OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 18 March 2020

The Council met at Eleven o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT
THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LEUNG KWAN-YUEN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE ABRAHAM SHEK LAI-HIM, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, G.B.S., J.P.

PROF THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH LEE KOK-LONG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JEFFREY LAM KIN-FUNG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG TING-KWONG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STARRY LEE WAI-KING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HAK-KAN, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KIN-POR, G.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PRISCILLA LEUNG MEI-FUN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-KIN, S.B.S., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE IP KIN-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE ELIZABETH QUAT, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LIAO CHEUNG-KONG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE POON SIU-PING, B.B.S., M.H.

DR THE HONOURABLE CHIANG LAI-WAN, S.B.S., J.P.

IR DR THE HONOURABLE LO WAI-KWOK, S.B.S., M.H., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHUNG KWOK-PAN

THE HONOURABLE ALVIN YEUNG

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WAN SIU-KIN

THE HONOURABLE CHU HOI-DICK

THE HONOURABLE JIMMY NG WING-KA, B.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE JUNIUS HO KWAN-YIU, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HO KAI-MING

THE HONOURABLE LAM CHEUK-TING

THE HONOURABLE HOLDEN CHOW HO-DING

THE HONOURABLE SHIU KA-FAI, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE SHIU KA-CHUN

THE HONOURABLE WILSON OR CHONG-SHING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE YUNG HOI-YAN, J.P.
DR THE HONOURABLE PIERRE CHAN

THE HONOURABLE CHAN CHUN-YING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TANYA CHAN

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG KWOK-KWAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HUI CHI-FUNG

THE HONOURABLE LUK CHUNG-HUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU KWOK-FAN, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE KENNETH LAU IP-KEUNG, B.B.S., M.H., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE CHENG CHUNG-TAI

THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHUN-YU

THE HONOURABLE JEREMY TAM MAN-HO

THE HONOURABLE TONY TSE WAI-CHUEN, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HOI-YAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

THE HONOURABLE MRS REGINA IP LAU SUK-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRANKIE YICK CHI-MING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG WING-SHUN, M.H., J.P.
PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

THE HONOURABLE MATTHEW CHEUNG KIN-CHUNG, G.B.M., G.B.S., J.P.
CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION

THE HONOURABLE JAMES HENRY LAU JR., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY

THE HONOURABLE FRANK CHAN FAN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING

PROF THE HONOURABLE SOPHIA CHAN SIU-CHEE, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD YAU TANG-WAH, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE HONOURABLE KEVIN YEUNG YUN-HUNG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

MR JOSEPH CHAN HO-LIM, J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

MR KENNETH CHEN WEI-ON, S.B.S., SECRETARY GENERAL

MISS ODELIA LEUNG HING-YEE, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL

MS DORA WAI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will the Clerk please ring the bell to summon Members to the Chamber.

(After the summoning bell had been rung, a number of Members entered the Chamber)

LAYING OF PAPERS ON THE TABLE OF THE COUNCIL

The following papers were laid on the table under Rule 21(2) of the Rules of Procedure:

Subsidiary Legislation/Instruments

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<td>Revenue (Reduction of Business Registration Fees and Branch Registration Fees) Order 2020</td>
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Other Papers

- Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2021
- General Revenue Account
- Consolidated Summary of Estimates
- General Revenue Account—Summary
- Revenue Analysis by Head

Li Po Chun Charitable Trust Fund
Report of the Trust Fund Committee on the administration of the Fund, Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit for the year ended 31 August 2019
Hong Kong Arts Development Council

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

The Legislative Council Commission

The Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2019

ADDRESS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Address. The Chief Secretary for Administration …

(Mr Charles Peter MOK indicated his wish to raise a question)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Charles Peter MOK, what is your point?

MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Cantonese): President, I have sought your permission for an urgent question I was going to ask today regarding the request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to expel journalists (including those in Hong Kong). And you deemed my question not urgent. But the point is that the Hong Kong Government must accede to the request from the Central Government and commit acts in violation of the Basic Law. President, if you do not permit us to ask urgent questions on this matter this week, the Government will have committed such acts next week. Therefore, President, could you think it over again? It is really very urgent …
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Charles Peter MOK, I have given you a written reply. This Council has an established mechanism for dealing with requests for asking urgent questions. And I have already made my ruling on this.

MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Cantonese): But, President, you did not give any reason. I think that you really have to consider it, because it is genuinely a very urgent matter affecting the international status of Hong Kong …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr MOK, if you consider the justifications given in my written reply insufficient, you may meet me later and I will explain it to you.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Address. The Chief Secretary for Administration will address the Council on "The Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2019".

The Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2019


This is the final Annual Report prepared by the former Ombudsman Ms Connie LAU at the end of her five-year tenure. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms LAU once again for her sterling contributions to improving public administration. Her efforts in promoting mediation as an alternative way for government departments to handle complaints from members of the public have indeed brought about significant changes. Through stepping up the efforts of the Office of The Ombudsman ("the Office") in conducting direct investigations, Ms LAU had also examined various policies of community concern from a wider perspective, fully demonstrating the function of The Ombudsman as an independent watchdog of public administration. Looking to
the future, the Government will continue to fully support the work of the incumbent Ombudsman Ms Winnie CHIU and the Office, and strive to implement The Ombudsman's recommendations for bringing about improvements in public services and related policies.

In the Annual Report, The Ombudsman summed up 12 direct investigation and 205 full investigation cases which gave rise to a total of 253 recommendations. GM responds to the 12 direct investigation and 105 full investigation cases where recommendations were made by The Ombudsman. Government departments and relevant public bodies accepted most of the recommendations, and relevant follow-up actions have been or are being taken. As for individual recommendations that could not be accepted, relevant departments have given an account or provided supplementary information to The Ombudsman for consideration, and explained their difficulties or responded in detail in GM.

President, the Office handled nearly 5,000 complaints in 2018-2019. Whether the complaint cases were pursued by inquiry, full investigation or mediation, government departments and public bodies fully cooperated with the Office and handled the cases in an earnest manner. The Ombudsman has been using its unique statutory powers of investigation to help government departments and public bodies identify problems that triggered complaints, probe into the roots of those problems and recommend comprehensive and systemic solutions or more effective measures to promote good public administration, thereby enhancing their operational efficiency and responsiveness to public needs. The positive interactions between the Office and government departments, especially in the direct investigation cases, have brought about active cross-departmental coordination and cooperation with very encouraging results.

The direct investigation into the Government's regulation of proprietary Chinese medicine ("pCm") is a case in point. The Ombudsman examined in depth the loopholes in the definition of pCm under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549), the progress of migration from transitional registration of pCm to formal registration and other related matters. The Government has accepted the 12 recommendations made by The Ombudsman and acknowledged that there is room for improvement in the regulation of pCm. I am pleased to point out that the Government has already initiated the legislative amendment exercise relating to the definition of pCm under the Ordinance, and will put
forward the amendment proposals to the Panel on Health Services of the Legislative Council in due course. In addition, the Government has established a $500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund ("CMDF") to provide financial support for the Chinese medicine sector to promote the development of Chinese medicine with a view to, among other things, assisting local Chinese medicine traders in the registration of pCm. CMDF has rolled out various subsidy programmes progressively since mid-2019 to provide technical support for the trade and further expedite the pCm registration process. The Government will continue its efforts to improve the regulatory mechanism of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong, and to deliver drug safety messages to the public, industry and other stakeholders via different channels.

On the other hand, in The Ombudsman's direct investigation of government departments' handling of the problem of air-conditioner dripping, the relevant procedures and guidelines of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department were looked into. The Ombudsman also explored tasking the Buildings Department with the duty to introduce measures which prompted and encouraged the inclusion of installation of communal drainage pipes for disposing condensate from air-conditioners in the comprehensive maintenance programmes of buildings. With the concerted efforts of the two departments, all recommendations set forth in the direct investigation reports have been implemented. This is certainly very good news for those residents who have long been troubled by such issues.

Concerning access to information, the number of requests for information made to government departments has continued to rise. In 2018-2019, departments received a record high of over 7,700 requests for information made by members of the public under the Code on Access to Information ("the Code"), representing an increase of over 20% as compared to 2017-2018. In the light of such a large volume of requests, government departments have worked hard to handle each request for information in accordance with the Code. Among all cases, 94% of them were provided with all the information requested, and another 3% were provided with part of the information requested. While the number of requests for information has consistently increased by a huge margin, the Office received 87 complaints in 2018-2019 regarding access to information, the number of which has fallen from 93 in 2017-2018.
We appreciate the public expectation for the Government to remain open and accountable. We also note the Office has indicated that there has still been reluctance among public organizations to release information, or a lack of thorough understanding of the spirit and principles of the Code. To improve staff awareness and understanding of the Code, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau will continue to provide relevant departments and organizations with briefings on improperly handled cases and contents of the Code, as well as offering a training video for reference to staff involved in regular handling of Code requests, so as to deepen their understanding of the spirit and principles of the Code. A number of departments have also accepted The Ombudsman's recommendations to provide complainants with the existing relevant information requested in accordance with the Code, and to review and strengthen staff training on the application of the Code.

In view of the concern raised by the Office that some departments were bound by the agreements with third parties not to disclose certain information, departments would consider, depending on the actual circumstances, whether it is appropriate to revise the relevant terms of the agreements. For example, the Lands Department has incorporated a clause in its new tenancy agreement allowing the Government to disclose the renewal rental without the need to seek the tenant's consent. The Ombudsman has also pointed out that some bureaux or departments have not kept the statistics requested by the public. The Government has issued clear guidelines requiring bureaux and departments to create and collect sufficient but not excessive records to document accurately and adequately government functions, policies, procedures, decisions and transactions. The Government will continue to remind bureaux and departments of such guidelines.

The Government has an open mind in respect of improving the current access to information regime and has implemented some of the Office's recommendations made in 2014, including enhancing publicity on the Code and offering more related information to the public. As regards the recommendation of introducing a law on access to information, the Office took note of the fact that Access to Information Sub-committee of the Law Reform Commission ("LRC") published its consultation paper in December 2018 and conducted a three-month public consultation exercise. The Sub-committee is considering the views
collected from the public consultation and will finalize its reform proposals. After considering the draft report submitted by the Sub-committee, LRC will publish its final report. The Government will carefully examine recommendations made by LRC in the final report on how to improve the current access to information regime.

President, The Ombudsman had expressed her concern about the effectiveness of the Government's monitoring of outsourced work or services performed by its contractors. As the provider of public services, the Government affirms its departments' responsibility for closely monitoring and supervising their contractors and subvented organizations, for whose performance they are accountable to the general public. To this end, government departments have taken steps to change their procurement arrangements and enhance their monitoring roles. When handling complaints about provision of public services by contractors, relevant departments will also strive for a more objective and comprehensive understanding of the actual circumstances of the complaints concerned to facilitate more direct and appropriate follow-up actions. Moreover, the Government attaches great importance to the training and supervision provided by the contractors and subvented bodies for their staff, and engages in experience sharing with them with guidelines provided, so as to ensure that the quality of their services meets the requirements of the contracts and public expectations.

Last but not least, President, I would like to express my gratitude to The Ombudsman and her professional team for their independence and impartiality in handling complaints from members of the public. They provided them with a trusted complaint channel and successfully boosted their confidence in public administration. In addressing The Ombudsman's recommendations, I have been encouraging my colleagues to assume the role of a collaborator in upholding professionalism, humbly listening and committing to ensuring the effective implementation of remedial measures. Together, we shall enhance the standards of public administration in Hong Kong.

Thank you, President.
ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS


Measures to support the retail industry

1. MR SHIU KA-FAI (in Cantonese): President, some members of the retail industry have relayed that the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments persisting for more than half a year and the recent pneumonia epidemic have dealt a heavy blow to the retail industry, bringing the business turnover down by 30% to 70%. Quite a number of shop operators have closed down or are prepared to close down their businesses, whilst those who continue their businesses have to arrange their staff to take no pay leave, stop providing replacement for staff members who have left, or even lay off staff, in order to reduce costs. Some shopkeepers have relayed to me that their total monthly income has reduced significantly from $30,000 to $40,000 in the past to around $10,000, which has gravely affected their livelihood. Employees who need to raise children or make mortgage repayments are in greater financial straits. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

   (1) whether it will consider introducing concessionary measures for retailers and eateries to enable them to obtain interest-free loans for paying staff salaries; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

   (2) given that low-income employees and self-employed persons are exempted from making Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") contributions in an amount equivalent to 5% of their income, and that the authorities announced in January this year that they would make the relevant contributions on behalf of those persons, whether the authorities will draw reference from this measure and make MPF contributions on behalf of the owners and staff of retail shops for six months to one year; and

   (3) given that a rental concession for another six months has been provided by the Government for the retail shops operating in its properties, whether the authorities have other measures in place to
urge the landlords of private shop premises (especially the landlords of shopping centres) to follow the Government's practice and reduce the rents of their tenants so as to ride out the hard times with the shop operators in the retail industry?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, thanks for the question raised by Mr SHIU Ka-fai. The Government understands that different sectors have since last year been suffering from the threefold impact of the United States-China trade conflict, the social unrest in Hong Kong and the COVID-19 infections, facing significant difficulties in running their businesses. We have since last August implemented four rounds of relief measures amounting to more than $30 billion, and have further rolled out the Anti-epidemic Fund of $30 billion last month to support enterprises and the general public affected by the epidemic. As mentioned by the Financial Secretary in the Budget, to "support enterprises, safeguard jobs, stimulate the economy and relieve people's burden", the Budget announced in February also launched more than $120 billion of counter-cyclical measures.

Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, my reply to the Honourable Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Government acknowledges that liquidity is one of the biggest difficulties faced by small and medium enterprises ("SMEs"). Therefore, we have since last September introduced an arrangement of principal moratorium for up to 12 months under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme ("SFGS"). We further introduced in December the new 90% Guarantee Product under SFGS to help smaller-sized enterprises and businesses with relatively less operating experience, as well as professionals seeking to set up their own practices, to obtain commercial loans. Response from the trade on these schemes has been positive. Up to the end of last month, the HKMC Insurance Limited ("HKMCI") has approved 319 applications, involving a total loan amount of $528 million.

With the COVID-19 infections, there is an urgent need to further alleviate the pressure on SMEs in business operations, thereby
reducing business closures and layoffs. The Financial Secretary announced in the Budget the introduction of a concessionary low-interest loan under SFGS applicable to SMEs in all sectors, for which the Government will provide 100% guarantee. The maximum amount of the loan is the total amount of wages and rents for six months of the enterprise, or $2 million at most. The maximum repayment period is three years, with an optional principal moratorium for the first six months. The interest rate will be set at a relatively low level, i.e. the prime rate minus 2.5%. The guarantee fee will be waived. The Government will provide a maximum loan guarantee of $20 billion for approved loans. I just consulted the Panel on Commerce and Industry of the Legislative Council yesterday, and am grateful for its support. We will soon seek the Finance Committee's approval for funding, with a view to rolling out the new product around one month after the funding approval.

On the other hand, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") has requested banks to provide funding support to SMEs as far as their credit policies and risk management principles allow. HKMA has established a banking sector SME lending coordination mechanism, through which representatives of the Hong Kong Association of Banks, major banks active in SME lending and HKMCI have met several times. Banks attending the meetings agreed to adopt a series of measures, such as offering principal moratoriums and extension of loan tenors for SMEs so as to relieve their cash flow pressure; introducing relief measures targeting specific sectors to allow clients to use their funds more flexibly; and treating SMEs encountering financial difficulties with sympathy and enhanced communication, and avoiding withdrawing credit lines hastily or taking other credit actions that will adversely affect clients' business operations.

Furthermore, HKMCI and banks have also simplified the application procedures for SFGS, such as by accepting other forms of financial proof in lieu of financial statements where appropriate. As necessitated by extension of loan tenors, HKMCI has streamlined
procedures to expedite the processing of banks' applications for revision of loan terms.

(2) The Chief Executive announced in January this year 10 new livelihood initiatives, including paying 5% Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") contributions for employees or self-employed persons whose income is less than the Minimum Relevant Income Level and are therefore exempted from making MPF contributions, with a view to reinforcing the retirement protection of low-income earners in the long run. It is necessary to put in place certain supporting measures in order to implement the initiative. Hence, the initiative will be implemented when the eMPF Platform is fully launched by the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority in 2024 at the earliest.

As for the proposal of extending the above initiative to pay MPF contributions on behalf of employers and practitioners of the retail sector, as it involves a number of operational issues as well as a relatively long period of preparation, we consider that the proposal is not the most direct and timely solution to address the current situation.

In fact, the Government has reserved under the Anti-epidemic Fund $5,600 million and $3,810 million respectively for implementing the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme as well as the Licensed Hawkers Subsidy Scheme and the Food Licence Holders Subsidy Scheme. These measures will help retailers and catering operators suffering from sharp decline in sales turnover arising from a significant drop in the number of inbound tourists and weak local consumption. We expect that around 100,000 enterprises will benefit.

(3) A number of measures to help reduce business operating cost have been introduced in the Budget, including waiving profits tax, rates for non-domestic properties and business registration fees, subsidizing electricity charges, waiving water and sewage charges as well as reducing rental and charges for Government premises and Government land, etc.
The Government will continue to implement counter-cyclical measures and appeals to other sectors to cooperate and implement corresponding measures for riding out the crisis together with enterprises and the general public.

**MR SHIU KA-FAI (in Cantonese):** President, first I would like to thank the Government, in particular the Chief Secretary for Administration Matthew CHEUNG and Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council Peter LAM, for the plan to provide a subsidy of $80,000 for each retail store, the details of which were announced on Monday. The sector is glad about this. I would also like to thank Secretary Edward YAU who submitted a paper to the Panel on Commerce and Industry yesterday for expediting the scheme to offer $2 million loan with 100% loan guarantee from the Government. I hope Honourable colleagues will pass the item at the meeting of the Finance Committee to be held this Friday, for this $2 million is extremely significant to the liquidity of members the sector.

Yet, as I mentioned in the main reply, the situation that employees are required to take no pay leave is extremely worrying. Let me cite an example. If an employee is required to work four days a week and take one day off, the employee's income will be reduced by 20%. If he is required to work merely on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and take day off on Tuesday and Thursday, his income will be reduced by 40%.

I know that the Government is now rolling out the Love Upgrading Special Scheme. Yet, the subsidy is capped at $4,000, which is $153.8 per day. Such an amount is definitely inadequate for basic subsistence, even if the subsidy is to be increased to $5,800 later, it will merely be $223 per day. If the trainee is a student, this amount is adequate for his meal expenses. Yet, if he has to support a family, it is definitely insufficient.

Hence, in the next six months, will the Government increase the subsidy for these trainees to $350 per day? Actually, this sum will merely incur a raise of the overall subsidy amount from $5,800 to $9,000? Will the Government consider this proposal?
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): I thank Mr SHIU for his supplementary question.

First, the overall anti-epidemic effort include the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund and the various measures announced in the Budget, which should be consider altogether as a basket of measures. Certain measures are targeted at individual industries, and as mentioned by Mr SHIU, measures rolled out yesterday are targeted at the retail industry as well as affected industries like the tourism industry. Yet, there are measures with general coverage, such as $10,000 cash payout to each adult resident, the highest payout amount ever. These initiatives are a basket of measures to be carried out. Besides, there will be other tax concessionary measures.

Regarding the two questions further raised by Mr SHIU, as no explicit provision on no pay leave has been laid down in existing legislation, relevant arrangements have to be negotiated and agreed between enterprises and employees. Yet, it is not without limitation and it depends on the duration of no pay leave and the percentage of such days in the total number of normal working days.

On the other hand, Mr SHIU has mentioned specifically the Love Upgrading Scheme. In fact, we have beefed up the subsidy amount from $4,000 to $5,800 when we introduced a series of measures last time, as we have heard requests in this respect. We know that the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is speeding up the implementation of the "beef up" scheme, hoping to offer additional support to employees during this difficult time. I have also heeded the views of Members. I believe we will submit a basket of measures to the relevant government departments for their consideration.

MR ABRAHAM SHEK (in Cantonese): President, I support this humble request of Mr SHIU. Yet, this request should not merely be applied to restaurants or the retail sector but to the community of Hong Kong as a whole. The $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund should be projected from two perspectives, namely to "support enterprises" and to "safeguard jobs". Regarding the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund introduced for the time being, it has to be selective in "supporting enterprises" and "safeguarding jobs" probably due to insufficient funds—the fund should indeed be beefed up. Mr SHIU is right in
saying earlier that many industries are facing underemployment. This situation is found in various sectors. Hence, the Government should adopt fair treatment and avoid offering assistance merely to failing enterprises, for these cases will increase in future. The construction industry is a case in point. At present, many engineers are unemployed. The authorities should look into the situation.

On the other hand, President, while I have also raised the relevant issue at the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee and the Financial Secretary has pointed out that the current unemployment rate has reached 3.7%, the situation of underemployment in many industries has not been counted. Regarding the daily passenger trips of the Mass Transit Railway ("MTR") which amount to 3 million to 5 million, the Fare Adjustment Mechanism adopted for MTR Fares and the various concessions offered fail to alleviate the plight of these 3 million to 5 million people.

May I ask the Government whether the authorities will consider providing subsidy during this difficult time to enable a 20% to 30% reduction in fare till the end of this year, so as to offer assistance to residents using MTR every day?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): I thank Mr Abraham SHEK for his question. First of all, the Financial Secretary has mentioned this issue in the Budget. We are dealing with this issue from different aspects, while "supporting enterprises" and "safeguarding jobs" concurrently, we also have to boost the economy. From a macroscopic perspective, the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund is a focused measure which includes 24 schemes targeted at industries obviously suffering a severe blow at the forefront. We adopt a focused approach in addressing the needs of these industries, yet it does not mean that other industries or persons will not benefit at all. As shown in the Budget, the authorities have allocated $120 billion for counter-cyclical measures this time around, and the measure to distribute $10,000 cash payout to every adult citizen will cost the Government $70-odd billion, doubling the amount provided for individual enterprises.

For enterprises, apart from individual industries benefiting from the Anti-epidemic Fund, all enterprises will enjoy profits tax exemption subject to a ceiling of $20,000. In addition, they will be offered concession for water and sewage charges and electricity tariffs. While not all enterprises are required to
pay sewages charges, the maximum concession for water charges and electricity tariffs already amount to $100,000. These measures are introduced to cater for the needs of enterprises. Certainly, in the prevailing situation, we understand that various trades and industries as well as individuals will be in dire needs, and the Government will continue to listen to different views. I believe many Members here have put forth a lot of suggestions and we will continue to listen to these views, including reducing personal expenses in various aspects and transport expenses. We will study these options. This is a time the community should work together in solidarity.

