically for such women prior to the

implementation of the relevant measures to be put forward by the study mentioned in (5); if so, of the details (including the timetable); if not, the reasons for that;

- (7) given that a study report of the Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation has pointed out that the implementation of a population-wide screening programme is an effective way to lower the breast cancer mortality rate, whether the Government has studied the justifications behind the assertion made earlier by the Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening that “all screening tests have their limitations”;
- (8) whether it knows if the Hospital Authority procured additional 3D mammography screening machines in the past five years in order to provide screening tests for women at increased risk of developing breast cancer; if HA did, of the number; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (9) as there are views that women’s awareness of the efficacy of breast examination is inadequate at present, whether the Government will allocate resources to step up publicity to boost the importance attached to breast examination by women; if so, of the details (including the timetable); if not, the reasons for that?