That said, I hope Members would appreciate that with the $120 billion allocated in the Budget, the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund and the $30 billion allocated some time ago, the Government has injected nearly $200 billion in less than a year to offer assistance to individual industries and individuals as well as to revive the economy. We will continue to work on this as far as possible.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Abraham SHEK, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MR ABRAHAM SHEK (in Cantonese): President, he has not answered how the measures can "safeguard jobs", as many enterprises still lay off employees after receiving the subsidy. I have raised this question because the $30 billion fund serves two purposes …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Abraham SHEK, please be seated. Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, first, as I have pointed out earlier in my reply, certain part of the fund is distributed to individuals, which will cover a vast majority of working people. The $70 billion will be used for the cash payout of $10,000 per head and of help to provide the greatest impetus. Certainly, we also hope that enterprises will try to "safeguard jobs" to tide over this difficult time together. As for the 100% loan guarantee which we have mentioned at the meetings of
relevant Panels, the amount is calculated according to expenditure on employee wages and rents for the past six months. We hope the enterprises benefited can take note of this point and be reminded to "safeguard jobs" and retain their staff. I trust this is a time to ride out the difficult times in solidarity. I agree with the views of Mr Abraham SHEK and urge enterprises to pursue this target together.

MR CHUNG KWOK-PAN (in Cantonese): President, just now, the Secretary has mentioned repeatedly the amount to be injected for subsidizing enterprises or the general public as stated in the Budget. The Budget will allocate $120 billion in this regard, this sum together with the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund and the $30 billion measures for reviving the economy introduced earlier, add up to a total of approximately $180 billion. In that case, the authorities may as well add $20 billion to round up the total amount to $200 billion.

In this question, I am the third Member pointing out that other industries are also in deep water. Will the Government have to wait until the public notice these industries are on the brink of breaking down to offer assistance? We can see that the retail industries and catering industries are facing high unemployment rate and a gravely high closing up rate, but they are not the only ones, the import and export industry, the manufacturing industry, the textiles and clothing industry and the wholesale industry are also facing the same plights. Secretary, many enterprises in the manufacturing industry are on the brink of closing. The situation of the textiles and clothing industry is even worse. Many factories of the import and export industries are unable to resume production to date, and even production has been resumed, not all the workers can report for duty.

The Government will distribute $10,000 cash payout to each Hong Kong citizen, and this is a personal subsidy. In respect of water charges and electricity tariff, the subsidy ranges from $2,000 to $3,000 only, whereas the amount of profits tax rebate is capped at $20,000. As all trades and industries are facing difficulties now, will the authorities introduce the "Anti-epidemic Fund 2.0" and offer a top-up of $20 billion to round the amount up to $200 billion, so as to provide assistance for all trades and industries and enterprises?
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, as I mentioned in my main reply and my replies to Members earlier, the overall assistance provided by the authorities is not limited to certain trades and industries. Yet, it is natural that we have to be selective in the process, for certain industries are affected more seriously than others. But then, to date, all industries are affected. Hence, the scheme as a whole has given regard to both aspects. I understand that when Members approved the $30 billion funding around two to three weeks ago, they hoped the Government would inject more resources. I believe the Financial Secretary or the Government has heard these views. We will continue to listen to the views of Honourable Members and give comprehensive consideration to these views.

MR CHRISTOPHER CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, I agree with the objectives of "supporting enterprises" and "safeguarding jobs". While the catering industries have suffered the heaviest blow, other trade and industries are also affected seriously. Regarding the relief measures introduced this time around, we hope that the Government will give regard to the impact of the epidemic on the financial sector, particularly those cases where some accountants are unable to enter the Mainland to conduct audit and enterprises, as they are concerned about suspension of listing due to failure to promptly submit financial reports to the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited ("HKEx").

The stock market is highly volatile recently. In fact, the fluctuations, to a large extent, are brought by hedge funds and real transactions are extremely limited. As a result, members of the finance sector are facing the problem of "zero commission". Besides, their income and margin operations are subject to regulation under the Securities and Futures Ordinance and their business is miserable. We hope that the Secretary will …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Christopher CHEUNG, please state your supplementary question direct.
MR CHRISTOPHER CHEUNG (in Cantonese): We hope the Secretary will consider the plights faced by the finance sector and offer some support to the industry.

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, I understand the issue brought up by Mr Christopher CHEUNG. I remember that he has mentioned about the situation of the industry on a similar occasion last time. I know that the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau has introduced certain measures to address the problems faced by the industry referred to by Mr CHEUNG just now. Since the Under Secretary is in the Chamber now, I would like to ask him to give a focused reply to this question.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Under Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, please give your reply.

UNDER SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, I thank the Honourable Member for his supplementary question. We understand the difficulties faced by certain trades Mr CHEUNG referred to earlier. As Members know, in response to the difficulties encountered by members of the accounting and auditing sectors in working in the Mainland, HKEx and the Securities and Futures Commission ("SFC") have issued a new announcement to give guidance to the sector. We also know that SFC has also waived the licence fees of securities dealers some time ago.

As the Secretary said just now, the Government is very much concerned about the financial pressure faced by all trades and industries in these tough economic times. Hence, in respect of the overall relief measures as well as the difficulties faced by individual trades and industries, we will continue to listen to the views of Honourable Members and then conduct consolidated studies and give comprehensive consideration.

Shatin to Central Link

2. **MR KENNETH LAU** (in Cantonese): President, the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL"), which is under construction, is divided into the Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section and the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section. The former links up the existing West Rail Line ("WRL") with the Ma On Shan Line to form the Tuen Ma Line ("TML"), and a section of TML from Wu Kai Sha Station to Kai Tak Station is named TML Phase 1. TML Phase 1 was commissioned on the 14th of last month, and Hin Keng Station, the expanded part of Diamond Hill Station and Kai Tak Station were also put into operation at the same time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed the passenger throughput of the various stations along TML Phase 1 during peak and non-peak hours at the initial stage of commissioning of the line, as well as the impacts on the passenger throughput of the various stations along WRL and the effect of diverting road traffic in the Tuen Mun district to be brought about by the commissioning of TML Phase 1; if so, of the details;

(2) given that in recent months, train services have been repeatedly disrupted owing to demonstrations and the facilities of MTR stations have been vandalized repeatedly, of the measures to be taken by the authorities to protect the facilities of the various stations along TML Phase 1 and minimize the impacts of demonstrations on train services; and

(3) of the latest timetable for the full commissioning of SCL, and the new measures in place to ensure the quality of the construction works and the completion of the works on schedule?

**SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING** (in Cantonese): President, thanks for Mr Kenneth LAU's question.

(1) Tuen Ma Line Phase 1 ("TML1"), i.e. extending the existing Ma On Shan Line ("MOSL") to three new stations, namely Hin Keng, Diamond Hill and Kai Tak Stations, was commissioned on 14 February 2020. The travelling time between Tai Wai Station and Diamond Hill Station has been substantially reduced from
17 minutes to around 9 minutes, providing passengers of the existing East Rail Line ("EAL") and MOSL an alternative to access the urban districts. The commissioning of TML1 will facilitate passengers to travel along the stations in Ma On Shan areas and East Kowloon more efficiently and conveniently, as well as to divert part of the EAL passengers destined to East Kowloon and Hong Kong Island East, contributing to relieve the most congested section of EAL from Tai Wai Station to Kowloon Tong Station.

Upon the commissioning of TML1, as at 13 March, the average daily patronage using the new Hin Keng Station and Kai Tak Station in the first month was about 38,000; about 5,000 passengers interchanged from TML1 to Kwun Tong Line at Diamond Hill Station during peak hours. In view of the short operation period of TML1 since its commissioning, we will continue to observe the change of the travelling patterns of passengers, in particular the travelling mode of the passengers plying between New Territories East and Hong Kong Island East or East Kowloon. In addition, as the passengers' travelling patterns have been affected by the recent novel coronavirus outbreak, we need more time to identify if there is a more stable diversion effect. The Transport Department and the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") will continue to closely monitor the diversion effect upon the commissioning of TML1.

Furthermore, MTRCL will continue to maintain smooth operations of the stations along Kwun Tung Line by adopting various measures, including introducing short trips for busy stations as far as possible during peak hours; improving station facilities and platform management, etc.

Regarding the concern of Mr Kenneth LAU about West Rail Line ("WRL"), in preparation for the commissioning of Tuen Ma Line ("TML") in the future, all 7-car trains in WRL and 4-car trains in MOSL were upgraded and converted to 8-car trains in advance to enhance overall passenger carrying capacity. MTRCL has been monitoring the patronage and the usage of facilities in various stations, and will adopt various patronage management measures to ensure smooth train operations and passenger flow. These measures will be reviewed from time to time.
(2) In view of the large-scale public order events over the last few months, some of the TML1 station facilities have been damaged in varying degree, including the damage to the glazing at the station entrances and graffiti on the walls outside the stations. To safeguard public safety, the damaged station facilities have been fenced off with fire-proof hoarding. In light of the current situation, new stations have been protected by temporary installations, including strengthening and protective measures at new station entrances. Further to the smooth commissioning of TML1 on 14 February, the Government and MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the situation, endeavour to ensure the safety and smooth operation after the commissioning of TML1, and safeguard the safety of the passengers and members of the staff of MTRCL.

(3) Due to the quality issue of works of the Hung Hom Station Extension revealed in May 2018 and the spate of incidents, there was a need to conduct relevant investigations and propose suitable measures. MTRCL assessed that the target commissioning date of "Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section" should be at most deferred to the end of 2021.

As regards "North South Corridor" of the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL"), since October 2019, there had been multiple damages to the EAL facilities necessitating maintenance and cancellation of works originally planned during non-traffic hours at night. Therefore, MTRCL considered that the commissioning date for "Hung Hom to Admiralty Section" had to be deferred to the first quarter of 2022. In addition, due to serious damages to the facilities at the University Station of EAL and adjacent railway section at the end of last year and the impact of the recent novel coronavirus outbreak on the works progress, the Highways Department ("HyD") and MTRCL are reviewing the construction schedule of the "North South Corridor" and exploring the feasibility of accelerating key activities.

HyD and its monitoring and verification consultant completed the review of supervision records for Tai Wai Station, Hin Keng Station, Diamond Hill Station, Kai Tak Station, Sung Wong Toi Station and To Kwa Wan Station along TML to confirm the works quality of the major structure. HyD also implemented measures to assure works
quality and progress, including arranging monthly site inspections, conducting surprise checks, and engaging audit sampling for the progress, procedures and quality of the works by MTRCL. The Government also conducted stringent acceptance work for each new railway line. For example, TML1 was commissioned smoothly on 14 February, after conducting trials, acceptance tests and inspections since the end of October 2019, and the concerned railway facilities were confirmed as safe and in sound condition by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department.

MR KENNETH LAU (in Cantonese): President, the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways of the Legislative Council approved the application for additional funding for SCL early this month. The Secretary indicated at the time that he was confident that the Hung Hom to Admiralty Section of SCL could be commissioned in the first quarter of 2022 following the approval of an additional funding of $10 billion. The latest cost of the SCL project amounts to $83 billion, and a cost overrun of over $10 billion has been incurred. At present, the novel coronavirus outbreak is getting more serious, there is a second wave of outbreak with imported cases continuously being detected. I would like to ask the Government whether the SCL project will be affected as a result, such that the commissioning date will be delayed again. Will additional funding be sought once and again, thus become a bottomless pit? Does the Government have any alternative plans?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, my thanks go to Mr LAU for his supplementary question. We have given a detailed explanation to Honourable Members during the meeting of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways which was held at an earlier time, as well as the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee held just now. Whilst the cost estimates for which we have sought approval have increased, under the circumstances that have come to our knowledge at this point, and based on the risks and circumstances that we currently face, we are confident that the project can be completed within the estimated expenditure and expected time frame following approval of the cost estimates. That said, we must also give an account to the legislature in a very candid manner that as we are yet to grasp a full picture of the development of the novel coronavirus outbreak in the meantime, the relevant situation and the progress of Hong Kong in controlling the
epidemic outbreak are factors that need to be taken into account. If there are no special changes in the situation, we are confident that we will manage to complete the work mentioned by Mr. LAU. However, we all understand that the novel coronavirus outbreak has in overall spread to a global pandemic now. Hong Kong is currently facing the challenge of a backflow of the epidemic outbreak, and even the arrival of infected people in Hong Kong. As a result, we will make our best endeavour to control the risks, and we will also do our best to control project costs in case of any special circumstances which might arise in the course of carrying out the project with MTRCL. We will make every effort to expedite the relevant work.

**MR ABRAHAM SHEK** (in Cantonese): President, I thank the Secretary for explaining to us in detail matters relating to the operation of SCL in various aspects at the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee this morning.

*President, my supplementary question is not related to project costs. I am just concerned that SCL involves many low-income people, the majority of whom are residents of various types of government-funded housing. During the process of fare determination, the Administration should not allow MTRCL to determine the fares—President, it is because this project is funded by us, and it has already incurred a cost overrun of $10 billion with a delay of several years—What are the criteria adopted by the Government in determining the fares? Apart from the operating costs on all fronts, have the authorities taken into account the financial capability of the public? In particular, the majority of the people riding on this railway line are earning a low income, how can the Government allow MTRCL to decide the fares? I would like to have the Secretary answer this question which is related to the affordability level.*

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Abraham SHEK, your supplementary question does not fall within the scope of the main question. Nevertheless, let us see if the Secretary has anything to add.

**MR ABRAHAM SHEK** (in Cantonese): President, please allow me to explain …
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Abraham SHEK, please sit down. Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): I understand this case. If the President has no objection, I am willing to answer Mr SHEK's supplementary question. Amid the raging novel coronavirus outbreak, the Government has been adopting the measure of standing together with the people to ride out the difficult times. Therefore, the Government has implemented four rounds of relief measures last year and established recently the Anti-epidemic Fund involving $30 billion, which are all introduced on the same grounds.

I understand that Mr SHEK and Honourable Members present here are deeply concerned about the livelihood of the grass roots, as all of us have seen the unemployment rate soar. One should be aware that upon commissioning of TML1 of SCL, MTRCL has offered a fare reduction of $1 for users of Adult Octopus cards travelling between Hin Keng Station and Kai Tak Station, whereas other passengers (i.e. elderly, children and students) are also entitled to a discount of 50 cents, and corresponding interchange discounts are available as well.

I understand that under the prevailing circumstances, the burden of transportation costs will put members of the public under pressure. The Government has launched the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme two years ago, and raised the percentage and amount of subsidies accordingly. I also understand that Mr SHEK hopes that MTRCL will make its best endeavour to offer fare concessions to the public, especially fare reductions. We have heard such a voice clearly. Colleagues from MTRCL have also attended the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee this morning. I have also communicated with MTRCL previously and discussed with them the relevant views and the difficulties faced by members of the public at present. I believe MTRCL will listen to these views and make appropriate judgments basing on its actual operation.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Abraham SHEK, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?
MR ABRAHAM SHEK (in Cantonese): President, I would like to clarify that my supplementary question does have direct relevance. We have spent $100 billion to construct this railway line, and the project has even been delayed for several years. The money belongs to the public. Therefore, the fares and issues in various aspects are all relevant to the general public.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr SHEK, I understand your supplementary question, but it has nothing to do with the main question and the Secretary has already given an answer.

MS TANYA CHAN (in Cantonese): President, my supplementary question is related to part (3) of the main reply, in particular that while HyD and its monitoring and verification consultant have completed the review of a number of TML stations, it so happens that the Exhibition Centre Station is not included. I would like to know the current situation of the Exhibition Centre Station. It can be said that the scandals relating to the Exhibition Centre Station are comparable to those of the Hung Hom Station, namely subsidence, over-digging and construction works not in compliance with the plans. Moreover, the media revealed in February of last year (2019) that there was the problem of missing RISC (Request for Inspection and Survey Checks) forms in as early as 2016, with 30% construction records having gone missing. The Secretary then explained in some documents—that is, the interim reports or the quarterly reports—that MTRCL would conduct an internal audit.

Has the expert panel of the Government actually completed the audits? Members of the public have waited for one year, why has the Government still not yet disclosed the number of forms relating to the Exhibition Centre Station which have gone missing? When will MTRCL complete its internal audit? When will they tell the public how many forms concerning the Exhibition Centre Station have gone missing?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): My thanks go to Ms CHAN for her supplementary question. I understand that Ms CHAN is gravely concerned about the progress of the SCL project. In this regard, the expert panel of the Government and the Expert Adviser Team of MTRCL have held discussions, and completed the relevant reviews and inspections of not only the new SCL stations which have been completed, but
also the extension works of the stations. They have also performed audits on the RISC forms mentioned by Ms CHAN just now. MTRCL has submitted reports to the Government, and we have also reported to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways at its past meetings.

Certainly, the reports submitted by them have not been made public, and we will report to Members in respect of all stations—that is, the review reports mentioned by Ms CHAN a moment ago—in due course upon completion of the entire SCL project.

Overall speaking, the Government team attaches great importance to the quality and safety of railway projects, and it will by no means give way on this issue. Regarding the monitoring and verification consultant of the Government mentioned by Ms CHAN just now, the Commission of Inquiry has pointed out in the interim report some areas of work on which it recommended that the monitoring and verification consultant should do more and do better. In view of such, we have already urged and invited the monitoring and verification consultant through HyD to take forward the relevant work as recommended by the Commission of Inquiry. For this reason, we have also sought support of the legislature at the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee this morning in regard to the increase in consultant fees payable to the monitoring and verification consultant.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms CHAN, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MS TANYA CHAN (in Cantonese): President, I have asked about the Exhibition Centre Station very clearly and specifically. If I do not get it wrong, the Secretary said they would only give an account to members of the public on the number of missing forms in due course upon completion of SCL. Is that all he can say? I hope he would further explain the situation of the Exhibition Centre Station clearly.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms CHAN, you have pointed out the part of your supplementary question that has not been answered. Please sit down. Secretary, do you have anything to add?
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): I have answered it just now, but perhaps I have not mentioned the name of the Exhibition Centre Station. Just now I have said that the review of the completed stations and completed extensions of SCL has been finished. As the works of the Exhibition Centre Station are still underway, HyD and MTRCL are conducting audits on the progress of the works as well as the relevant construction records. It is expected that we will report to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways at its meetings in due course upon completion of the relevant work.

MS TANYA CHAN (in Cantonese): When raising my question, I made it very clear that they had been conducting audits for almost a year. When will they give an account actually?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms CHAN, you have pointed out the part of your supplementary question that has not been answered, and the Secretary has provided supplementary information already. Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): We will report to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways in due course after completing the relevant audit work.

MR CHAN HAN-PAN (in Cantonese): Unfairness has all along been observed in MTRCL’s fare determination mechanism. In the past, MTRCL and the Government would argue with the excuse that the problem originated from some historical factors. However, I believe such an history has to be rewritten after the commissioning of SCL and TML, as SCL makes it possible for us to cross the harbour by riding on EAL, whereas TML links up New Territories East and New Territories West. With the progress of these two lines and their expected commissioning within one to two years, I think it is time for the Secretary or MTRCL to discuss the issue of fare determination.

I have in my hands a chart—which I have also shown to the Secretary before—The fare from Sheung Shui to Hung Hom on EAL is $10.8, but it costs $22.3 to get to Hung Hom from Tuen Mun. Regarding the fares of EAL and WRL, the latter is doubled although the distance and time involved are more or
less the same. How ridiculous and unreasonable is the way adopted for determining the fares! As such, we hope that MTRCL will, in response to the epidemic outbreak, reduce its fares by at least 10% in the future. Apart from that, in the medium term and with the commissioning of the two new railway lines, will the Secretary request MTRCL to redetermine the fare structure, so as to consider afresh whether the fares of other lines should be significantly reduced by adopting EAL as the benchmark?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr CHAN Han-pan, your supplementary question has deviated from the scope of the main question. Nevertheless, Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, thank you for your advice. Whilst Mr CHAN’s supplementary question has deviated from the main question today, I do not mind giving a response as there is enough time.

Being a strategic railway development project, SCL indeed serves a link between east and west as well as north and south, which will bring great convenience to members of the public when getting around upon its commissioning. The fares of EAL are the results of some historical reasons. If you have paid attention, there are actually no stations before crossing the border in many railway lines, but EAL is an exception with the presence of Lo Wu Station and Lok Ma Chau Station. The fares of cross-border railway lines are different from those within our territory. Given that higher fares are charged for cross-border trips, the fares of trips between other stations along the railway line are therefore relieved to a relative extent. I also understand that an interconnecting effect will be achieved among WRL, EAL and many places served by railway lines in Hong Kong upon the full commissioning of SCL. I believe that MTRCL will also conduct a review at that time having regard to the overall principle of charging fares according to the distance of rail sections. I believe this issue has its historical background and there are also practical reasons behind it. Certainly, we will also review from time to time the future operation of the entire railway system in Hong Kong.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Third question.
Complaints about teachers’ professional conduct

3. MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): President, earlier on, the Education Bureau indicated that among the complaints about teachers’ professional conduct received from June to December last year, the majority of them pertained to teachers being alleged to have posted on social media inappropriate messages such as hate remarks, committed provocative acts, used inappropriate teaching materials, and committed unlawful acts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of complaints received since June last year, and the number of such complaints lodged anonymously; a breakdown of such complaints by nature, and the number of complaints in respect of which the Council on Professional Conduct in Education have filed a case for investigation;

(2) of the legal provisions or codes on the basis of which the authorities have considered those complaints relating to posting "hate remarks" or committing "provocative acts" (please quote the contents of the relevant provisions or codes); and

(3) as the authorities have indicated that society has its moral bottom lines and consensus on what constitute "hate remarks" and "provocative acts", whether the authorities will consider (i) making public, on the premise of not disclosing matters of personal data privacy of the complainees, the "hate remarks" and "provocative acts" involved in those complaints which were found substantiated, for public comments, and (ii) accepting an appeal and conducting a review on the relevant complaint cases when the public opinion so formed or the complainee considers that the remark or act concerned is not tantamount to transgressing the moral bottom lines and consensus of society?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, the professional quality of the teaching profession makes a direct impact on the quality of education. Enhancing the professional capability of teachers and maintaining a
teaching profession of ethical standards is one of the main responsibilities of the Education Bureau. Teachers serve as role models for our next generation by words and deeds. The set of attitudes and values preached by teachers and the examples set by them today will shape the values and behaviours acceptable to our society in future. The Education Bureau is responsible for work relating to registration of teachers. We handle all complaints relating to professional misconduct of and violation of the law by teachers in a serious and prudent manner to ensure that every case is treated fairly. At the same time, we will tackle the few black sheep in the profession, so as to safeguard the well-being of students, protect the professionalism of teachers and maintain public confidence in the education in Hong Kong. If any complaint case is found substantiated, the Education Bureau will consider the gravity of each case and take action against the teacher concerned, including cancellation of teacher registration, or issuing a reprimand, warning or advisory letter. This is to ensure that the Education Bureau plays a gate-keeping role in quality assurance for the education sector and society as a whole. We could also remind teachers to pay attention to their words and deeds, respect and value our teaching professionalism.

In the past few months, the words and deeds of some teachers have aroused grave concerns and worries among various sectors of the community. The Education Bureau has received a considerable number of complaints relating to serious misconduct of or unlawful acts by teachers. The Education Bureau issued letters to schools before and during school term to provide clear guidelines, including urging teachers to comply with the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong and explaining our requirements on schools in respect of handling suspected cases of unlawful acts by teachers and misbehaviour of students. Apart from that, we also promote the Professional Standards for Teachers of Hong Kong and the Professional Standards for Principals of Hong Kong, to encourage teachers and school leaders to reflect and demonstrate the professional roles and conduct expected of them, while also enabling the public to understand the professional performance of the teaching profession so as to support and work hand in hand with them.

Regarding the question raised by Mr IP Kin-yuen, our reply is as follows:

(1) From June 2019 to the end of January 2020, the Education Bureau received 171 complaints about possible professional misconduct of
teachers. Given the extensive coverage of these complaints and unique nature of various cases, with quite a number of them involving multiple allegations, we do not categorize the complaints by types. Roughly speaking, the majority of these 171 cases are related to teachers making hate messages or cursing people, while the rest are about the use of extremely indecent language or use of foul language in insulting people; use of inappropriate teaching materials; suspected engagement in illegal activities, etc. Most of the complaints were made through emails. While the complainants' email addresses were given, we are unable to confirm whether the names provided by the complainants are real. Notwithstanding this, as the words and deeds of teachers have a direct impact on students, the Education Bureau has the responsibility to seriously follow up the complaints, even they are made anonymously, if the allegations obviously fail to meet the moral standards as acceptable to the general public, risk safety of students, or harm the healthy development of students. Hence, we also do not categorize the complaints by whether they are anonymous.

The Council on Professional Conduct in Education ("the Council") is an advisory body with one of its tasks to advise the Permanent Secretary for Education on complaint cases of professional misconduct involving educators, including the proposed sanctions. Currently, the Council is handling 34 complaints with follow-up actions still underway, of which four are related to recent social events. Under the existing mechanism, the complainant can make a complaint to the Education Bureau or the Council directly.

(2) Upon receiving complaints alleging teachers to have violated the professional conduct, the Education Bureau conducts investigation according to the established procedures. Each decision is made after considering the facts, evidence and representations from teacher, and in accordance with section 47 of the Education Ordinance. Section 47 of the Education Ordinance specifies the grounds for cancellation of registration of teacher, including the grounds for refusal to register teacher as specified in Section 46;
whether the teacher is incompetent; whether the teacher has contravened any provision of the Education Ordinance; whether the teacher has behaved in any manner which constitutes professional misconduct; or whether the teacher has behaved in any manner which is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school in which the teacher teaches. Indeed, to live up to public expectations for their values and moral standards, profession educators should appreciate the impact of their every word and deed on the minds and virtues of students, should show respect for the law and the behavioural norms acceptable to society, and do their best to uphold the honour, dignity and morality of the teaching profession. These are clearly stipulated in the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong. Moreover, the Professional Standards for Teachers of Hong Kong states that teachers should be committed role models of professionalism; uphold public trust in the profession; maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school to realize the core professional values. I believe that the teaching profession has a thorough understanding of the required ethical standards and the social moral standards.

(3) In determining whether a teacher is involved in professional misconduct, we will consider the matter from a professional perspective, focusing on whether the acts in question conform to the professional ethics, whether the teacher concerned has violated social expectations and whether the values so demonstrated will have an adverse impact on the teaching profession or students. We do not agree that professional misconduct cases should be made public for comments. Apart from the privacy concern, the uniqueness of each case makes it unfair to allow the general public, who does not possess a complete set of information, to comment on the cases. Nevertheless, among the cases handled by the Education Bureau, some can be adopted for teacher reflection. From the perspective of professional development, we will make reference to the contents of some cases to design reflective questions in relevant professional development courses to enhance the ethical standards of teachers.
Should a teacher under investigation for alleged professional misconduct disagrees with the findings of investigation, he can lodge an appeal following the established practices. If the teacher concerned does not agree with the Education Bureau's decision to cancel his teacher registration, he may, within 21 days after the service of the notice informing him the decision of the Permanent Secretary and the grounds for making such decision, appeal to the Appeal Board by delivering a notice of appeal in accordance with section 61 of the Education Ordinance. If there is any objection to the advisory letter, warning letter or reprimand letter received, the teacher concerned may submit his views to the Education Bureau.

In the past six months, members of the public have expressed their views on our work with regard to teacher misconduct cases. We will continue to listen to these comments and sum up our experience in a timely manner to safeguard the education quality for Hong Kong.

We find it regrettable that there are cases involving offences and acts of misconduct committed by teachers. I sincerely hope that all teachers are committed to disseminate knowledge, dispel confusion and nurture students. We cannot bear to see individual teachers change course or even break the law, bringing shame on their peers and students. I strongly believe that the education sector and the public share the same goal as the Education Bureau of ensuring that students learn effectively and grow up healthily under the guidance of outstanding and professional teachers.

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): President, I am extremely disappointed with the main reply of the Secretary for Education because apart from the figure 171, everything else provided therein had already been made known to us and mentioned by him previously. Indeed, I have also touched on some of such information in the main question. The Secretary provided merely very vague information in regard to the norms in the main reply. It is unclear as to what the norms are. It was mentioned in the past that a task force under the Education Bureau was in charge of relevant matters, but even things in this
respect are not disclosed now. Why could the authorities not count the number of complaints lodged anonymously? There are 171 complaints in total, so the authorities should have been able to count the number of complaints lodged anonymously. Why did the authorities not do so? Is it a question that cannot be answered? As a result, a general impression of "black box operation" is given.

President, here comes my supplementary question. Under the current mechanism for handling complaints about teachers and cancelling teacher registration, the teaching profession is the only major profession the professional qualifications of which are examined by administrative officials. How does the Education Bureau enhance the transparency thereof? How can the rights and interests of teachers be protected? I hope the Secretary will respond to these questions.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, Mr IP is right in saying that the main reply has not provided brand new information. This is because we have all along handled the matter in an open and transparent manner. We have already explained and presented a lot of information to the public on different occasions. Hence, if Mr IP wants us to provide brand new information in seven minutes, we find it difficult to satisfy him because we have already been making relevant announcements.

We have pointed out in the main reply that, as the authority that manages teacher registration, the Education Bureau has always handled complaints in a fair and open manner. Our work concerns several aspects: insofar as the professional development of teachers is concerned, we will provide a lot of trainings on professional or personal development for teachers through committees; in terms of handling complaints, as stated in the main reply, we will handle every complaint in a fair manner under the mechanism. I think the Education Bureau, as the authority managing teacher registration, is exercising due diligence by doing so.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr IP, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): President, the Secretary clearly did not answer my supplementary question, which asks about how transparency can be enhanced and the rights and interests of teachers be safeguarded.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, I have already answered that earlier. We have all along maintained a high degree of transparency. I do not quite understand in which area our transparency needs to be enhanced according to Mr IP, unless he reckons that we should discuss individual complaint against teachers publicly. His supplementary question concerns how the rights and interests of teachers can be protected. We seek to protect the privacy of teachers, hence, we should not discuss the cases publicly. I hope Mr IP can understand that we have to strike a balance in this regard.

MS CLAUDIA MO (in Cantonese): President, the breeze is unable to read, so why does it want to rummage through the pages of a book? This is a classic case of literary inquisition. You can change the news, but you may not be able to rewrite history. The Government fully toes the line of the Communist Party of China ("CPC") now, and the essence of CPC's governance is to "grasp firmly the ideology" and ideology starts from education. It is even expressly stated in the main reply that they will tackle "the black sheep" in the profession. Please do not scare me. In some cases, the Education Bureau has insisted that there is a problem even though the school concerned considers otherwise. I wish to ask whether public officers in charge of education admit that they are suppressing teachers in Hong Kong under the pretext of professional misconduct.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, I do not quite understand the problem with tackling "the black sheep" in the profession. We respect the teaching profession. We respect the majority of the teachers …

(Ms Claudia MO spoke aloud in her seat)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Claudia MO, please do not speak aloud in your seat.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): In order to maintain the professional standards of teachers, we tackle teachers who have done wrong or poorly and penalize them. What is the problem with that? If we do not do that but mix bad teachers with good teachers, how do we render the teaching profession more professional?

(Ms Claudia MO stood up and spoke aloud)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms MO, the Secretary is replying to your supplementary question and he has not yet finished doing so. Please sit down and let the Secretary finish his speech. Secretary, please continue with your reply.

(Ms Claudia MO remained standing and spoke aloud)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms MO, the Secretary has not finished replying, please sit down. Secretary, please continue with your reply.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): The second point raised by Ms MO is that the Education Bureau should not get involved if the school finds that there is nothing wrong with the incident. This is tantamount to outsourcing to schools a due responsibility of the Education Bureau, which is the
responsibility of teacher registration. Under this logic, if someone made a complaint to the Government and the Government subsequently reached a conclusion, and then that person lodged a complaint with Legislative Council Members again, would it possible for Members to simply ignore it because the Government had already reached a conclusion? Certainly not. Each department or organization has its own responsibilities and must examine complaints separately. As employers and education institutions, schools certainly have to be held accountable to their employees and the education given, and that is why investigations have to be conducted. On the other hand, the Education Bureau, as the authority in charge of teacher registration, must handle complaints about teachers involving in misconduct or illegal activities. In deciding whether relevant teachers have conduct issues, reports made by schools are one of the important factors, but not the only factor. We will also conduct investigations, in order to exercise our due diligence.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms MO, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MS CLAUDIA MO (in Cantonese): He got it completely twisted. The current education policy is mainly school-based.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms MO, this is not part of the supplementary question raised by you just now. Please sit down.

MR CHEUNG KWOK-KWAN (in Cantonese): Secretary, I will not be such a rascal as to just asking questions and not letting you reply. President, teachers indeed serve as role models for our next generation by words and deeds. The set of attitudes and values preached by teachers and the examples set by them will indeed shape the values and behaviours acceptable to our society in future. Therefore, I support schools and the Education Bureau to follow up on the professional conduct of practitioners in education stringently.
President, in an earlier case involving an acrostic poem, the complainee acted stealthily and displayed extremely inappropriate words and deeds. He tries to shirk his responsibility after the matter has been exposed, arguing that he did not know the meaning of the poem. However, he is actually sold out by the hashtags, in which he says "Calm down everyone, read carefully and you will understand", and "Those who understand, understand". Obviously, someone might be lying.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to avoid trouble, the school readily accepted his explanation during the investigation process and closed the case hastily. I would like to ask how the Bureau will deal with the school’s appeasement approach and the complainee’s muddling-through attempt. Will the Bureau impose a separate penalty if the complainee has been telling lies blatantly during the investigation process?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, our long-standing position is that individual case will not be discussed in detail publicly, but I can point out that we will conduct a thorough investigation and make a conclusion based on the actual evidence.

Members may hold different opinions on the investigation by the school. Some hold that the principal has conducted too long and too thorough an investigation for such a minor incident; while some hold that the school merely sought to avoid troubles and rushed through the matter. We have to examine the facts found through investigation by the school and whether these facts are supported by evidence. Then, basing on the investigation conducted by the school and the facts found, we will decide whether the incident has happened, the reasons behind it, and whether professional conduct has been breached.

We will absolutely not tolerate any misconduct. We believe lying and attempting to deceive are serious acts of misconduct. How do teachers teach students to be honest if they tell lies? Therefore, if teachers are found to have lied in these circumstances, we will deal with the matter even more stringently.
MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, the speech of the Secretary is in effect putting the cart before the horse and confusing right and wrong. Hongkongers have seen clearly in various live broadcasts the Hong Kong Police make arrests and prosecutions arbitrarily and beat young people until they are blood-soaked. What is wrong about the teacher telling the truth?

The Secretary has stated in the main reply that they "will tackle the few black sheep in the profession". So, will Carrie LAM's Administration "tackle the black sheep in the Police", too? It is indeed laughable that the Secretary talks about the Education Bureau seriously following up even anonymous complaints. If there are tens of thousands of anonymous complaints about the Secretary's misconduct now, will he handle them? It is really laughable. How can anonymous complaints be handled? The Bureau has not replied us at all in the paper.

President, I would like to ask the Secretary how he would handle the matter if there are now tens of thousands of anonymous complaints about the Secretary for Education's misconduct. Will he handle the complaints seriously? He must be joking, acting like this in his capacity as the Secretary for Education! Reply me!

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, I am not quite sure about the Honourable Member's supplementary question. The Honourable Member has asked about a situation where someone lodges a complaint that I, as the Secretary for Education, have done something improperly. I will surely consider the complaint cautiously and reflect on whether it is justified. Likewise, having been accused by the Honourable Member just now, I will also reflect on whether I have done something improperly …

(Mr KWONG Chun-yu stood up and spoke aloud)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG Chun-yu, please sit down. Secretary, please continue with your reply.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, my simple reply is that I will consider cautiously and pay attention to opinions about me in society. If the opinions are justified, I will try my best to make improvements. Even if they may be just misunderstandings, I will still reflect on them in a bid to improve in terms of communication or work, so as to do a better job in the future.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, I am very gentle. I want to ask a follow-up question. The Secretary stammered just now and did not answer my supplementary question …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG, you may not ask any follow-up question. Please sit down.

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, my question is very simple. Please listen to me …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Fourth question. Mr KWONG Chun-yu. Mr KWONG, do you wish to ask this question?

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, you should let me raise my supplementary question. How can you move on to the next question like that?

President, there is no need to panic. Secretary, I will "take care" of you again next time.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG Chun-yu, Members can ask only one supplementary question and no follow-up question is allowed. The Council is dealing with the fourth question and please ask it now.

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, I am just about to ask this question. Are you going to let me ask it or not?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Fourth question. Mr KWONG, please ask your question.

Tackling the novel coronavirus epidemic

4. MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): Fine, President, thank you. The World Health Organization has described the outbreak of novel coronavirus as a pandemic in view of the outbreak having spread to more than 110 countries and territories around the world. Regarding the tackling of the epidemic, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has grasped the whereabouts of the people who came from Hubei Province and are now staying in Hong Kong; if so, of their number and, among them, the respective numbers of those who are receiving treatment in hospitals and those who have been admitted to quarantine centres; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the total number of face masks in the Government's stock as at the 3rd of this month; the new measures in place to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of compliant face masks for use by healthcare personnel and that members of the public can buy face masks at reasonable prices; and

(3) as a medical team of the University of Hong Kong has projected that the local epidemic will reach its peak in May this year, whether the existing manpower in medical, nursing and various allied health grades as well as the current number of isolation beds are sufficient to tackle the epidemic, and whether the Government has made adequate preparations for tackling the epidemic in the light of the
aforesaid projection or its own projection; if not, of the reasons for
that?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): President, since
the outbreak of coronavirus disease-2019 ("COVID-19"), the Government has
been closely monitoring the development of the outbreak situation. Guided by
the three key principles of "responding promptly", "staying alert to the situation"
and "working in an open and transparent manner", we have continued to adopt the
"containment" strategy based on science and experts' advice and secured every
line of defence with a view to achieving "early identification, early isolation and
eye and early treatment of the infected". According to the Government's prevention and
control strategies, we introduced a host of specific and practicable measures in
the areas of health surveillance, compulsory quarantine, isolation treatment,
health declaration, exit screening, reducing people flow between Hong Kong and
the Mainland, enhancing "social distancing" and supporting frontline health care
staff, etc.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, Commerce and Economic
Development Bureau, Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and Hospital
Authority ("HA"), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by
Mr KWONG Chun-yu is as follows:

(1) In view of the latest situation of the COVID-19 outbreak, the
Government has taken a number of measures proactively since late
January this year to further reduce the flow of people between the
Mainland and Hong Kong. Having considered that the outbreak
mainly took place in Hubei Province early on and was getting more
severe, the Government announced on 26 January that, with effect
from 27 January, except for Hong Kong residents, all residents of
Hubei Province and persons who had visited Hubei Province in the
past 14 days would not be permitted to enter Hong Kong until
further notice.

After the announcement of the above measure, to find out the
whereabouts of persons who were from Hubei Province or had
visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days and may still be in Hong
Kong at that time, the Government announced on 29 January that it
would reach out to hotels through the hotel industry and the Hong
Kong Tourism Board to contact travellers from Hubei Province and also contact students returning to Hong Kong from Hubei Province through tertiary institutions. On the same day, the Immigration Department ("ImmD") started to inspect all hotels and guesthouses in Hong Kong, with a view to locating travellers from Hubei who were still in Hong Kong for registering their contact information and providing them with health advice. Furthermore, starting from 31 January, the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health ("DH"), with the assistance of ImmD, arranged for travellers from Hubei who were still in Hong Kong to move into quarantine centres, or arrange those who displayed no symptoms to leave Hong Kong as soon as possible.

ImmD had completed inspections of 1 837 hotels and guesthouses by 7 February. A total of 55 travellers from Hubei were identified during the inspection. At the time, 31 of them left Hong Kong on their own, 10 left Hong Kong with the assistance of the HKSAR Government, and 4 moved into the quarantine centre at Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village (all have now completed quarantine). For the remaining 10 people, no quarantine was required as they had departed Hubei for more than 14 days, and all of them had thereafter left Hong Kong on their own.

Furthermore, as at 16 March, among the 157 patients confirmed with the disease, 12 had visited Wuhan or are Wuhan residents. Out of them, 10 have recovered and have been discharged, one passed away and one is still hospitalized for isolation treatment.

As regards the stock of masks, according to the information from the Government Logistics Department ("GLD"), since early January, the Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to procure masks directly through different channels and means, without undergoing any tendering procedures, with a view to securing the resources in the shortest time possible to meet the operational needs of the Government. As long as the items provided by the manufacturers and suppliers meet the required specifications and are sold according to prevailing market prices, GLD will make an immediate purchase and there is no question of "the lowest bid wins". The Government has contacted 600 suppliers from more
than 30 countries or regions, reaching as far as Egypt, Turkey, Mexico, South America, etc. The Overseas Economic and Trade Offices and individuals have also rendered proactive support.

Among the masks ordered, more than 10 million have been delivered to Hong Kong. We hope that the remaining will arrive in batches as scheduled. As the supply of masks remain very tight around the globe and with increasing demand, global sourcing is very difficult. Even the Government has placed orders, the orders could be cancelled due to export controls suddenly imposed by some countries or regions.

That said, the Government will continue to work hard on sourcing masks globally. The Government expects that the supply of masks will remain tight for some time in the near future. Currently, the stock of masks kept by GLD can last for about two months for meeting the needs of government departments. The Government will prioritize the distribution of masks in the Government's stockpile following a risk-based approach, with priority accorded to health care workers to meet their needs. In view of the latest situation of the COVID-19 outbreak, supply of GLD's masks will be prioritized for staff participating in quarantine-related work and execution of quarantine orders, including medical and port health staff of DH and frontline staff who maintain provision of essential public services.

Furthermore, in view that the Government's outsourced cleansing service contractors have encountered difficulties in procuring masks, to protect the health of cleansing workers and maintain environmental hygiene, the Government will reserve the 700,000 additional masks produced by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") for distribution to the frontline cleansing workers employed by the Government's outsourced service contractors to meet their imminent needs. The relevant government departments have accorded priority to distributing masks to the cleansing workers responsible for cleaning public toilets, public markets, refuse collection points, streets and public housing estates since 17 February.
In addition, the Government has provided 1 million masks for the staff of subvented, contract, self-financing and private residential service units, including residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities licensed by the Social Welfare Department, so as to assist them to continue to provide services. The Government has also received donations of masks from some groups and individuals, and will distribute the items to needy bodies and disadvantaged groups in society according to the wishes of the donors.

At the same time, the Government has taken steps to follow up on the recommendation to increase local production. Under the Anti-epidemic Fund, the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme will provide financial assistance to facilitate the establishment of mask production lines in Hong Kong, so as to address the shortage situation and build up reserve stock. CSD has also increased its mask production volume to meet the needs of government departments. As for retail, the Government has been in liaison with suppliers and retailers at all levels. It is hoped that when stock is available, it can be handled without causing too much inconvenience to members of the public.

(3) As regards the work of public hospitals in prevention and control, HA has put in place an established mechanism to deploy manpower of frontline staff to meet operational needs. In view of the latest situation of the COVID-19 outbreak, HA announced on 15 February to adjust non-emergency and non-essential medical services significantly in the four weeks starting from 17 February, so as to focus manpower and resources such as personal protective equipment on providing care for the most critical patients and responding to the outbreak. Specific measures include:

(1) except for emergency and essential treatment, non-emergency services such as elective surgeries will be postponed;

(2) specialist outpatient clinics will contact patients with stable conditions to reschedule their appointments and arrange drug refills for them according to their conditions; and
except for emergency and essential examinations, non-emergency examinations such as routine endoscopy will be rescheduled. Furthermore, as at noon of 17 March, 954 isolations beds were being used by HA with occupancy of around 40%. Each HA cluster will continue to closely monitor the situation and allocate resources to mobilize the other isolation beds when required.

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, when faced with the Wuhan pneumonia, the entire Carrie LAM Administration is just useless.

We can see that all the people in Hong Kong are counting on themselves in order to be saved. They are buying masks by themselves and scouring masks everywhere, rather than counting on the Carrie LAM Administration. So far, the situation in Hong Kong is still under control and this is attributed to the efforts made by Hongkongers and also the action taken by health care personnel a month ago. Had it not been the health care personnel putting up a strike a month ago, the Carrie LAM Administration would not have agreed to a partial lockdown and we could have no idea how badly the epidemic would have spread in Hong Kong. Listen up, Secretary, you really must not take reprisals against them.

President, some health care personnel have complained and disclosed to me that currently they are given one N95 mask a day when there are several dozens of patients requiring sputum suction, and they have to keep using their mask even though it is dampened. My question to the Secretary is this: Have the authorities amended the guidelines based on the quantities in stock, so that they can continue to tell people outside that they have sufficient stock? Or is it because of some reasons that the health care personnel have only one mask a day now? Is the said situation really the case? I wish to ask the Secretary whether the authorities have amended the guidelines and whether the situation described by me just now is true.
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I thank Mr KWONG for his question.

According to the information of HA, they already expedited the procedures for procuring protective equipment in early January. Now they have started to take a more open and transparent approach to let their colleagues know the quantities of the equipment in stock.

Currently, the stock quantities of various types of protective equipment in HA at the central level and in various hospitals are approximately as follows: 25 million surgical masks, 2.6 million protective gowns, 2 million face shields and 1.2 million N95 respirators. Certainly, regarding the guidelines for frontline staff and how such protective equipment is used in accordance with public health and infection control procedures, HA has all along formulated these guidelines based on science and the advice of experts in infection control within HA. We understand that some time ago, there were several times that they made adjustments to certain guidelines and aroused views from some colleagues. In view of such, apart from keeping communication with the colleagues, they have now designated in each cluster dedicated staff responsible for these issues. With regard to the stock or replenishments, they are making improvements gradually.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): She really did not answer my supplementary question. Is it true that masks have to be used repeatedly, or dampened masks have to be used repeatedly?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I think if frontline colleagues really consider it necessary to change their protective clothing and if they can bring it to the attention of their superiors or colleagues, I believe HA will definitely cater to their needs accordingly.
MR WILSON OR (in Cantonese): President, concerning the performance of the SAR Government in the prevention of the epidemic, the people of Hong Kong have all seen it. There is indeed plenty of room for the SAR Government and the relevant officials to do better.

I have two questions, and I hope the Secretary can respond to them. First, many people from the European and American countries (including the United Kingdom and the United States) are continuously swarming back to Hong Kong and this has indeed aroused concern among many members of the public, as they are worrying about whether these people, after their return to Hong Kong, may be found to be infected with the disease or will be confirmed to be infected after undergoing tests. The local residents are gravely worried about this every day.

May I ask the Secretary what measures are in place to tackle this problem? Now the Government is only appealing to them to undergo voluntary self-isolation but what is the actual situation? Is there a more vigorous and effective measure to reduce the risk of spread by these people coming back to Hong Kong from different places?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I thank Mr Wilson OR for his supplementary question. By the time the pandemic was announced by the World Health Organization on 11 March or even before that, we have already been consistently assessing the development overseas and in the Mainland of the novel coronavirus outbreak which began in Wuhan. Certainly, over the past fortnight, we have issued the Red Outbound Travel Alert ("OTA") for a number of times. Currently, the Red OTA is issued on all places in the world with the exceptions of the Mainland, Taiwan and Macao. Apart from appealing to Hongkongers to avoid non-essential travel overseas, DH has also been extending the health quarantine arrangements on inbound travellers. These arrangements are not of a voluntary nature, rather, they are compulsory quarantine arrangements with a legal basis.

The latest situation is that we issued a press release on 17 March, stating that in view of the continued increase in the number of novel coronavirus infections globally, starting from 0:00 am on 19 March, the Port Health Division officers of DH will issue quarantine orders for compulsory quarantine to all people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to all overseas countries/territories in the past 14 days, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents.
Certainly, we will keep monitoring the overall situation and also how work should be carried out continuously in handling compulsory quarantine.

As I said earlier, compulsory quarantine aside, we have continuously expanded the coverage of virus testing and surveillance. Apart from the Accident and Emergency Departments and some 60 general outpatient clinics in the public sector where virus testing is provided—people with symptoms can go there to seek medical consultation and they will be assessed by doctors for the need to undergo testing—the coverage has been expanded recently for testing to be performed by private doctors. As we are aware that a large number of people, such as students, will return to Hong Kong from Europe and the United States or elsewhere in the next week or two, we are also thinking about expanding the coverage of testing. DH is currently working on the details in order to look into ways to expand the testing to cover people arriving in Hong Kong who have a higher risk.

MR MICHAEL TIEN (in Cantonese): I would like to ask the Secretary the following question. In the last few days, a daily average of 1 000-odd foreigners, who are neither people from the Greater China region nor Hongkongers, arrived in Hong Kong, meaning that the number can add up to over 10 000 people in 14 days. I understand that the Government currently does not let these people stay in hotels but will ask them to live in quarantine centres. However, it is obvious that there is actually not sufficient quarantine centres in Hong Kong to deal with these 10 000-odd foreigners.

My supplementary question is simple. All places in the world have now banned the entry of foreigners. So have Mainland China, Taiwan and Macao in the Greater China region, except in Hong Kong where those 1 000 non-Hong Kong people and non-Mainlanders are still allowed entry. What is the reason for that? Where do we have so many quarantine facilities to accommodate these people in Hong Kong? Besides, some 60 000 students will be coming back to Hong Kong. Experts have said that it would be best to let them stay in hotels for a couple of days in order for them to undergo various tests. Those who are confirmed to be infected will be sent to hospitals while those who are not infected can go home to finish the remaining 10-odd days of home isolation. Will the Government adopt this measure? Will the Secretary please make a response direct.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr TIEN, you have asked two questions. Secretary, you can pick one to answer.

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): Alright. I thank Mr Michael TIEN for his supplementary question. First, if we look at the confirmed cases now, we will find that a vast majority of them are Hong Kong residents. Of course, some of them are foreigners but they are Hong Kong residents. This is the first point.

Second, we have all along followed a risk-based approach in handling people arriving in Hong Kong. Of course, there is already a global outbreak now but prior to that, the measures that we implemented gradually were also risk-based. This is why people arriving in Hong Kong from countries with higher risks are required to undergo compulsory quarantine, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents. According to the overall risk assessment now, it is necessary for us to reserve quotas in the quarantine centres for people with the highest risk, such as close contacts of confirmed cases, etc. Generally speaking, after the risk assessments, people returning to Hong Kong are all required to undergo home isolation. For people arriving in Hong Kong from overseas countries, if they are ordered by Port Health Division officers to undergo quarantine but cannot provide an address, it would be safer for them to stay in quarantine centres.

Having said that, we have heard a lot of different demands or views that these people arriving in Hong Kong should be allowed to stay in hotels. We are now looking into the risks in this respect. Moreover, there are also many different demands or suggestions about how crew members or people working on cargo aircraft should be handled. We will consider ways for handling these cases one by one in the light of the risks involved.

(Mr Michael TIEN stood up and intended to ask a question)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr TIEN, you asked two questions just now and the Secretary already answered them. Please sit down.

(Mr Michael TIEN remained standing and continued to ask a question)
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This is not in the contents of the supplementary question that you asked just now.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Fifth question.

Impacts of the novel coronavirus epidemic on Hong Kong

5. MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Cantonese): The novel coronavirus epidemic has now spread to more than 110 countries and territories around the world and has been described as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. In recent days, a number of persons from the Mainland, who had been confirmed to have been infected with the virus, withheld the information of having visited the Mainland when seeking medical treatment, withheld the relevant circumstances when making health declarations, or refused to cooperate with the authorities. Some members of the public have relayed to me that they are gravely worried that the Government's failure to "completely close all boundary control points" will lead to a rise in locally infected cases, thereby imposing an unbearable burden on Hong Kong's public health care system. Regarding the impacts of the epidemic on Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) among the non-local persons who had entered Hong Kong from the Mainland and had been confirmed in Hong Kong to have been infected with the virus, of the number of those who successfully gained entry into Hong Kong as they had not been identified as suspected cases, as well as the respective average duration of their stay in Hong Kong at the time they showed the relevant symptoms and they were confirmed to have been infected; whether it will immediately suspend granting entry permission to all non-local persons who have recently visited any Mainland cities or come to Hong Kong via the Mainland, and temporarily forbid Hong Kong residents from travelling to the Mainland, until the epidemic is under control; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that there are countries (including Italy and Kuwait), one after another, banning flights to and from Hong Kong or entry of Hong Kong residents, how the Government convinces the international
community that the epidemic will not be spread to other places by people coming from Hong Kong or by Hong Kong residents; and

(3) given that some elderly persons, grass-roots families and the disadvantaged groups are unable to acquire face masks at a reasonable price, whether the Government will allocate funding from the Community Care Fund for purchasing face masks, and sell those face masks to Hong Kong residents in need at a low price at designated locations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): President, the World Health Organization ("WHO") declared on 11 March that the coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") outbreak can be described as a pandemic. Faced with the outbreak situation rapidly evolving and a continuous surge in the number of affected countries/regions and confirmed cases, the Government is closely monitoring the situation around the world and implementing relevant response measures.

After consulting and consolidating information provided by the Security Bureau, Transport and Housing Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and Information Services Department ("ISD"), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Mr Charles Peter MOK is as follows:

(1) The Government has been closely monitoring the development of the COVID-19 outbreak in the Mainland. As at 16 March, among the 157 confirmed cases and one suspected case received by the Centre for Health Protection ("CHP") of the Department of Health ("DH"), seven are non-Hong Kong residents entering Hong Kong via the Mainland, six of whom had stayed in Hong Kong for one to six days before the onset of fever symptoms. Since 7 February, there has been no imported case from the Mainland.

Having regard to the seriousness of the outbreak, starting from 27 January, all non-Hong Kong residents who had visited Hubei
Province in the past 14 days prior to arrival to Hong Kong are not permitted to enter Hong Kong. Starting from 8 February, in accordance with the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) ("the Regulation"), DH requires all persons who have been to the Mainland in the past 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong (save for exempted persons), regardless of their nationality and travel documents, to stay at designated places (quarantine centre, home or other accommodation) for a 14-day compulsory quarantine. A breach of the above quarantine requirement is an offence. Offenders are liable to a penalty of a fine of $25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Also, providing false or misleading information to health officers or medical practitioners concerned would be liable to a penalty of a fine of $10,000 and imprisonment for six months. As of now, no person who underwent compulsory quarantine had become confirmed cases during the quarantine period.

In fact, in view of the outbreak situation, the Government has taken a number of measures proactively since late January to further reduce the flow of people between the Mainland and Hong Kong. These initiatives have been very effective. During the period from 8 February (i.e. when the quarantine order to all people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland or having visited the Mainland in the past 14 days came into effect) to 15 March, compared to the figure before the measures to strictly manage control points and reduce the cross-boundary flow of people came into effect, the daily average passenger trips arriving in Hong Kong had dropped significantly by over 90%, with Hong Kong residents making up over 80% of the total passenger trips and Mainland residents 5%. Compared to the figure before the measures came into effect, daily average passenger trips arriving in Hong Kong via the two land border control points had dropped over 95%, with Hong Kong residents making up nearly 85% of the total passenger trips and Mainland residents 3%. However, due to the close economic, social and livelihood ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland and the heavy visitor traffic, a complete closure of the boundary control points is not practicable and may also affect the supply of daily necessities and food to Hong
Kong. Starting from 4 February, the Government has only maintained services at the two land boundary control points of Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port. With this measure coupled with the implementation of mandatory home quarantine under the Regulation since 8 February, it is believed that the flow of people can be minimized and the risk of disease transmission reduced.

The Government has conducted detailed risk assessments for formulating prevention and control measures in response to disease outbreak in other countries/regions. Other than considering the number, distribution and rate of increase of infected persons, the Government would also take into account the surveillance and control measures implemented by the authorities of that particular country/region, as well as the frequency of travels between Hong Kong and that particular country/region. The Government would suitably review and rationalize the relevant measures having regard to the latest development of the outbreak. Furthermore, the Government has also urged members of the public planning to travel outside Hong Kong to adjust travel plans and avoid non-essential travel. As the outbreak situation around the world is evolving rapidly, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

(2) The Government is aware that some countries/regions have decided to suspend air services to/from Hong Kong or prohibit the entry of travellers from Hong Kong or those who have visited Hong Kong recently in view of the development of COVID-19. After learning of the decisions of the relevant countries/regions, the Government has been actively following up the matter with the civil aviation authorities and relevant units of the countries/regions concerned and explaining in detail the prevention measures implemented by the Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA"). For instance, when Italy announced the suspension of air services between Italy and Hong Kong on 31 January, the Government immediately followed it up with the Italian Civil Aviation Authority. We were informed by the Italian authority in the early morning of 2 February (Hong Kong
time) that the relevant suspension of cargo flights had been lifted. In addition, after Vietnam announced the immediate suspension of air services between Vietnam and Hong Kong on 1 February, the Government actively liaised with the Vietnamese Civil Aviation Authority. The Vietnamese Civil Aviation Authority lifted the relevant suspension with immediate effect at night on the same day. The Government will continue to actively follow up the matter with other relevant countries/regions, so as to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on Hong Kong's aviation services.

Also, the Government has earlier written to Consuls General of various countries in Hong Kong and held briefings to explain in detail the overall strategy and measures put in place by the Government to combat the outbreak, and to reiterate that extreme measures such as suspension of air services to/from Hong Kong or restricting the entry of travellers from Hong Kong would be unnecessary at this stage. The Airport Authority Hong Kong also arranged on 7 February a briefing-cum-visit to HKIA for Consuls General in Hong Kong to explain in detail the robust anti-epidemic measures at HKIA. Furthermore, ISD issues press releases to local and overseas media on a daily basis to explain the latest situation in Hong Kong and our anti-epidemic measures. ISD has also been providing daily reports to Consular Corps, international chambers of commerce and other organizations with international connections since 26 January. (The buzzer sounded)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, please finish your reply as soon as possible.


(3) As regards mask supply, the Government understands that some members of the public have difficulty in procuring masks. We are also very concerned about the demand for masks by the elderly,
grass-roots families and the underprivileged. In view of the fact that the supply of masks and personal protection equipment is tight globally and the announcement by WHO that the outbreak is a pandemic, panic buying happens in many places. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to procure masks globally through different channels and means. These include the Government Logistics Department reaching out to suppliers directly and through referrals from Overseas Economic and Trade Offices and individuals to source supplies for direct procurement of masks and anti-epidemic items without undergoing any tendering procedures. The aim is to secure the delivery of these resources to Hong Kong in the shortest time possible.

In addition to imports, the Government has taken steps to follow up on the recommendation to increase local production. Under the Anti-epidemic Fund, the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme will provide financial assistance to facilitate the establishment of mask production lines in Hong Kong. The Correctional Services Department has also increased its mask production volume. As for retail, the Government has been in liaison with retailers and suppliers at all levels. It is hoped that when stock is available, it can be handled without causing too much inconvenience to members of the public.

Lastly, the Government has provided 1 million masks for the staff of subvented, contract, self-financing and private residential service units, including residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities licensed by the Social Welfare Department, so as to assist them to continue to provide services. The Government has also received donations of masks and sanitizing items from some groups and individuals for distribution to those in need. We will help the donors distribute the donated items in accordance with their wishes, including providing masks to high-risk patients and medical workers through the Hospital Authority ("HA"), as well as to the elderly and needy households through major charities and non-governmental organizations. At the same time, the Government encourages
private and charitable organizations to donate masks to the underprivileged, and stands ready to play a facilitation role with financial resources and coordination.

**MR CHARLES PETER MOK** (in Cantonese): President, since I raised this question, actually many changes have taken place. Hence, sometimes urgent questions are more suitable. Since the day before yesterday (16 March), more than 23 flights have come to Hong Kong from Europe and the United States. It is believed that over 5,000 people have entered Hong Kong. According to Dr HO Pak-leung's estimation, in the worst-case scenario, there may be 200 confirmed cases of infection in a week, and an outbreak in the community is possible. While the majority of people returning to Hong Kong from Europe and the United States are Hongkongers, in fact we have also seen currently a trend of substantial increase in the number of arrivals of both visitors and Hong Kong residents through the airport. In particular, the number of Mainland visitors has increased from 830 in the previous week to 1,662 on 16 March. The increase is more than one fold. Given the present loophole of not completely closing all the boundary control points, more imported cases from places outside the border (including the Mainland) may arise, particularly in the next couple of weeks when many Hong Kong students will return to Hong Kong from the European and American regions, thereby increasing greatly the pressure on Hong Kong's health care system; as for the Mainlanders, they will also bring about unnecessary pressure. Moreover, the Mainland is under the threat of a second wave of outbreak, affecting us at the same time.

Therefore, my supplementary question is about how the Government will handle the surveillance procedure during the peak period of the people's return to Hong Kong in the next couple of weeks. In particular, the number of Mainland visitors has drastically increased. The problems therein include omission of declaration and false declaration. Some cases involve Mainlanders showing no symptoms—for Hongkongers, dealing with them is our only option—but such is extraordinary and extra pressure from Mainland visitors. Regarding these people who have escaped the net, what can be done to prevent these people from causing a second or third wave of outbreak in the Hong Kong community?
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I thank Mr Charles Peter MOK for his supplementary question and concern. Since we issued a Red Outbound Travel Alert on places around the world and imposed the quarantine requirements on arrivals, we have been paying close attention to the overall situation in the ensuing two weeks. We have also noticed that HA has received more suspected cases. For this reason, we have got to be more careful. We have checked up on the number of confirmed infections among these suspected cases. In the past few days, there were about three cases where the arrival felt unwell, went to a hospital under HA for inspection immediately upon arrival at the airport and then confirmed to have been infected. Certainly, there were also a large number of cases where the test result was negative. That means the patient was not infected. These cases have also been treated by HA all the way.

Regarding the measures which follow, first, we have to work on how to enforce the quarantine order at the airport so that the large number of arrivals can undertake quarantine in an orderly manner. Second, we will provide information for the people concerned through the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas, recommending them to take proper anti-epidemic measures such as wearing a face mask before boarding, during the flight and after landing. We have also provided Cathay Pacific Airways with face masks for passengers who do not have any to wear on the plane. Third, on handling the flow of people, apart from the issue of a general quarantine order instructing the arrivals what they should do during the compulsory quarantine at home, CHP has also done a lot of work, such as shooting videos to be played on the plane to teach the people concerned what they should do. To facilitate a smooth overall procedure, the health declaration form and relevant information will be distributed to passengers on the plane so that they can complete it on board. We have also introduced the Electronic Health Declaration Form, giving them the option of submitting the form by electronic means. Besides, we need to expand the scope of virus tests, especially for people coming from the European and American regions or areas with a higher risk. Although the virus has currently spread throughout the world, we have noted from certain figures that some regions pose a higher risk. The Government has now proactively arranged tests for people coming to Hong Kong from these regions in order to know as soon as possible whether or not these people are positive for the virus. This is the work we have been doing.

(Mr Charles Peter MOK stood up to raise a follow-up question)
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr MOK, just now you asked quite a number of questions. This Council has already spent about 18 minutes on your supplementary question. Please let other Members have the opportunities to ask questions too.

DR PIERRE CHAN (in Cantonese): President, the anti-epidemic measures of the Hong Kong Government are full of flaws. I am thankful to Mr Charles Peter MOK for raising this question. I will ask about prevention against the epidemic in respect of immigration control.

On 23 January, Wuhan City took the lead in closing off itself. On 11 March, it was reported on XinhuaNet that personally led, directed and planned by President XI Jinping, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, the prevention and control measures against the epidemic in Hubei Province and Wuhan City had achieved remarkable results. However, on 25 January, the Chief Executive said that closure of all the boundary control points was impractical. On 31 January, she said that complete closure of all the boundary control points would amount to discrimination. On 11 February, the Chief Executive said that closure of all the boundary control points was already "meaningless".

As shown by the tables, now Hong Kong is in fact enduring the second and third waves of imported and local cases. Previously, the cases in January were imported from the Mainland. The ones in February were local, such as those of the family sharing a hot pot meal and the Buddhist temple. In March, we are facing the third wave. Now the situation is still developing, as many people are coming back to Hong Kong.

My supplementary question is as follows. Dr CHUANG Shuk-kwan, the Head of the Communicable Disease Branch of CHP, said some patients had admitted that they did not report their health conditions truthfully in the health declaration form. She also admitted that there were loopholes in the surveillance system. May I ask how many prosecutions the Government has instituted since 1 January 2020? How will the Government plug these loopholes?
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I thank Dr Pierre CHAN for his supplementary question. This is a novel virus. The anti-epidemic and prevention work conducted by CHP of DH at the boundary control points consists of temperature checks and health declaration. These are the general measures. However, with better understanding of the virus, knowing that some people may show no symptoms or only mild symptoms, we have expanded the scope of overall surveillance in the hope of containing these people as far as possible.

Regarding the Honourable Member's supplementary question, I do not have the number of prosecutions at hand. Nevertheless, we will deal with provision of false information very seriously. As I said just now, the relevant law has prescribed the penalties. I will later check the figures in this regard from the overall information. I would like to reiterate that we do not solely rely on health declaration or temperature checks. Since the incubation period of the virus is relatively long, visitors may not show any symptoms when they arrive at Hong Kong. For this reason, we are now conducting extensive surveillance of the virus through general outpatient clinics, private doctors and accident and emergency departments, exerting the best efforts to confine and reduce the risk of transmission in the community.

What Dr CHAN said just now is most correct. In the initial period, some cases were indeed imported from the Mainland, but they soon evolved into local infection and transmission. Recently, the majority have turned out to be imported cases again. For this reason, we have issued the Red Outbound Travel Alert and require arrivals in Hong Kong to receive compulsory quarantine.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHAN, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

DR PIERRE CHAN (in Cantonese): This is actually quite dissatisfactory. In the session of oral answers to questions, the Secretary has answered only two Members' questions. She talked a lot, but she did not answer any questions at all. She did not answer my supplementary question. I have pointed out that the law has empowered the Government to conduct quarantine. Let me give an example. The Government may invoke the law to require visitors to make a
health declaration, but the problem is that the Government is unable to enforce it. She has admitted that. My supplementary question is, albeit she said she did not have the information at hand, whether the Government has instituted any prosecution. Moreover, how will the loopholes be plugged? She said a lot of things, but she did not answer my question.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHAN, you have already pointed out the part of your supplementary question not answered. Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): I do not have such data at hand. I can give it to Dr CHAN later. (Appendix I)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Last oral question.

Supplies of anti-epidemic items

6. MR LAM CHEUK-TING (in Cantonese): President, due to the rampant novel coronavirus epidemic, face masks are in acute shortage. As indicated by the Chief Executive, the Government has, apart from conducting an open tender exercise, adopted a multi-pronged approach to procure face masks worldwide. It has contacted more than 400 suppliers from nearly 20 countries, but the procurement efforts have not been very successful. In view of this, government personnel must meet several criteria (including being sick, being frontline officers or going to crowded places) before they are allowed to wear face masks, with a view to economizing on the use of face masks. Those who do not meet the criteria are not allowed to wear face masks, and they are required to take the face masks off even if they are wearing one. Some members of the public have pointed out that the authorities have serious inadequacies in the reserve and supplies of anti-epidemic items such as face masks, causing immense anxiety and panic purchases of such items among members of the public. Some of them even queued up overnight to buy face masks. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:
of the quantities of anti-epidemic items in the Government's stock, the number of months that such quantities may meet the consumption by public officers, healthcare personnel and members of the public, as well as the changes of such quantities, on the day of 23 January this year when the Mainland authorities announced the lockdown of the Wuhan City and on each day thereafter;

whether it has established a mechanism for the reserve of anti-epidemic items such as face masks; if so, of the details of the mechanism, including the reserve quantity of each type of such items, and the number of months of consumption by public officers, healthcare personnel and members of the public based on which such quantities have been determined; if it has not, of the reasons for that and whether it will establish such mechanism; and

of a breakdown, by name of country, of the number of suppliers which the Government has contacted, the number of face masks ordered and the number of face masks already delivered to Hong Kong (set out in a table); whether it has reviewed the reasons why the Government's efforts of procuring face masks worldwide have not been very successful; if so, of the review outcome and the improvement measures, including whether it will enter into regular procurement agreements with suppliers of anti-epidemic items so as to ensure stable supplies of such items?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, after consulting the Food and Health Bureau, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and the Government Logistics Department ("GLD"), our reply to the three parts of Mr LAM Cheuk-ting's question is as follows:

(1) and (2)

I wish to make clear at the outset that GLD is responsible for the procurement of masks for use by government departments to maintain services to the public. The Hospital Authority ("HA") is not a government department and procures masks on their own.
The Government and HA have maintained a stockpile of masks to meet contingency needs. However, generally speaking, the stock will not be directly supplied to the public.

As far as masks procured by GLD are concerned, GLD maintained a regular stock of 10 million masks by virtue of the Government's preparedness and response plans for infectious diseases. As the average monthly demand for masks by government departments was normally about 1.1 million before the outbreak, the stock should have been sufficient to support the operational needs of government departments for more than half a year.

In light of the development concerning the disease, the amount of masks used by government departments has multiplied. Following GLD's stepping up of procurement efforts, the current stock of masks is sufficient for the operational needs by various government departments for about more than two months, based on the broad estimates. In order to rationalize the use of masks within the Government, internal guidelines have been issued to Heads of Departments, with a view to according priority to frontline staff participating in quarantine-related work, execution of quarantine orders (including medical and port health staff of the Department of Health) and maintenance of essential public services. The Government also requires departments to keep their use of masks distributed by the Government to a minimum. Government departments will provide suitable personal protective equipment ("PPE") to their staff based on actual operational needs.

As for HA, before the outbreak of the disease, their target level of PPE stockpile was three months of usage. In light of the development concerning the disease, HA has seen a sharp increase in the amount of PPE used. As at 13 March 2020, the stock of surgical masks at HA is sufficient for use of about two months, while that of N95 respirators is sufficient for about one month. HA has already expedited procurement procedures to replenish PPE. Public hospitals will also step up the control of stock and remind health care staff on the appropriate use of PPE.
In general, masks procured and stored by the Government are not supplied to the public. Nevertheless, as we see a supply crunch for masks, the Government considers it necessary to dedicate extra care to some groups in the society for their need on masks. For example, the Government announced at an earlier juncture that the 700,000 additional masks produced by the Correctional Services Department would be set aside for distribution to cleansing workers engaged by government contractors, in order to relieve the imminent needs; the Government would also provide 1 million masks through the Social Welfare Department to residential care homes for elderly and residential homes for persons with disabilities, so as to support their continuous operation. In addition, the Government has passed all of the masks donated by private and charitable bodies to non-governmental organizations, for their distribution to the elderly and other underprivileged communities who are in need. This was done as an endeavour to share relatively scarce resources with the community so we can fight the disease together. The Government has to date given out more than 3 million masks. As announced by the Chief Executive on 17 March, considering that many Hong Kong students in the United Kingdom and the United States of America are encountering difficulties in purchasing masks, the Government has arranged 67,000 masks to be distributed through airlines to passengers of Hong Kong residents who are returning to Hong Kong from the two countries.

(3) Since early January, GLD has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to source PPE globally through all possible means and channels. In view of emergency needs, GLD adopts direct procurement, i.e. through directly approaching suppliers to place purchase orders and bypassing normal tendering procedures. In parallel, GLD sources the items on the referral of our overseas Economic and Trade Offices, Invest Hong Kong and individuals, with a view to procuring PPE in the greatest quantities within the shortest possible time.

GLD has contacted more than 600 suppliers from all over the world. So far, over 10 million of the masks ordered have been delivered to GLD. Owing to the worldwide shortage and upsurge in demand for
masks, there have been cases in which our orders for masks were snapped up by other buyers before delivery and export, notwithstanding our partial or full payment. We have also encountered cases in which the relevant jurisdictions imposed sudden export controls, leading to suppliers cancelling the transactions and non-delivery of the masks. As such, the procurement of masks remains a great challenge.

In an endeavour to increase the supply of masks on the market, the Government has been following up on proposals to increase local production. The Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund ("the Fund") will provide subsidies to facilitate the establishment of surgical mask production lines in Hong Kong, so as to address the shortage situation and build up reserve stock. We have also earmarked $800 million under the Fund to enable technology applications in relation to mask reusability to cater for the needs of the community.

To conclude, our current top priority is to maximize procurement of masks and other PPE as needed for disease prevention. GLD will enhance the planning and methods used in procurement, and will consider the use of standing procurement agreements for PPE so as to meet the Government's needs in disease prevention.

MR LAM CHEUK-TING (in Cantonese): President, in reply to my question about whether the Government has established a mechanism for the reserve of anti-epidemic items such as face masks, the Government indicated that it maintained a regular stock of 10 million masks by virtue of the response plans put in place for infectious diseases, and, as the monthly demand for masks by government departments was normally about 1.1 million before the outbreak, the stock should have been sufficient for use by government departments for more than half a year. The Government is indeed shameless in giving such a reply. First, its response plans surprisingly have no regard whatsoever for the needs of the public, and members of the public are left to fend for themselves. It is no wonder that the entire city is short of masks, and many Hong Kong people have to queue up overnight to buy masks.
Second, the Government has surprisingly estimated that, on the basis of the monthly demand for masks of about 1.1 million in the halcyon days, the stock of 10 million masks should be sufficient for use by government departments for half a year in the event of an outbreak. It is insulting the wisdom of the public by giving such a reply. Anyone with common sense knows that in the event of an outbreak, the number of masks used will be five or even 10 times that in normal times. Can this be called a contingency mechanism? This should be called a mechanism of "doing nothing to tackle anything". In the end, due to the shortage of masks, Carrie LAM said that masks …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LAM Cheuk-ting, please raise your supplementary question directly.

MR LAM CHEUK-TING (in Cantonese): President, I will soon raise my supplementary question. In the end, Carrie LAM said that masks were like clothes and the Government was not duty-bound to provide civil servants with masks. In demonstrating a cold-blooded and unsympathetic attitude, she has fully disregarded the responsibility of an employer towards its employees.

May I ask the Government why, after the bitter lessons from SARS in 2003 when 299 Hong Kong people died, the needs of the public are completely not taken into account under the response plans it formulates for infectious diseases? Will the Government subsequently establish a mechanism for the reserve of anti-epidemic items, so as to ensure that all Hong Kong people, including health care personnel and civil servants, will have adequate anti-epidemic items?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, as we have explained just now, we are not leaving members of the public to fend for themselves. The approach adopted by the Government is that GLD provides government departments with masks, and regarding the needs of the public, normally pharmacies or retail outlets all sell masks on the market. Certainly, we have observed that recently, particularly at the early stage of the outbreak, there was a limited or tight supply of masks. The
Government's reserve of masks is mainly for use by government departments. Regarding the needs of the public, as masks generally have their expiry dates and need to be stored at certain places, it is not an appropriate approach to treat them as strategic items. For this reason, our priority is to increase the supply of masks from overseas. In addition, we have adopted a multi-pronged approach in terms of local production and technology applications in relation to mask reusability, so that Hong Kong people can purchase the masks that suit their needs.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr LAM, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

**MR LAM CHEUK-TING** (in Cantonese): The Secretary has not answered the part of my supplementary question asking whether the Government will in the future establish a mechanism for the reserve of anti-epidemic items to cater for the needs of all Hong Kong people. Is it his point that the Government will not consider doing so?

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

**SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY** (in Cantonese): President, we will not consider doing so at this stage.

**MS CHAN HOI-YAN** (in Cantonese): President, I really cannot understand why the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury is the only official responsible for giving a reply this main question, which involves our approach to dealing with the outbreak and the supply of masks for health care personnel. I hope the Secretary will make his best effort to answer my supplementary question.

*First, people from any social stratum or occupation can be infected with the virus, and the virus will not wait until we are fully prepared to attack us.*
The Secretary has specifically mentioned just now that the Government's reserve of masks is mainly for use by government departments and will not be supplied to members of the public. However, I would like to remind the Government that on 11 March, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the virus a pandemic. All Hong Kong people are human beings, and the Government must protect them, in addition to protecting government departments or health care personnel. Government departments and health care personnel must certainly be protected, but many wage earners have no masks to wear to work.

Even though, as indicated by the Secretary just now, the Government will not provide members of the public with masks, it should at least draw reference from the practice of Macao and negotiate with some scrupulous pharmacies or stores the retail prices for quality masks that members of the public may choose to order. Alternatively, the Government may set up an emergency hotline in this regard. Some people do not even have any masks to wear to work or go outside, and as the Government is unable to help them, they can only turn to Legislative Council Members for help. Will the Government consider this proposal?

Finally, I would like to alert the Government to one point, and it is fine if it does not give me a reply. N95 masks are high-level masks that cannot be produced by ordinary producers or local production lines. At a special meeting of the Panel on Health Services last week, HA said that its stock of masks is sufficient for use of about one month, and the Secretary said in the main reply that the stock is sufficient for about two months. I wish to alert the Secretary that as Hong Kong has already recorded some imported cases from overseas, a new wave of contagion is possibly underway, and, if we are short of N95 masks, our hospitals will be overwhelmed.

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, we are concerned about the masks we need in our anti-epidemic campaign. The Honourable Member is particularly concerned about the reserve of relevant items that Hong Kong needs, or the need for the Government to provide masks for all members of the public. While the Honourable Member has mentioned about the practice of Macao, we have drawn reference from other developed countries. These countries have differing views
on when masks should be put on, and whether healthy people or patients need to wear masks. As such, masks are not a key factor in solving the problem. Apart from masks, our anti-epidemic campaign also involves many other factors such as personal hygiene, home isolation and people-to-people contact. As for Ms CHAN's question just now on whether the Government will set up a hotline, we will consider the situation concerned. When dealing with a problem of this kind, people need to pay more attention to hygiene than the need to wear a mask.

In addition, President, regarding high-level N95 masks, as I said in the main reply, the stock of N95 respirators is sufficient for use of about one month. In this regard, we have expedited procurement. We have recently increased the number of suppliers and given the information of the suppliers to HA directly, so that they can expedite procurement in this connection to cope with the demand for N95 masks.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms CHAN, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MS CHAN HOI-YAN (in Cantonese): President, I actually want to take this opportunity to make a clarification. President, I must make it clear, or else when the outbreak has been declared a pandemic, and if people fail to wear masks and get infected …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms CHAN Hoi-yan, it is not the time for you to make any clarification. Please sit down.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, the Secretary has said just now that wearing masks is only one of the things that we need to do, and there are many other things we need to do, such as washing hands. In that case, may I ask the Secretary for what reason he is now wearing a mask? Why is our Chief Executive wearing a mask in public? Dr CHAN has mentioned just now that a third wave of contagion is already underway, and the entire world is being
affected by the pandemic; however, the Secretary seems to be suggesting now that wearing a mask is not a matter of concern. Is the Secretary sending to the public a wrong message that it really does not matter if one wears a mask or not? Is it not a matter of concern whether or not one wears a mask when going outside? Has the Secretary suddenly turned into an official in charge of hygiene, who is now telling the public that while government officials need to have sufficient masks, it does not matter whether members of the public have sufficient masks or not?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, the Honourable Member has totally distorted my point. My point is that we are concerned about the demand of the public for masks. I am wearing a mask when attending the Legislative Council meeting today, this is because I have seen many Members wearing masks and I choose to follow suit. President, let me reiterate that wearing masks is only one of our anti-epidemic measures, there are many other very important measures, such as maintaining personal hygiene, and I have mentioned about that just now. I am not saying that we totally disregard the issue of masks. Rather, in terms of the supply of masks, we have sought to increase supply through various channels, including overseas procurement, local production and technology applications in relation to mask reusability.

(Dr Fernando CHEUNG rose to further raise a follow-up question)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHEUNG, this is not the content of the supplementary question you raised just now. Please sit down.

MR KENNETH LEUNG (in Cantonese): President, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting has actually raised a number of detailed questions and requested the Secretary to provide information, but the reply of the Secretary is very general, particularly when he touches upon the supply of masks. According to part (3) of the main reply, "GLD has contacted more than 600 suppliers from all over the world … over 10 million of the masks … have been delivered to GLD". President, from which date to which date were the 10 million masks delivered? How many
masks ordered have not been delivered? In addition, President, which countries across the world is now prohibiting the export of masks?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, the number of masks supplied is a running tally, as we keep purchasing and distributing them to the departments. On 12 February, we indicated that we had ordered some 53 million masks, and we continued to increase supply thereafter. Over 10 million masks have so far been delivered. As for the actual number of masks ordered, we have not made it public, for it is a sensitive figure. We have placed orders with many suppliers, and many masks ordered have failed to be delivered for reasons such as export bans. In fact, many countries or places have successively imposed export bans on the basis of formal or informal documents. Such countries or places strictly prohibit the export of masks due to the outbreak of the disease, but they also adopt a less stringent approach in some other times. The approach adopted by us is that, since the masks of countries where export bans are in place may possibly be exported to other places, we will procure masks from such other places. Hence, we are trying to resolve the problem from various aspects.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG, which part of your supplementary question has not been answered?

MR KENNETH LEUNG (in Cantonese): Hong Kong people will not accept this answer, because we want to know how many masks ordered have not been delivered to Hong Kong, and how many are still on their way. The question is very simple. For example, how many masks today …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Kenneth LEUNG, this is not the content of the supplementary question you raised just now.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department

7. **MR SHIU KA-CHUN** (in Chinese): President, regarding the face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the quantity of face masks produced by CSD, and (ii) the respective quantities of such face masks supplied to the various government departments and non-governmental organizations, in each month of the past three years;

(2) of the respective quantities of face masks currently kept in the stock of the various government departments, and whether, to avoid hoarding, such departments have set a limit on the quantity of face masks kept in the stock;

(3) of the mechanism adopted by the Government for determining the quantities of face masks to be allocated to various government departments, and how such departments handle those face masks which will not be used before the expiry dates; and

(4) as the Chief Executive has indicated that the 700,000 face masks per month made available by CSD's increased production will be given to cleansing service contractors for use by the cleaning workers hired by them, of the relevant details?

**SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY** (in Chinese): President, having consulted the Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office ("PICO") and the Government Logistics Department ("GLD"), our consolidated reply to the four parts of the question raised by Mr SHIU Ka-chun is as follows:

(1) Filter masks produced by CSD are mainly supplied to GLD for allocation to government departments. From 2017 to 2019, CSD supplied about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average to
GLD; GLD supplied roughly the same quantity to government departments.

Moreover, non-governmental organizations such as social welfare agencies and schools procured about 150,000 masks per year on average from CSD from 2017 to 2019. In the light of the developments of COVID-19, there has been a rapid increase in the demand for filter masks from government departments. As such, CSD has ceased to take orders from parties other than GLD since January 2020.

(2) and (3)

Based on the broad estimates, the current stock of masks at GLD is sufficient for operational use by government departments for more than two months. In light of the developments concerning the disease, all government departments have worked very hard to reduce their demands for masks. GLD will comply strictly with the Government's internal guidelines and accord priority to frontline staff participating in quarantine-related work, execution of quarantine orders (including medical and port health staff of the Department of Health) and maintenance of essential public services. GLD will review the demand for and stock of masks from time to time.

Moreover, when departments manage stores items with a shelf-life (including masks), they should conduct regular monitoring to ensure that the stores will be consumed before the expiry dates. If departments are unlikely to consume the stores before expiry, they should consult other departments through GLD to transfer the stores, where appropriate.

(4) The Government understands that outsourced cleansing service contractors have encountered difficulties in procuring masks. To protect the health of cleansing workers and maintain environmental hygiene, the Chief Executive announced on 8 February that CSD would increase the production of an additional 700,000 masks, which would be set aside for distributing to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleansing service contractors as a temporary measure to relieve the imminent need.
PICO coordinates the aforementioned measure of mask distribution. Starting from 17 February, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department have started distributing masks to cleansing workers. Priority was given to those frontline cleansing workers who are responsible for cleaning streets, public toilets, refuse collection points, public markets and public housing estates. Each worker receives one mask per day before work. Some of the masks have also been provided to frontline cleansing workers through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the control points at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and Shenzhen Bay and the Marine Department.

The aforementioned measure is expected to benefit over 21,000 frontline cleansing workers of government contractors.

Hong Kong residents stranded on the Mainland

8. **MR JAMES TO** (in Chinese): President, to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus epidemic, a number of Mainland provinces, cities, counties, towns and villages have implemented closed management one after another since early January this year, under which the entry and exit of persons and vehicles are subject to stringent restrictions. It is learnt that thousands of Hong Kong residents are currently stranded on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

   (1) whether it knows the current number of Mainland-stranded Hong Kong residents, with a breakdown by (i) their whereabouts and (ii) the age group to which they belong (i.e. aged below 18, 18 to 60, and above 60); among such persons, the respective numbers of pregnant women and infants aged below one;

   (2) of the respective to-date numbers of Mainland-stranded Hong Kong residents who have (i) requested the SAR Government to deliver medicaments to them from Hong Kong and (ii) obtained such medicaments, with a breakdown by their whereabouts; if it has received requests for the delivery of medicaments from Hong Kong residents stranded in places outside Hubei Province on the Mainland, whether it has made the arrangements; if not, whether it can make the arrangements expeditiously; whether it has, by
drawing reference from the practices adopted by overseas postal administrations, arranged the use of unmanned aircraft systems to deliver medicaments to Hong Kong residents who are located at places with inconvenient transport links or those who cannot go out conveniently;

(3) of the to-date number of Mainland-stranded Hong Kong residents confirmed to have been infected with the novel coronavirus, together with a breakdown by the gender and age group (covering 10 years each) to which they belong; among such persons, the number of those who have been admitted to hospitals for medical treatment, together with a breakdown by their whereabouts; and

(4) whether the offices of the SAR Government on the Mainland have liaised with the Mainland authorities to discuss how arrangements can be made to assist Mainland-stranded Hong Kong residents in returning to Hong Kong (e.g. conducting novel coronavirus testing on them in batches, and making transport arrangements to take persons confirmed uninfected back to Hong Kong); if so, of the details of the relevant preparatory work (including the arrangements for the quarantine and isolation of such residents after their return to Hong Kong) and the progress made so far?

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND MAINLAND AFFAIRS (in Chinese): President, the reply to the four parts of the question is as follows:

(1) As at the morning of 16 March, more than 3,400 Hong Kong residents who had requested for assistance from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government ("SAR Government") were stranded in various places in Hubei Province. They belong to different age groups, and there are six pregnant women among them. The SAR Government is greatly concerned about the situation of the Hong Kong residents there. The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Wuhan ("WHETO"), the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Offices in the province and different municipalities as well as other non-governmental organizations will continue to provide practical assistance on all fronts to the Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province.
(2) Some of the Hong Kong people in Hubei Province, especially those with chronic illnesses, require medications provided in Hong Kong. Since public transport service in Hubei Province has yet to resume normal, arrangements have been made by the SAR Government to deliver medications to the Hong Kong people in Hubei Province who are in need. As at the morning of 16 March, arrangements were made to deliver medications to 233 Hong Kong people in Hubei Province.

In addition, given the compulsory quarantine measures in Hong Kong, an increasing number of Hong Kong people in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces are unable to make day trips to Hong Kong to attend follow-up consultations to replenish their medications and return to the Mainland on the same day as they did so previously. Although their family members may collect the prescription medications for them from clinics, they cannot deliver the medications to the Mainland using ordinary mail services. To address their concerns, the Government has introduced a special scheme for delivering prescription medications. Priority is given to those currently located in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces who will run out of prescription medications by end March. As at the morning of 16 March, arrangements were made to deliver medications to more than 1,800 Hong Kong people in need.

(3) According to available information, as at the morning of 16 March, 20 Hong Kong people belonging to different age groups in the Mainland were confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19, amongst which 14 were in Hubei Province, 4 in Guangdong Province, 1 in Fujian Province and 1 in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Three of them are being treated in hospitals in Hubei Province, one of them is being treated in a hospital in Guangdong Province and 15 of them have been discharged. Among those who are hospitalized, all are stable except one who is in critical condition. Moreover, a 77-year-old man from Hong Kong who usually resided in Wuhan was infected with COVID-19 and passed away after his treatment failed. WHETO, upon being informed of the case, immediately contacted his family in Guangzhou to offer assistance.
On 4 and 5 March, the SAR Government sent the first batch of four chartered flights to take Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province back to Hong Kong. The first batch of chartered flights mainly assisted Hong Kong residents stranded in Wuhan to return to Hong Kong. For those in areas outside Wuhan, priority was accorded to relatively urgent cases, including pregnant women, those who suffered from serious illnesses or were urgently in need of medical treatments in Hong Kong, and secondary school graduates who needed to sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE"). The SAR Government brought back a total of 469 Hong Kong residents from Hubei Province during this operation, including 379 Hong Kong residents in Wuhan and 90 Hong Kong residents and accompanying persons in other parts of Hubei Province who had an urgent need to return to Hong Kong. Those with an urgent need to return to Hong Kong included 14 pregnant women, 21 who suffered from serious illnesses or were urgently in need of medical treatments in Hong Kong, and 9 secondary school graduates who needed to sit for HKDSE.

When arranging for the return of Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province, the SAR Government took a series of measures to minimize public health risks and the risk of cross-infection. Staff of the Department of Health had conducted a health assessment beforehand for each and every person bound to take the chartered flights to Hong Kong to check whether they had any symptoms such as fever. The Hubei Provincial Government had also conducted verification to ascertain that all those who were allowed to board the flight were not confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19, and were not close contacts of confirmed patients. Before boarding, passengers had undergone four temperature checks to ensure that they were not having fever, or developing abnormal vital signs, respiratory tract symptoms or other signs of infectious diseases, and they were required to put on protective gears. Upon disembarkation from the plane, medical staff from the Department of Health briefed the returnees about the quarantine arrangements and checked their body temperature. They were then taken to the quarantine centre in Chun Yeung Estate by coaches to undergo 14 days of quarantine observation. They also took a laboratory test to ascertain whether they were infected with COVID-19.
On 16 March, the SAR Government announced that it would arrange the second batch of chartered flights to take Hong Kong residents stranded in Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan in Hubei Province back to Hong Kong. For Hong Kong residents in Hubei Province with relatively urgent needs, such as pregnant women, those who suffer from serious illnesses or are urgently in need of medical treatments in Hong Kong, or secondary school graduates who need to sit for HKDSE, the SAR Government has already arranged them to take the first batch of chartered flights to return to Hong Kong as far as possible. For Hong Kong residents with urgent needs who are still in Hubei Province, the SAR Government will discuss the matter with the Hubei Provincial Government and relevant local departments, and seek medical advice on whether they are fit for travel, with the aim of taking them back to Hong Kong on the second batch of chartered flights as far as practicable.

As for Hong Kong residents who are now in areas other than Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan with no urgent needs, the SAR Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the Hubei Provincial Government and make arrangements for them by batches according to priorities.

Relief measures of the Government

9. MS ELIZABETH QUAT (in Chinese): President, some members of the public have relayed that Hong Kong’s economy, after being dealt double blows last year by the Sino-United States trade conflicts and the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, and then being ravaged this year by the novel coronavirus epidemic, is now on its last legs. As the economic prospect is not optimistic and the tide of unemployment is coming inexorably, small and medium enterprises as well as grass-roots people are particularly bearing the brunt. Regarding the relief measures of the Government, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will implement the relief measures (including allowing employers in the severely hit industries to hold over payments of the provisional profits tax) which were proposed by the political party to which I belong, and implement these measures expeditiously under
an approach of special arrangements for special circumstances; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the funds under the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund set up by the Government may be used for the following purposes: (i) subsidizing small and medium enterprises in paying their employees' salaries, and (ii) providing subsidies to the employees whose income has been affected by the epidemic (especially those who are unable to cross the boundary daily to go to work because of the implementation of the infection prevention measures); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the grass-roots people cannot afford anti-epidemic items the prices of which have shot up due to the shortage of supply, and many of them lack anti-epidemic awareness, whether the Government will (i) step up anti-epidemic publicity among them and (ii) supply anti-epidemic items to them at reasonable prices; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as anti-epidemic items are currently in short supply, of the measures put in place to help trades and industries such as retail, property management and private healthcare to acquire anti-epidemic items for use by their frontline staff; and

(5) given that quite a number of members of the public are currently unable to acquire anti-epidemic items such as face masks, whether the Government will consider afresh adopting administrative measures or invoking its statutory power to prohibit hoarding of such items, to centralize the procurement and distribution of such items (including imposing restrictions on the selling prices and purchase quantities), and to make daily announcement on the stock of such items available on the market, so as to ensure that members of the public can acquire such items at reasonable prices?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Chinese): President, subsequent to the Government's announcement of four rounds of relief measures from August to December last year, the Financial Secretary delivered the 2020-2021 Budget on 26 February, in which he proposed
counter-cyclical measures amounting to more than $120 billion. The proposals help to boost our efforts to combat the epidemic, take care of people in need and bolster the economy. The Budget represents an unequivocal commitment by the Government to rise to the challenge of overcoming adversity and helping people in need. The measures also complement the initiatives set out under the $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund, approved by the Legislative Council on 21 February, providing comprehensive support for people from all walks of life.

My reply to the various parts of the question, prepared in consultation with relevant bureaux/departments, is as follows:

(1) The measures introduced in the Budget focus on "supporting enterprises, safeguarding jobs, stimulating the economy and relieving people's burden". They endeavour to meet the public's expectations for relief measures. The Budget proposed a cash payout of $10,000 to Hong Kong permanent residents aged 18 or above. It also proposed to reduce profits tax for the year of assessment 2019-2020 by 100%, subject to a ceiling of $20,000. The Government will implement these measures as soon as practicable upon the Legislative Council's approval of the Appropriation Bill 2020.

(2) The Anti-epidemic Fund will enhance the capability of the Government and relevant parties in combating the epidemic, and will provide assistance or relief to enterprises and members of the public that are hard hit by the present epidemic, or are affected by anti-epidemic measures. About $17 billion from the Fund will be used to implement 14 measures concerning the provision of assistance to affected enterprises and individuals. The enterprises and organizations that benefit from the respective measures may use the funds at their discretion, such as to settle employees' wages. Moreover, the Government will also use the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide a one-off special allowance to about 200,000 eligible low-income households under the Working Family Allowance and Student Financial Assistance.

(3) (i) At this critical moment, it is essential to step-up anti-epidemic publicity so as to dispel public concerns. Senior representatives from the Centre for Health Protection ("CHP")
of the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority conduct daily briefings covering issues such as the number of cases, their work on contact tracing and the latest quarantine measures. The Government has launched a thematic website <www.coronavirus.gov.hk>, an interactive map dashboard <chp-dashboard.geodata.gov.hk/covid-19/en.html> and a Telegram channel named "Hong Kong Anti-epidemic Information Channel" (t.me/HKFIGHTCOVID19) to furnish the public with the latest information in a timely manner. CHP has also issued guidelines, reminding the public to maintain personal and environmental hygiene, and disseminated relevant health information through various channels and media. Senior officials of the Government also hold press conferences to announce major government decisions and measures, and to update the public on key developments in combating the virus.

(3)(ii) and (4)

The Government appreciates that a sufficient and stable supply of personal protective equipment ("PPE") is critical for the prevention and control of the epidemic. We are also concerned about the requirement of masks by disadvantaged sectors of the community. However, as we operate in a free market economy, the short supply of and high demand for PPE, resulting in a rise in prices, is indeed a global phenomenon.

To maintain public services, the Government will continue its endeavour to source masks globally through all practical channels. On the other hand, to strengthen and stabilize the supply of PPE, the Government will adopt a multi-pronged approach, exercise greatest flexibility and act with the greatest determination.

The Government has been following up on suggestions to increase local production of masks, including the "Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme" introduced under the Anti-epidemic Fund. The Government has also contacted a
local innovation and technology firm, inviting them to increase their monthly output of masks of higher specifications. The Government will proactively support their implementation of plans, with a view to stabilizing local supply.

At the retail level, the Government has reached out to suppliers and retailers of different scales, appealing that they do not handle arriving supplies in a way that causes too much inconvenience to the public.

The Food and Health Bureau has been keeping in close contact with the private health care sector, with a view to understanding the supply of masks and PPE made available to them, and to rendering assistance as appropriate.

The Government also appeals to private enterprises and charitable organizations to donate masks to underprivileged communities, and will assist in coordination as far as practicable. A number of private organizations and charities have recently donated or indicated their wish to masks and disinfectants to the Government and non-government organizations. The Government will get in touch with relevant organizations according to the donors' wishes.

(5) According to the assessment of experts, the epidemic may persist for some time. As the supply of masks will remain tight in the short run, the Government considers that it pragmatic to strengthen supply and manage demand. The Government currently does not have any plans to mandatorily control the supply and prices of surgical masks through legislation, because this could adversely affect supply, or weaken our ability to make purchases from outside Hong Kong.

To address the supply shortage and problems faced by needy communities, we will continue to pursue the aforementioned measures, strengthening supply and encouraging donations to people in need.
Impacts of the epidemic on schools and parents of students

10. MR HUI CHI-FUNG (in Chinese): President, in view of the rampant novel coronavirus epidemic, the Education Bureau ("EDB") earlier on has extended for several times the class suspension arrangements for all primary and secondary schools, kindergartens and special schools in Hong Kong, and classes will resume on 20 April this year at the earliest. Regarding the impacts of the epidemic on schools and parents of students, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some parents of kindergarten students hold the view that since their children have not been able to go to school for the whole months of February and March, it will only be reasonable that they are not required to pay for these two months' tuition fees, whether EDB will consider paying the tuition fees for February and March on behalf of the parents of all kindergarten students in Hong Kong; if not, of the measures in place to assist parents with financial difficulties;

(2) of the details of the various support provided by EDB for schools since the outbreak of the epidemic, and whether EDB will provide subsidies to schools in need for paying expenses such as rents and salaries; and

(3) given that there are nearly 28 000 cross-boundary students in Hong Kong, how EDB ensures that the epidemic on the Mainland will not spread to the schools in Hong Kong through such students upon class resumption, in order to safeguard the health of all students and teachers?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President, under the novel coronavirus epidemic, to minimize the risk of the spread of the virus, and to ensure students' health and well-being by reducing social contacts, the Education Bureau has announced that all classes in Hong Kong have been temporarily suspended and classes will not resume before 20 April. The exact date of class resumption is subject to further assessment. During the period of class suspension, the Education Bureau has maintained contacts with schools to better
understand their operation and needs, join hands with them to tackle related problems and provide support as necessary.

My reply to Mr HUI Chi-fung's question is as follows:

(1) At present, about 90% of the kindergartens ("KGs") joining the kindergarten education scheme ("Scheme-KGs") and offering half-day programmes are free. For whole-day and long whole-day programmes, their tuition fees are at a low level, with the median tuition fees per instalment at about $820 in the 2019-2020 school year. For parents whose children are attending these KGs, tuition fee should not be a heavy burden. Families with financial needs may apply for fee remission through the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme ("KCFRS") under the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. Under KCFRS, although students are required to have attended school in the month concerned to be eligible for fee remission in that month, in view of the fact that the number of school days may be affected during the school suspension period, the Education Bureau and the Student Finance Office will handle the cases with flexibility so that students will continue to receive the subsidy. During the period of class suspension, KGs remain open to take care of students in need and maintain contacts with parents to provide information and support as necessary to support students' learning at home. As such, schools are in practice still providing services.

Overall speaking, to reduce parents' burden on educational expenses, a funding of about $900 million is allocated from the Anti-epidemic Fund newly set up by the Government to provide an additional $1,000 for each recipient of the Student Grant, i.e. an increase from $2,500 to $3,500 for the 2019-2020 school year, benefiting some 900,000 students, including KG students studying in both Scheme-KGs and non-Scheme-KGs.

In addition, to assist KGs in tackling operational difficulties and additional expenses caused by the epidemic, the Education Bureau has implemented the following measures:
(a) using the number of students in January this year as the basis for calculation of monthly subsidy for each Scheme-KG during the class suspension period to ensure that there will be no reduction of government subsidies due to absence or withdrawal of individual students during the period;

(b) providing an additional grant for all KGs (including Scheme-KGs and non-Scheme-KGs); the one-off subsidy for each KG ranges from $60,000 to $160,000, incurring an additional expenditure of about $120 million; and

(c) providing a one-off Special Anti-epidemic Grant for all KGs. Please refer to part (2) of the reply for details.

These measures have alleviated the pressure on operational expenditure faced by KGs, and have indirectly supported parents.

The cost structure of non-Scheme-KGs is not monitored by the Education Bureau, some of these KGs are even not non-profit making in nature. Payment of tuition fees by the Education Bureau on behalf of parents does not conform to the principles governing the use of public money. Nevertheless, if individual KGs, in particular those without government subsidies, need to reduce their tuition fees, the Education Bureau will expedite the processing of the applications to cater for the needs of KGs and parents.

(2) In order to help schools replenish their epidemic prevention equipment, clean their school premises and pay for other expenses related to epidemic prevention, the Education Bureau will deploy the existing resources to provide a one-off Special Anti-epidemic Grant to all schools offering full and formal curriculum (including KGs, public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") schools, English Schools Foundation schools, international schools, Private Independent Schools, private primary schools and private secondary day schools). The subsidy rate, ranging from $10,000 to $25,000 per school, depends on the type and size of the school. This will involve an additional expenditure of about $42 million, benefiting some 2200 schools.
Apart from that, the boarding sections of aided special schools have been operating to cater for students in need of boarding service during class suspension. To enhance the support for the boarding sections to guard against the epidemic and to reduce the risk of the spread of the novel coronavirus, the Education Bureau have already provided separately a one-off additional grant for 21 special schools with a boarding section. The amount of the special grant is determined by their approved boarding capacity, ranging from $50,000 to $150,000, incurring an additional expenditure estimated to be around $2.25 million.

During the period of class suspension, both primary and secondary schools are making use of different modes of learning (including e-learning) to maintain students' motivation and interest in learning and achieve the goal of "suspending classes without suspending learning", with a view to helping students continue learning at home. In accordance with the established mechanism and criteria, the Education Bureau will continue to provide public sector schools and DSS schools with subsidies, the amount of which will not be reduced because of the suspension of classes. As for private schools, which are market-driven, their operating expenses (such as salaries, rentals of school premises, etc.) are generally included in calculating their annual budgets and tuition fees. As far as we understand, the number of students in private schools during the period of class suspension has remained fairly stable. If individual schools wish to adjust their tuition fees due to the impact of the epidemic, we will process their applications as soon as possible.

As for KGs, the support measures launched by the Education Bureau have already been detailed at part (1) of my reply.

(3) As the epidemic is still evolving, the date of class resumption is subject to further assessment. The Education Bureau will act on medical advice and take into account the readiness of schools and the supply of protective equipment in the community in making further assessment. The Education Bureau will decide on the date of class resumption when there are sufficient conditions to do so, so as to safeguard students' health. As regards cross-boundary students, we will take into account the anti-epidemic measures at that time
(including the immigration control measures and quarantine arrangements, etc.), epidemic situation in neighbouring regions and medical advice when formulating the arrangements. We will continue to closely liaise with the relevant government departments, including the Centre for Health Protection, and make reference to the views of the representatives from the school sector, so as to draw up the anti-epidemic measures when classes resume.

Supply of face masks to non-governmental organizations

11. **DR HELENA WONG** (in Chinese): President, the Government stated on 1 February this year that before the occurrence of the novel coronavirus epidemic, the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") had supplied face masks produced by it to certain non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

   (1) of the quantity of face masks produced by CSD last year; among them, the quantity of those supplied to NGOs, with a breakdown by name of NGO; and

   (2) whether NGOs are required to pay for the face masks supplied; if so, of the criteria for determining the charges; if not, whether the Government has established a mechanism for monitoring the use of such face masks to prevent such face masks from being sold for profits or transferred to non-specified users; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

**SECRETARY FOR SECURITY** (in Chinese): President, filter masks produced by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") are mainly supplied to the Government Logistics Department ("GLD") for allocation to government departments. My reply to Dr Helena WONG's question is as follows:

   (1) In 2019, CSD produced about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average, which were mainly supplied to GLD. Moreover, some non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") such as social welfare organizations and schools procured a total of about 120 000 masks during the year from CSD, amounting to less than 1% of the total
production. CSD is unable to disclose details of NGOs which procured masks from it as third party information is involved.

In the light of the development of the novel coronavirus infection, there is a rapid increase in demand for filter masks from government departments. As such, CSD ceased to take orders other than from GLD since January 2020. Moreover, the mask production facilities in Lo Wu Correctional Institution gradually increased the production and has reached 24-hour operation. CSD has also recruited over 1 200 off-duty or retired CSD officers as volunteers to participate in the production of masks, increasing the production to about 2.5 million masks per month. Among them, 1.8 million masks are supplied to GLD, whereas the remaining 700 000 masks are set aside for distribution to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleaning service contractors through relevant departments (including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Housing Department, Government Property Agency, Marine Department, Customs and Excise Department (in respect of the Shenzhen Bay Port Hong Kong Port Area)).

(2) The price of the masks sold to NGOs is determined by cost, which is about $0.13 each. The handling of the masks after-sales rests upon NGOs which procured them.

Legislation against acts of spreading rumours

12. **MR WONG TING-KWONG** (in Chinese): President, it is learnt that some people have been spreading rumours on the Internet recently, claiming that there might be a shortage of essential livelihood commodities due to the novel coronavirus epidemic. As a result, some members of the public snapped up and stockpiled commodities such as rice and toilet paper, making the rumours come true. On the other hand, the Court of Final Appeal handed down a judgment on an appeal case in April 2019, ruling that as the acts of the respondents had not involved access to another person’s computer, the respondents had not committed the offence under section 161(1)(c) of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200) (i.e. the offence of obtaining access to a computer with a view to dishonest gain for himself or another). Some members of the legal sector have pointed out that as a result of the said judgment, the authorities might no longer be able to prosecute
rumour-mongers by invoking the said provision. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether any legislation is currently in place to prosecute persons who wilfully spread false information which is likely to give rise to panic among members of the public; if so, of the details, as well as the number of prosecutions instituted in the past five years and the penalties imposed on the convicted persons; and

(2) whether it will, on the premise of safeguarding freedom of speech, study the enactment of dedicated legislation to combat acts of wilful spread of such information; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President, Hong Kong residents enjoy the freedom of speech and communication, but these freedoms are not absolute. According to Article 30 of the Basic Law, the relevant authorities may inspect communication in accordance with legal procedures to meet the needs of public security or of investigation into criminal offences; while according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383), the exercise by anyone of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions as provided by law as necessary for (1) respect of the rights or reputations of others, or (2) the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.

Even though there is currently no specified criminal offence in Hong Kong targeting the deliberate dissemination of false information, the Internet is not an unreal world that is beyond the law. As far as the existing legislation in Hong Kong is concerned, most of the crime-prevention laws in the real world are applicable to the online world. Any acts inciting others to break the law, as long as they involve criminal offences, are regulated by the relevant laws regardless of whether they were committed online. According to section 89 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221), any person who aids, abets, counsels, or procures the commission by another person of any offence shall be guilty of the like offence. Under common law, inciting others to commit any substantive offence is also itself an offence. In short, any act of inciting others to commit an offence is already an offence.
As for "access to computer with criminal or dishonest intent" under section 161 of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200), it covers any person who obtains access to a computer (a) with intent to commit an offence; (b) with a dishonest intent to deceive; (c) with a view to dishonest gain for himself or another; or (d) with a dishonest intent to cause loss to another. Given that the facts of each case are different, there is no hard-and-fast rule on how to handle the relevant cases. When handling Internet-related cases, Police would determine the charge(s) to be laid with regard to the evidence of individual cases, and, where necessary, the Department of Justice ("DoJ")'s advice would also be sought before prosecution. In considering each case, DoJ would make relevant prosecutorial decisions based on the actual facts, evidence, the Prosecution Code, and the applicable laws and cases.

In view of the rapid developments associated with information technology, the computer, and the Internet, as well as the potential for them to be exploited for carrying out criminal activities, the Law Reform Commission has established in January 2019 a sub-committee to study the topic of cybercrime. In the course of its study, the sub-committee will identify the challenges arising from such rapid developments, review existing legislation and other relevant measures, examine relevant developments in other jurisdictions, and recommend possible law reforms (if any). We will pay close attention to the progress of the sub-committee's review.

As mentioned above, should any remarks published involve illegal acts, regardless of whether such acts occur online, as long as they involve criminal offences, they would be regulated by the relevant legislation. As messages could be disseminated rapidly through the Internet, and especially via social networks and communications software, this presents unique challenges to law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the proposal to introduce specific legislation targeting deliberate dissemination of rumours would involve many complicated and controversial issues, such as human rights protection, how to define certain speech as rumours, how to define a rumour's impact on the community and ascertain its degree of impact, how to prove that the persons who disseminated the false information did so deliberately with the intent to disrupt public order, and whether the introduction of a specified criminal offence would be the most effective measure in tackling the issue, etc. These questions must be considered and thoroughly discussed by the community.
As for the malicious act of spreading rumours when the city was fighting against the epidemic, leading to shortages of goods such as rice and toilet paper, the Government had issued a press release at once to condemn those rumour mongers. The Government had stressed that the measures in disease prevention and control would not affect the freight services between the Mainland and Hong Kong, and that the supply of food products remained normal and there was no shortage of food. There was no need for the public to worry. We appeal to members of the public to be vigilant against rumours and pay attention to information released by the Government, so as to avoid being misled by rumours.

Reduction, recovery and recycling of waste textiles

13. **MS CHAN HOI-YAN (in Chinese):** President, some environmentalists have relayed that at present, the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") has not actively promoted the reduction, recovery and recycling of waste textiles (including used clothes and other used textile products). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the disposal quantity and recovery rate of waste textiles, and (ii) the quantity and percentage of waste textiles recovered through the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme under the Home Affairs Department, in each of the past five years; if such figures are unavailable, whether the Government will gather them;

(2) whether EPD has set targets on (i) the quantity of reduction, (ii) the recovery rate and (iii) the recycling rate in respect of waste textiles; if so, of the details and the specific measures taken to achieve such targets; if not, whether EPD will set such targets;

(3) of the respective numbers of applications for subsidies made to the Environment and Conservation Fund (i) received and (ii) approved by the authorities in each of the past five years in respect of used clothes recovery projects, and the total amount of subsidies granted;

(4) as waste textiles currently are not the major waste items to be recovered under both the Community Recycling Network and the Community Green Stations, whether EPD will consider including
waste textiles in these two programmes or other programmes implemented by EPD;

(5) whether EPD will (i) collaborate with educational bodies to set up used clothes recovery boxes and organize recovery activities in schools, so as to increase the recovery quantity of waste textiles and enhance community engagement, and (ii) provide education and services relating to repairing clothes and recycling of used textile products, so as to encourage members of the public to reduce waste at source; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) whether EPD has put in place new measures to encourage more non-profit making organizations and community groups to take part in the recovery of used clothes, so as to promote community-wide participation?

SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (in Chinese): President, among the municipal solid waste ("MSW") generated in Hong Kong, food waste, waste paper and waste plastic have accounted for more than 75% of the total quantity. The waste reduction strategy of the Government is to put in more resources for reducing those wastes of larger quantities. To foster the environment-friendly culture of "use less, waste less" and enable green living to take root at the community level, the Government has been carrying out promotion of overall waste reduction through education and at the same time assisting local communities in the collection of various recyclables, including waste textiles.

While waste textiles account for only about 3% of MSW, the Government is implementing the "Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme" ("the Scheme") launched in 2006. Non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") which participate in the operation of the "Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks" regularly collect donated used clothes. All of the collected clothes and revenue generated from them have to be used for charity purpose. The current Scheme Managers are Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong), Christian Action, the Salvation Army and Conservancy Association. Apart from operating some of the banks by themselves, Scheme Managers have to allocate, in an open and fair manner, no less than 50% of the banks to other organizations, so as to encourage more NGOs to participate in the recycling of used clothes. At present, 192 "Community
Used Clothes Recycling Banks" are placed at appropriate locations in all districts under the Scheme.

The Government has established a Community Recycling Network across the territory. Through a wide range of recycling programmes and environmental education activities, the Network's Community Green Stations ("CGSs") encourage public participation in waste separation for recycling as well as reuse of suitable second hand items. They also disseminate messages of at-source waste separation and clean recycling. To promote a "use less, waste less" lifestyle, swap and charity donation events are held from time to time by CGSs to encourage proper use of resources, including used clothes.

Currently, quite a number of organizations in the community are providing clothing reuse services such as consignment service, online auctions and swap parties for used clothes. In recent years, some large fashion houses even provide shopping discounts for customers bringing in used clothes for recovery. Relevant information may be obtained via the Environmental Protection Department's ("EPD's") website on waste reduction <https://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/>. The public may also make use of EPD's "Hong Kong Second Hand Exchange" platform to exchange used clothes to avoid wastage.

On funding support, the Government has set up a $1 billion Recycling Fund to assist in upgrading the operational capabilities and efficiency of the recycling industry. This can help spur the sustainable development of the industry, thereby promoting waste recovery and recycling as well as turning waste into resources. A total of about HK$ 4.38 million has been granted under the Recycling Fund for two projects concerning, among others, the recovery of used clothes.

Three funding applications on upcycling of clothing were received under the Environment and Conservation Fund ("ECF") in the past five years. The applicants proposed to upcycle the used clothes into cloth bags, cloth dolls, pet clothing and accessories, etc. However, these funding applications were not supported as the proposals were considered not as good as other funding applications. In 2017, a total of HK$ 2.36 million was approved under ECF for three projects for the collection of resources/recyclables in the community. Apart from collection of common recyclables, the three projects also provide reuse, recycling and upcycling outlets for recyclables including used cloth.
The disposal quantity at landfills and recovery rate of textile waste between 2014 and 2018 are tabulated as below while compilation of relevant waste statistics for 2019 is underway:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile waste (1)</th>
<th>Disposal quantity at landfills (tonnes)</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total quantity recovered (tonnes) (2)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 200</td>
<td>4 800</td>
<td>4 200</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>6 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery rate (%)</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>(1) Among the textile waste, about 50% was non-clothing waste including towels, handkerchiefs, cloth dolls, cloth bags, quilts, towel blankets, cloth carpets and flat sheets, etc. while the rest were clothing such as inner and outer clothes, scarfs and gloves, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Including the quantity recycled locally and exported for recycling, but not including the quantity of direct reuse through community activities such as &quot;exchange of goods&quot;, consignment service, and online auctions for used clothes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quantity of used clothes collected under the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme managed by the Home Affairs Department between 2014 and 2019 are tabulated as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity collected under the Scheme (tonnes)</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>503</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues relating to the novel coronavirus epidemic

14. **MR WU CHI-WAI** (in Chinese): *President, since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus epidemic, demand for face masks in Hong Kong has remained high. Quite a number of members of the public and healthcare workers have demanded the Government to "close all border control points" to curb the spread of the epidemic to Hong Kong, but the Government has refused. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*
(1) whether it knows, in the past six months:

(i) the respective weekly quantities of (a) import, (b) export, (c) re-export and (d) net import of face masks effective in filtering viruses, and

(ii) the respective monthly quantities of such face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") and local private enterprises and, among such face masks, the respective quantities of those for local consumption and for export;

(2) as a healthcare team of the University of Hong Kong has projected that the epidemic in Hong Kong will reach its peak in May this year, of the Government's projections for the coming three months in respect of:

(i) the overall demand in Hong Kong for face masks effective in filtering viruses, and

(ii) the weekly quantities of such face masks which will be (a) imported into Hong Kong, and (b) produced respectively by CSD and local private enterprises;

(3) of the criteria currently adopted by the Government for determining the quantity of face masks effective in filtering viruses to be maintained in stock by the Government for internal use, and how many months' consumption that such quantity of face masks can meet;

(4) of the respective quantities of face masks that various government departments have (i) obtained from the Government Logistics Department, (ii) consumed, and (iii) stockpiled, since January this year; the respective projected quantities of face masks to be allocated to the various departments in the coming month;

(5) of the circumstances under which the Government will consider (i) distributing face masks free of charge to members of the public and those organizations in need (e.g. elderly centres or social
welfare organizations), and (ii) amending the Reserved Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 296) to specify face masks as a reserved commodity, so as to stabilize the supply of face masks;

(6) of the number of quarantine residential units which will be needed in the coming three months, as projected by the Government; whether the Government has (i) discussed with the Central People's Government on borrowing parts of the barracks of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison for use as isolation/quarantine facilities, and (ii) studied the construction of isolation/quarantine facilities on the site reserved for the Phase 2 development of the Hong Kong Disneyland; if so, of the details (including the costs and the commencement dates for works);

(7) given that although the Mainland authorities suspended on 2 and 7 February this year respectively the processing of applications by Mainland residents for travel endorsements and for business visit endorsements to visit Hong Kong, they will still approve applications for visiting Hong Kong with urgent purposes such as studying, seeking medical treatment and attending funerals, of (i) the weekly number of Mainland residents entering Hong Kong during the period from 1 January to 1 February this year, and (ii) the weekly number of Mainland residents entering Hong Kong since 2 February this year (with a tabulated breakdown by type of endorsements and specific reasons for visiting Hong Kong (e.g. seeking medical treatment and attending funeral)); and

(8) as the number of confirmed cases of the infection recorded in the Guangdong Province has been on the rise recently, whether the Government will consider further tightening the immigration arrangements to temporarily suspend the entry of all Mainlanders to Hong Kong; if not, of the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President, in view of the serious outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19"), it is the top priority of the Government and members of the community to step up our efforts in prevention and control of the disease. Since the outbreak, the Government
has been adhering to the three key principles of "responding promptly", "staying alert to the situation" and "working in an open and transparent manner". Based on science and experts' advice, we have continued to adopt the "containment" strategy and secured every line of defence with a view to achieving "early identification, early isolation and early treatment of the infected". The Government has introduced a host of specific and practicable measures in the areas of providing surgical masks and protective equipment, compulsory quarantine and reducing cross-boundary flow of people, etc.

In consultation with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, Security Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau and Hospital Authority ("HA"), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Mr WU Chi-wai is as follows:

(1) and (2)

In view of the latest development of the COVID-19 outbreak, both the Government and the market have been actively procuring masks globally and importing them from different places and through different channels into Hong Kong. The commodity classification list currently used for trade declarations is based on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System commonly adopted by the international community. There is no separate classification in the list for face masks or masks which can meet certain specific requirements. As such, no official statistics on weekly imports, exports, re-exports and net imports are available in this regard. However, the Government estimates that, through Hongkong Post's services alone, over 160 000 postal items containing masks have been delivered between the end of Lunar New Year and 6 March. As senders are not required to declare the detailed quantity of contents in their postal items, the Government does not have the actual number of masks imported through this channel. The Government expects that local demand for masks will remain keen in the near future. The volume of mask imports into Hong Kong is expected to remain high, but it is also subject to global supply, the latest demand of other places for masks, as well as export control imposed by certain countries and regions for such items.
As regards local production, as the Hong Kong manufacturing industry is not required to submit figures on its production output to the Government, we do not possess statistics on mask production by private enterprises. Under the Anti-epidemic Fund, the Government has launched the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme to facilitate the establishment of mask production lines in Hong Kong. The Subsidy Scheme will provide financial assistance to a maximum of 20 production lines, with each producing at least 500,000 masks per month. The Government will also procure up to 2 million masks from each production line each month for one year. Actual mask output under the Subsidy Scheme depends on the number of production lines, the timing they commence production, and their respective production capacities.

In 2019, the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") produced about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average, which were mainly supplied to the Government Logistics Department ("GLD"). As the outbreak of novel coronavirus, there is a rapid increase for demand of filter masks from government departments. As such, the mask production facilities in Lo Wu Correctional Institution gradually increased production since January 2020 and has reached 24-hour operation. CSD has also recruited over 1,200 off-duty or retired CSD officers as volunteers to participate in the production of masks, increasing the production to 2.5 million masks per month. Among them, 1.8 million masks are supplied to GLD, whereas the remaining 700,000 masks are set aside for distribution to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleaning service contractors through relevant departments (including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Housing Department, Government Property Agency, Marine Department and Customs and Excise Department (in respect of the Shenzhen Bay Port Hong Kong Port Area).

CSD is actively striving to increase the number of production lines so as to further increase the mask production as early as possible.

(3) In support of the Government's response plan for infectious diseases, GLD maintains a stock of 10 million masks to support the operational needs of relevant bureaux and departments. With the
development of the outbreak, the usage of masks by government departments has significantly increased. Based on broad estimates, the current stock of masks kept by GLD can last for about two months for meeting the operational needs of government departments.

HA has established guidelines on the use of personal protective equipment ("PPE") for medical procedures and workplaces of different risk levels with stringent infection control measures and training, allowing frontline health care staff of various positions to understand and get familiar with infection control measures required for different medical procedures, including on the use of suitable PPE. Based on HA's usage as of 13 March, the stockpile of surgical mask in HA is adequate for about two months' consumption, while stockpile of N95 respirators is adequate for about one month's consumption. In view of the pandemic, HA expects the demand for PPE will continue to increase in the coming months. HA will continue to monitor the situation and endeavour to expedite the procurement of PPE so as to ensure that adequate PPE is provided to frontline health care staff for patient care.

(4) All government departments have stepped up efforts to reduce their demand for masks. The masks are now predominantly used for discharge of duties related to preventing and controlling the outbreak, as well as essential and emergency services provided by other government departments. In light of the development of the outbreak, GLD will comply strictly with the Government's internal guidelines on distribution and accord priority to frontline staff participating in quarantine-related work and execution of quarantine orders, including medical and port health staff of the Department of Health ("DH"), and those who maintain provision of essential public services.

(5) The Government has provided 1 million masks for the staff of subvented, contract, self-financing and private residential service units (including residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities licensed by the Social Welfare Department) so as to assist them to provide continuous services. Also, the Government has received donations of masks
and sanitizing items from some groups and individuals for distribution to those in need. According to the wishes of donors, the Government will distribute these items to day care service units, high-risk patients (e.g. the elderly and pregnant women) and medical workers through HA, as well as elderly and needy households through the major charities and non-governmental organizations.

As the supply of masks continues to be tight in the short run, the Government considers that it is more pragmatic and practicable to strive to increase the supply and manage the demand. The Government currently does not have any plans to mandatorily control the supply and prices of masks through legislation, because this could be counterproductive and possibly adversely affect supply, or lower our ability to procure masks from other places. To address the problem at source, we will continue to increase supply and appeal for donation of masks to those in need through various channels in order to meet the needs of society and address the problem of inadequate supply.

(6) Currently, there are three quarantine centres for close contacts who may have been exposed to the risk of contracting COVID-19 but are nonetheless asymptomatic, namely the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan, the Heritage Lodge at the Jao Tsung-I Academy and Chun Yeung Estate, Fo Tan, providing about 1,250 units. We are also making preparations to make available more units in Chun Yeung Estate for quarantine purpose. It is expected that an addition of nearly 400 units will be available soon.

In view of the development of the outbreak, the Government has been actively looking for suitable sites and setting up more quarantine facilities as soon as possible since late January. It is estimated that 88 retrofitted units at the Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre ("JPC Centre") at Pat Heung, Yuen Long can be put into use shortly. On the other hand, quarantine facilities are being constructed through the application of the modular integrated construction method at the Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan, the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre, the JPC Centre and a government site at Penny's Bay, providing at least 1,000 units as quarantine facilities in total. It is expected that the units can be
completed and put into use from March to July by phase. In addition, we are following up with the Walt Disney Company, which has agreed to explore using another site at Penny's Bay reserved for future tourism development for constructing quarantine facilities. As regards the barracks of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison, they are used for defence purposes, and the HKSAR Government has no plan to seek any change.

In view of the rapid development of the COVID-19 outbreak, it is difficult to accurately estimate the demand for quarantine facilities. The Government will closely monitor the latest development and make corresponding deployment in view of the situation.

(7) The weekly numbers of arrivals of Mainland visitors from 1 January to 1 February 2020 are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (Monday to Sunday)</th>
<th>Number of arrivals of Mainland visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 January to 5 January (5 days in total)</td>
<td>414 291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 January to 12 January</td>
<td>693 689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 January to 19 January</td>
<td>788 072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 January to 26 January</td>
<td>506 607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 January to 1 February (6 days in total)</td>
<td>129 711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The weekly numbers of arrivals of Mainland visitors with breakdown by type of endorsements/travel documents from 2 February to 10 March 2020 are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (Monday to Sunday)</th>
<th>Number of arrivals of Mainland visitors</th>
<th>By type of Endorsements and Other Travel Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Endorsement for Individual Visit</td>
<td>Endorsement for Group Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 February to 9 February</td>
<td>11 715</td>
<td>2 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 February to 16 February</td>
<td>5 273</td>
<td>5 [1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### By type of Endorsements and Other Travel Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (Monday to Sunday)</th>
<th>Number of arrivals of Mainland visitors</th>
<th>Endorsement for Individual Visit</th>
<th>Endorsement for Group Visit</th>
<th>Endorsement for Business Visit</th>
<th>Endorsement for Visiting Relatives</th>
<th>Other Endorsement</th>
<th>Chinese Passport</th>
<th>Other Travel Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 February to 23 February</td>
<td>4,443</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;(3)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,392</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 February to 1 March</td>
<td>5,423</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;(4)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,396</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3,905</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March to 8 March</td>
<td>6,853</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;(5)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;(6)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4,741</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 March to 10 March (2 days in total)</td>
<td>1,861</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;(7)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. Including one Mainland visitor arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, and four Mainland private air crew members arriving from the Mainland and disembarking at the Hong Kong International Airport who were exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine arrangement.

2. Including two Mainland visitors arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port and one Mainland visitor arriving from abroad via the Hong Kong International Airport.

3. Including one Mainland private air crew member arriving from the Mainland and disembarking at the Hong Kong International Airport who was exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine arrangement.

4. Including two Mainland visitors arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port.

5. Including one Mainland visitor arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port.

6. Including three Mainland visitors arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, and four Mainland private air crew members arriving from the Mainland and disembarking at Hong Kong International Airport who were exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine arrangement.

7. Including one Mainland visitor arriving from Macao via the control point at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port.

8. The Immigration Department ("ImmD") does not maintain other breakdown statistics mentioned in the question.

9. Since late January, the Government has actively implemented various measures to reduce the flow of people between the Mainland...
and Hong Kong in the light of the latest situation. The effect of these measures is remarkable. These measures include:

(a) With effect from midnight of 27 January, non-Hong Kong residents from Hubei Province and persons who visited the Hubei Province in the past 14 days are not be permitted to enter Hong Kong until further notice. As at 15 March, ImmD had refused entry of over 2,412 visitors concerned at various control points;

(b) With effect from midnight of 30 January, the passenger clearance services of six control points (namely the West Kowloon Station, Hung Hom Station, China Ferry Terminal, Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal, Sha Tau Kok and Man Kam To) were suspended until further notice;

(c) With effect from midnight of 4 February, the passenger clearance services of four control points (namely Lo Wu, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Lok Ma Chau (Huanggang) and Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal) were suspended until further notice;

(d) With immediate effect on 5 February, the passenger clearance services of Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the Ocean Terminal were suspended until further notice. The 10 control points which were suspended since 30 January and 4 February remain closed. The passenger clearances services are maintained only at the Airport, Shenzhen Bay Control Point and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port;

(e) With effect from 8 February, apart from exempted persons, DH issues quarantine orders to all people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland or those who have been to the Mainland in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong (including Hong Kong residents, Mainland residents and visitors from other places). As the period of compulsory quarantine would be 14-day, arrivals holding a visa with validity of less than 14 days would be denied entry; and
(f) In the light of the latest development of the novel coronavirus infection, DH has progressively, from late February onwards, issued quarantine orders to people who have been to the affected areas (including Korea, Iran, Schengen Area and Hokkaido of Japan) in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong. From midnight of 19 March, DH will issue quarantine orders to people who have been to the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland and Egypt in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong. As the period of compulsory quarantine would be 14-day, arrivals holding a visa with validity of less than 14 days would be denied entry.

In addition, since 28 January, the National Immigration Administration ("NIA") has suspended the application, approval and issuance of the group visit endorsements and the endorsements under the Individual Visit Scheme (including the "one trip per week" endorsements) for Mainland residents to travel to Hong Kong and Macao with immediate effect until further notice. In view of the HKSAR Government's imposition of the mandatory quarantine on people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland, NIA also suspended the processing of the business visit endorsements for Mainland residents to travel to Hong Kong with effect from 7 February.

From the passenger traffic figures, the number of daily passenger trips arriving Hong Kong was about 19,503 on average from 8 February (i.e. from which the measure for issuing quarantine orders to all people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland or those who have been to the Mainland in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong has taken effect) to 15 March 2020, which has significantly reduced by 91% in comparison with the figures prior to the implementation of the measures for managing control points and reducing the flow of people (i.e. 217,065 passenger trips on 26 January). Among them, about 82% were Hong Kong residents (16,045 passenger trips daily on average), whereas 5% were Mainland residents (895 passenger trips daily on average). The HKSAR Government will continue to monitor the latest situation and make necessary adjustment having regard to the advice of the experts as well as the actual situation in Hong Kong.
Veterinary and pet shop services

15. **MR CHAN HAK-KAN** (in Chinese): President, regarding veterinary and pet shop services, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of veterinary surgeons registered under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529), (ii) the ratio of registered veterinary surgeons to pets, and (iii) the number of veterinary surgeons convicted of contravening Cap. 529 and the punishments imposed on them, in the past five years;

(2) whether the authorities currently deploy officials to conduct inspections on veterinary clinics on a regular basis; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; of the reasons why the authorities do not keep, on a routine basis, records on the number of veterinary clinics and related information; whether the authorities will change such practice; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it knows the following information in each of the past five years:

(i) the numbers of complaints against veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics received by the Veterinary Surgeons Board ("VSB"), and the major subject matters of such complaints;

(ii) the respective numbers of complaints referred to the Preliminary Investigation Committee and the Inquiry Committee of VSB for follow up actions;

(iii) regarding those complaints for which investigations were completed, of the average, longest and shortest time taken by VSB to conclude the investigations; and

(iv) the number of veterinary surgeons found guilty of professional misconduct or neglect, and the punishments imposed on them;

(4) given that while some veterinary surgeons have been complained for several times and found guilty of professional misconduct or neglect, VSB currently only publishes on its website the orders made within
one year and the findings of disciplinary inquiries made within three years by the Inquiry Committee, whether the authorities will suggest VSB to modify such practice and publish on its website the names of all non-compliant veterinary surgeons and the veterinary clinics concerned for public inspection; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as some members of the public have pointed out that the complainants have to provide substantive supporting evidence when lodging complaints with VSB, but the veterinary clinics do not provide the medical records and X-ray films of animals to their owners and, in some cases, even do not return the dead bodies of the animals to their owners, whether the authorities know if VSB has required veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics to provide the medical records of animals to their owners upon their requests; if VSB has, of the details; if VSB has not, the reasons for that; among the complaints received by VSB in the past three years, of the respective numbers of those (i) having problems of the provision of supporting evidence and (ii) which could not be followed up due to such problems;

(6) as some members of the public have relayed that the operation of veterinary clinics (including the procedures on operations, the care given to animals staying overnight at the clinics and treatment of the dead bodies of animals) lacks transparency, of the authorities' respective improvement measures;

(7) as many members of the public have relayed that the fees for veterinary services are high and not clearly set out, whether the authorities know if VSB will require veterinary clinics to provide their customers with a schedule of fees and charges, so that animal owners can make informed choices in the selection of services; if VSB will, of the details; if not, whether VSB will consider making public the standard fees and charges for various types of medical consultation and treatments, laboratory tests and operations for reference of members of the public;

(8) as some members of the public have relayed that some animal owners cannot afford private veterinary services which are
expensive, whether the authorities will consider afresh (i) offering subsidies to non-profit-making bodies for the provision of inexpensive veterinary services, or (ii) introducing medical vouchers for animals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(9) given that this Council has passed amendments to Cap. 529, one of which is to enlarge the membership of VSB from 10 to 19 members (with six of the seats to be filled by registered veterinary surgeons elected by members of the profession), and that the authorities have made subsidiary legislation on the election of the six members, of the confirmed date of the election and, with the increase in the number of members, the anticipated reduction in the time taken on average by VSB in handling a complaint; and

(10) as it has been reported that an incident occurred in Tai Po earlier on in which a groomer of a pet shop was alleged to have abused dogs, of the measures put in place by the authorities to step up the monitoring of such type of practitioners in the trade; the number of complaints against pet shops received by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in the past five years and the follow-up actions taken?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President, my reply to the question is as follows:

(1) According to the information of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong ("VSB"), the number of registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong in the past five years (as at the end of each year) is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of registered veterinary surgeons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1 049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the Thematic Household Survey Report No. 66 of the Census and Statistics Department, a total of around 221,100 dogs and 184,100 cats were being kept by households in Hong Kong in 2018. According to VSB's number of registered veterinary surgeons in 2018, the veterinarian-to-pet (dog and cat) ratio of that year is around 1:410.

According to section 16(1) of the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) ("the Ordinance"), no person shall practise veterinary surgery or provide a veterinary service in Hong Kong unless the person is registered with VSB and a holder of a practising certificate which is currently in force. According to the VSB Secretariat's information, there were two convicted cases for contravening the relevant provision in the past five years, sentenced to 100 hours' community service order and six weeks of imprisonment respectively.

(2) VSB is a statutory authority established under the Ordinance and is responsible for the regulation of the practice of veterinary surgery, the registration of veterinary surgeons, and the disciplinary control of the professional activities of registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong. All registered veterinary surgeons have received professional training before practising in Hong Kong, and obtained the qualifications for registration specified under the Ordinance, and are required to comply with the Ordinance and the Code of Practice for the Guidance of Registered Veterinary Surgeons ("CoP") promulgated by VSB. Although VSB does not keep the number of veterinary clinics or inspect them regularly, the CoP includes operational requirements of the relevant clinics. For instance, Part E of the CoP stipulates the professional relationships between veterinary surgeons and clients, and paragraph 25 also sets out the requirements of professional premises and equipment, etc. The Ordinance and the Rules of the Veterinary Surgeons Board (Disciplinary Proceedings) ("Rules") have also provided for the complaint mechanism and the disciplinary proceedings relating to the disciplinary offences of registered veterinary surgeons. Please refer to part (3) of the reply below for details.
Moreover, in order to promote the message of responsible pet ownership, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") also provides a list of veterinary clinics on its thematic website <pets.gov.hk> for public reference.\(^{(1)}\)

(3) All complaints received by VSB will be referred to the Preliminary Investigation Committee ("PIC") for investigation and decision on whether to advise VSB to conduct disciplinary inquiries. VSB will then consider whether to refer the complaints to the Inquiry Committee ("IC") for conducting disciplinary inquiries.

In the past five years, the numbers of complaints about registered veterinary surgeons received by VSB, cases referred to IC (as at end February 2020), and cases found substantiated upon inquiry hearings are tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of complaints received</th>
<th>Number of cases referred to IC</th>
<th>Number of inquiry hearings completed*</th>
<th>Number of cases found substantiated upon inquiry hearings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

* The number includes those uncompleted cases in the past.

Majority of the complaints received were against the result or process of diagnosis and treatment or surgery by registered veterinary surgeons. Amongst all the cases received and completed in the past five years, the shortest processing time was about one month, the longest one was about three years and the average processing time was around nine months.

(1) The list of veterinary clinics includes those agreed to be listed for public access on the Internet.
Over the past five years, a total of 27 complaint cases in relation to the conviction of disciplinary offences of misconduct or neglect in a professional respect of veterinary surgeons were found substantiated by IC after conducting inquiry hearings with the following orders made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Order</th>
<th>Number of cases involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Removal of name(s) of relevant veterinary surgeon(s) from the register for three months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimand and compulsory participation in continuing professional development programme or professional seminar</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory participation in continuing professional development programme</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) The relevant arrangement was decided by VSB when reviewing the matter of publishing disciplinary orders in 2017. Later on, VSB discussed such arrangement again in 2019, and decided to add a hyperlink onto its website that links to the website of the Government Gazette, so as to facilitate members of public to search disciplinary orders made by VSB. The relevant hyperlink has already been added onto the web page of "Disciplinary Inquiries of VSB".

(5) VSB has established the CoP as the general guidelines of conduct for the registered veterinary surgeons. Members of the public could make complaints to VSB if there is suspected professional misconduct or neglect by veterinary surgeons. Relevant requirements have been stipulated in the CoP(2) in regard to the matters of provision of medical records to owners.

(2) Paragraph 17.7 of the CoP states "In the event the owner or agent of the owner of an animal in respect of which a registered veterinary surgeon is in possession or control of medical records, including (without limitation) clinical notes, radiological films and/or test results, requests to be provided with a copy of those records or a particular item thereof, the veterinary surgeon should comply with the request in a timely manner. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a veterinary surgeon may make compliance with such a request contingent upon the payment of a fee to cover the reasonable administration and copying costs incurred or to be incurred in complying with the request."
Over the past three years, a total of 14 complaints in relation to the refusal of registered veterinary surgeons to provide the complainants with medical records were received by VSB. If complainants fail to obtain the medical records of the relevant animals for their cases, VSB will request the relevant information from the veterinary surgeons or veterinary clinics concerned. If the veterinary surgeon concerned does not provide the relevant medical records as requested by VSB, thus adversely affecting the progress of processing the complaint case, VSB may issue charges against the veterinary surgeon concerned for failing to provide the relevant information to VSB in accordance with paragraph 18.2 of the CoP. Of the inquiry hearings conducted in the past three years, there was no registered veterinary surgeon being charged for refusal to provide medical records to VSB or owners.

(6) and (7)

Paragraph 17.4 of the CoP has stipulated the guidelines on communication between veterinary surgeons and clients, the relevant details are as follows:

"A client should always be offered the best option available for treatment or surgery, but lesser options may meet the client's needs. Anticipated outcomes of the various options available must always be fully discussed with the client before treatment, with cost estimates. It is essential that the client is kept fully briefed about changes to both prognosis and costs by regular communication with the attending veterinary surgeon."

Furthermore, paragraph 17.5 of the CoP has stipulated the guidelines on providing a schedule of fees and charges by the veterinary clinics: "Veterinary surgeons shall make available to their clients or prospective clients a schedule of their normal fees and charges for consultations, routine tests and routine procedures, which may be

(3) Paragraph 18.2 of the CoP states "A registered veterinary surgeon has an obligation to assist VSB in carrying out its statutory duty of determining whether to refer a complaint alleging a disciplinary offence to an inquiry committee for decision by providing to VSB on request information and documents, including medical records, and test results, radiographs, ultrasound films and Magnetic Resonance Imaging images, of relevance to the complaint."
done by way of a notice displayed at the veterinary surgeon's clinic containing the schedule or stating that the schedule is available on request.

(8) The number of registered veterinary surgeons continues to rise in recent years, currently there are more than 1,000 registered veterinary surgeons and over 140 veterinary clinics. As mentioned in part (1) of the reply above, the veterinarian-to-pet (dog and cat) ratio in Hong Kong is around 1:410 in 2018, which is far below the ratios of other places (i.e. Singapore (1:2,543), the United Kingdom (1:2,374) and the United States (1:3,072)) included in the report of consultancy study on veterinary profession in Hong Kong published by VSB in 2017. The veterinarian-to-pet ratio is a common indicator for assessing the overall situation of veterinary services: the lower the ratio, the greater the number of veterinary surgeons. As such, animal owners should be able to find suitable veterinary services in Hong Kong for their pets. Also, AFCD has been subventing Animal Welfare Organisations (such as the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) in support of their work on safeguarding animal welfare, including the provision of veterinary services.

(9) The Secretary for Food and Health has made the Veterinary Surgeons Board (Election of Members) Regulation ("the Election Regulation") under section 28(1A) of the Ordinance as amended by the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2015. The Election Regulation was tabled at the Legislative Council on 13 November 2019 and the negative vetting process had been completed. According to the current timetable, we plan to commence the election procedures starting from the second quarter of this year, and expect that the newly constituted VSB comprising appointed and elected members will come into operation in the fourth quarter; however, due to the current development of the COVID-19 situation, the relevant timetable might be affected.

According to the amended Ordinance, the composition of VSB will be expanded from 10 to 19 members, and an Assessment Panel will be formed by not more than 12 registered veterinary surgeons and not more than 6 other persons. PIC and IC will be formed by members of VSB and Assessment Panel, therefore there will be more
candidates to become members of PIC and IC handling the complaints received. We will review the progress of complaint processing by VSB in due course after the commencement of the Ordinance.

(10) Although operating pet grooming business does not require any licence from AFCD, AFCD conducts regular inspections to relevant shops to monitor any illegal animal trading or suspected cases of cruelty to animals. Upon the receipt of relevant complaints or detection of the aforementioned situation during inspections, AFCD will conduct investigations and take corresponding actions, which include conducting joint operations with the Police and initiating prosecution where appropriate.

The number of complaints in relation to pet shops received by AFCD over the past five years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hard-surface soccer pitches under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

16. **DR PIERRE CHAN** (in Chinese): *President, regarding the hard-surface soccer pitches under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of the three types of soccer pitches, i.e. (a) 5-a-side hard-surface soccer pitches, (b) 7-a-side hard-surface soccer pitches and (c) 11-a-side hard-surface soccer pitches, and set out the following information on each soccer pitch by type of soccer pitch in separate tables of the same format:

(i) the District Council district in which it is located,
(ii) name (for venues with more than one soccer pitch, provide also the relevant names (e.g. "Soccer Pitch No. 1")),

(iii) whether it is located indoors or outdoors,

(vi) size (length and width) (metres),

(v) utilization rate in 2018,

(vi) utilization rate in 2019,

(vii) whether or not the design is in compliance with the standards of the Federation Internationale de Football Association ("FIFA") for international matches, and

(viii) whether or not the design is in compliance with the standards of FIFA for non-international matches;

(2) of the method for calculating the utilization rates of hard-surface soccer pitches;

(3) of (a) the average number and percentage of cases in which hirers failed to take up booking sessions in respect of each of the aforesaid three types of hard-surface soccer pitches, and (b) the number of complaints received by LCSD about suspected transfer of user permits or approval letters by hirers of hard-surface soccer pitches, in each of the past three years, together with statistics on (i) the default notice issued and (ii) the temporary suspension of the eligibility of the bodies concerned for priority venue booking, in respect of such cases by LCSD; and

(4) whether there are on-site staff on duty in all hard-surface soccer pitches at present; if not, of the number of occasions, in each of the past three years, on which LCSD deployed officers to those venues without on-site staff on duty for the purpose of verifying the identity of hirers?
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Chinese): President, my reply to the question raised by Dr Pierre CHAN is as follows:

(1) and (2)

There are 234 outdoor hard-surface soccer pitches managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"), including 55 5-a-side soccer pitches and 165 7-a-side soccer pitches as well as 14 7-a-side cum 5-a-side soccer pitches. There are only 11-a-side natural turf and artificial turf soccer pitches. No 11-a-side hard-surface soccer pitches are provided. Hard-surface soccer pitches are open to public use when they are not taken up by booking and therefore the usage rate of such facilities is not available. Information about each hard-surface soccer pitch is set out at Annex. Besides, the multi-purpose arenas of the sports centres managed by LCSD, including Ma On Shan Sports Centre, Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre, Tseung Kwan O Sports Centre, Kowloon Park Sports Centre and Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park Sports Centre are available for block booking by organizations for futsal.

(3) and (4)

LCSD received nine complaints about touting activities involving hard-surface soccer pitches in the past three years. Since on-site staff is not available at all the hard-surface soccer pitches, LCSD verifies the identity of hirers/hirer organizations of hard-surface soccer pitches mainly through venue inspections. Besides, LCSD does not require its venue staff to keep record in relation to no-show of all outdoor hard-surface soccer pitches. Hence, the average no-show rate of these facilities is not available. LCSD staff inspected hard-surface soccer pitches (including venues without regular on-site staff) at least 1 600 times in the past three years. No unauthorized transfer of user permit/letter of approval was found during the inspections. Hence, LCSD had neither served default notice to any hirer organization nor suspended priority booking status of any organization accordingly.
Annex

List of Hard-surface Soccer Pitches of LCSD

(a) 5-a-side Hard-surface Soccer Pitches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Council District</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Size (metre)</th>
<th>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for Non-international Matches(^{(1)})</th>
<th>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for International Matches(^{(1)})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(length x width)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hong Kong Island</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Western</td>
<td>Blake Gardens</td>
<td>25 x 15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Li Sing Street Playground</td>
<td>23 x 12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sai Woo Lane Playground</td>
<td>30 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern</strong></td>
<td>Sheung On Street (1) Playground</td>
<td>30 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheung On Street (2) Playground</td>
<td>30 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tin Chiu Street Playground</td>
<td>20 x 15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern</strong></td>
<td>Stanley Promenade</td>
<td>38 x 20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kowloon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowloon City</td>
<td>Ede Road Playground</td>
<td>32 x 17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoi Sham Park</td>
<td>(1) 42 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoi Sham Park</td>
<td>(2) 42 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kwun Tong</strong></td>
<td>Hoi Bun Road Park</td>
<td>37 x 30</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lam Tin Park</td>
<td>33 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lam Wah Street Playground</td>
<td>36 x 30</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sam Ka Tsuen Recreation Ground</td>
<td>29 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sau Nga Road Playground</td>
<td>43 x 30</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shun Lee Tsuen Playground</td>
<td>32 x 20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sham Shui Po</strong></td>
<td>Tung Chau Street Park</td>
<td>30 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wong Tai Sin</strong></td>
<td>Choi Hung Road Playground</td>
<td>39 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shek Ku Lung Road (1) Playground</td>
<td>25 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shek Ku Lung Road (2) Playground</td>
<td>25 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsz Wan Shan Estate Service Reservoir Playground</td>
<td>42 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Council District</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Size (metre) (length x width)</td>
<td>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for Non-international Matches&lt;sup&gt;(1)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for International Matches&lt;sup&gt;(1)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Territories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands</td>
<td>Tung Chung Road Soccer Pitch</td>
<td>28 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwai Tsing</td>
<td>Central Kwai Chung Park</td>
<td>30 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Chung Mei Road Temporary Playground</td>
<td>30 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>30 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lai King Soccer Pitch</td>
<td>27 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liu To Road Playground</td>
<td>33 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tai Lin Pai Road Playground</td>
<td>33 x 21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tai Wo Hau Road Playground</td>
<td>36 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tai Wo Hau Road South Playground</td>
<td>30 x 18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsing Wah Playground</td>
<td>26 x 17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wing Kei Road 5-a-side Soccer Pitch</td>
<td>29 x 19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yip Shing Street Playground</td>
<td>28 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Kwu Tung Playground</td>
<td>30 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tai Tau Leng Playground</td>
<td>30 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>30 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>30 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sai Kung</td>
<td>Wai Man Road Playground</td>
<td>30 x 20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sha Tin</td>
<td>A Kung Kok Playground</td>
<td>25 x 15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chui Tin Street Soccer Pitch</td>
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<td>Hung Mui Kuk Road Playground</td>
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<td>30 x 18</td>
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<td>Tai Wai Soccer Pitch</td>
<td>38 x 20</td>
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<td>Wo Liu Hang Playground</td>
<td>34 x 21</td>
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<td>Tai Po</td>
<td>Fung Yuen Playground</td>
<td>25 x 16</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wan Tau Kok Playground</td>
<td>28 x 16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>
### Legislative Council

**District Council District** | **Venue** | **Size (metre) (length x width)** | **Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for Non-international Matches**(1) | **Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for International Matches**(1)
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Tsuen Wan | Kwok Shui Road Park | 36 x 18 | Yes | No
| Shing Mun Valley Park | 41 x 25 | Yes | Yes
| Tsuen King Circuit Recreation Ground and Rest Garden | 30 x 20 | Yes | No
Tuen Mun | Butterfly Beach Park | 28 x 20 | Yes | No
Yuen Long | Kik Yeung Road 5-a-side Football Pitch (1) | 28 x 18 | Yes | No
| Kik Yeung Road 5-a-side Football Pitch (2) | 28 x 18 | Yes | No
| Shui Mei Village Playground | 25 x 15 | No | No
| Tin Ho Road Playground | 26 x 16 | Yes | No
| Tin Shui Wai Park | 40 x 24 | Yes | Yes
| Yuen Long Park | 30 x 23 | Yes | No

Note:

1. Fédération Internationale de Football Association ("FIFA") sets the standards for 5-a-side soccer pitches. The length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line. The standards of the dimensions of the pitch for non-international matches and international matches are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>Length of pitch (touch line)</em></th>
<th><em>Width of pitch (goal line)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-international matches</td>
<td>25 m to 42 m</td>
<td>16 m to 25 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International matches</td>
<td>38 m to 42 m</td>
<td>20 m to 25 m</td>
</tr>
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2. 7-a-side Hard-surface Soccer Pitches

### District Council District

**District Council District** | **Venue** | **Court Size (metre) (length x width)**
--- | --- | ---
Hong Kong Island | Blake Gardens | 51 x 15
| Conduit Road Service Reservoir Playground | 38 x 24
| Forbes Street Temporary Playground | 46 x 26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Council District</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Court Size (metre) (length x width)</th>
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<td>Kennedy Town Service Reservoir Playground</td>
<td>46 x 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
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<td>62 x 27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>46 x 27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King George V Memorial Park, Hong Kong</td>
<td>56 x 31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pok Fu Lam Road Playground</td>
<td>34 x 21</td>
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<td>Eastern</td>
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<td>Chai Wan Park (1)</td>
<td>53 x 33</td>
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<td>Chai Wan Park (2)</td>
<td>67 x 48</td>
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<td>Heng Fa Chuen Playground</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Tin Soccer Pitch</td>
<td>62 x 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shek Po Tsuen Playground</td>
<td>38 x 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheung Tsuen Park</td>
<td>64 x 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shui Pin Tsuen Playground</td>
<td>58 x 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tin Sau Road Park</td>
<td>77 x 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tung Tau Industrial Area Playground</td>
<td>(1) 62 x 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) 62 x 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wang Toi Shan Playground</td>
<td>53 x 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuen Long Park</td>
<td>61 x 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

(2) FIFA does not set any standard for 7-a-side soccer pitch.
### (c) 7-a-side cum 5-a-side Hard-surface Soccer Pitches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Council District</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Size (metre) (length x width)</th>
<th>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for Non-international Matches(^{l(1)})</th>
<th>Court size meeting FIFA's Standards for International Matches(^{l(1)})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hong Kong Island</strong></td>
<td><strong>Southern</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wong Chuk Hang Recreation Ground</td>
<td>(1) 7-a-side: 67 x 33 5-a-side: 40 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) 7-a-side: 67 x 33 5-a-side: 40 x 22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kowloon</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kwun Tong</strong></td>
<td>7-a-side: 76 x 45 5-a-side: 40 x 23 (2 pitches)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MacPherson Playground</td>
<td>7-a-side: 71 x 42 5-a-side: 41 x 25 (2 pitches)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sycamore Playground</td>
<td>7-a-side: 64 x 30 5-a-side: 40 x 20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Territories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kwai Tsing</strong></td>
<td>7-a-side: 64 x 35 5-a-side: 42 x 23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hing Fong Road Playground</td>
<td>(1) 7-a-side: 64 x 35 5-a-side: 42 x 23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) 7-a-side: 64 x 35 5-a-side: 42 x 23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kwai Chung Sports Ground</td>
<td>(1) 7-a-side: 66 x 39 5-a-side: 41 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) 7-a-side: 66 x 39 5-a-side: 41 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>North</strong></td>
<td>7-a-side: 62 x 37 5-a-side: 42 x 25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pak Wo Road Playground</td>
<td>7-a-side: 61 x 37 5-a-side: 40 x 20 (2 pitches)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note:

(1) FIFA sets the standards for 5-a-side soccer pitches. The length of the touch line must be greater than the length of the goal line. The standards of the dimensions of the pitch for non-international matches and international matches are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Length of pitch (touch line)</th>
<th>Width of pitch (goal line)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-international matches</td>
<td>25 m to 42 m</td>
<td>16 m to 25 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International matches</td>
<td>38 m to 42 m</td>
<td>20 m to 25 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use of shock bombs and flash bangs by the Police**

17. **MR KENNETH LEUNG** (in Chinese): President, it has been reported that the Police used shock bombs and flash bangs when handling public events in November last year. Regarding the use of such weapons by the Police, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the cases involving the use of the aforesaid weapons by police officers in public events since June last year, including (i) the numbers of police officers concerned, (ii) the quantities of the weapons used, and (iii) the purposes of using the weapons, and set out the information by date;
whether it has investigated if the use of the aforesaid weapons by the police officers referred to in (1) on the dates concerned was in compliance with the relevant guidelines; if it has investigated and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the details of the guidelines; if the investigation outcome is in the negative, whether the Police will institute disciplinary proceedings against the police officers concerned;

of the details of the guidelines on the safe use of such weapons provided by the manufacturers, including but not limited to (i) the shortest safe distances from the targeted people to be maintained, and (ii) the limits on the frequencies of the continuous use;

of the level of force that the Police has classified the aforesaid weapons to be;

of the respective maximum levels of brightness and volume of sound generated by the aforesaid weapons in continuous use and in single-time use;

of the respective harms to the human body at the worst in the short term and long term that may be caused by the use of the aforesaid weapons under the circumstances that the relevant safety guidelines are (i) complied with and (ii) not complied with;

whether the aforesaid weapons are suitable for use in crowd management; whether it knows the law enforcement agencies outside Hong Kong that have used such weapons for that purpose;

whether the Police have drawn up guidelines to ensure that the use of the aforesaid weapons will not cause crowd panic and then lead to stampede incidents; if so, of the details of the guidelines; and

of the number of occasions on which the aforesaid weapons have been used by the Police since the reunification of Hong Kong, and the types of crimes allegedly committed by the suspects against whom such weapons were used?
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President, Hong Kong citizens enjoy the freedom of and rights to assembly and procession. However, when expressing their demands, they should abide by the Hong Kong law and do so in a peaceful and lawful manner. 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. Since 9 June last year, more than 1 400 protests, processions and public meetings have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into illegal acts of serious violence. To respond to and curb violent acts, where circumstances require, the Police have to use the necessary force to control the scene, with a view to restoring public safety and public order. We would like to stress that if the expression of views was conducted in a peaceful and lawful manner, there would be no need for the Police to use any force.

On 18 November 2019, some netizens called on a large number of people online to block roads in various districts, claiming that it was a tactic of "besieging Wei to rescue Zhao" (i.e. relieving a besieged ally by attacking the home base of the besiegers). The aim was to distract the Police so that the rioters who were staying at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University could escape. Up till the small hours of 19 November, thousands of rioters wreaked havoc and blocked roads in the Yau Ma Tei and Jordan areas, including building barricades with sundries, attacking police officers with bricks and sundries and hurling nearly 1 000 petrol bombs in total, posing serious threats to the personal safety and lives of people and law enforcement officers at the scene. The scene was not just a matter of ordinary crowd management, but a matter of serious violence and threats to personal safety and public safety.

Throughout the operation, the Police repeatedly warned rioters to stop their illegal acts and leave the scene. Having issued numerous warnings in vain, in order to protect personal safety and restore public safety, the Police had to conduct dispersal and arrest operations, arresting a total of 213 persons. While the Police were trying to control these arrested persons, over 1 000 people nearby interfered with and attacked the Police in different ways, including hurling sundries and petrol bombs at police officers and even attempting to snatch suspects. In view of these serious violence and threats to personal safety and public safety at the scene, police officers had to use different levels and the necessary force when discharging their duties, having assessed the actual circumstances at the material time with their professional judgment. The weapons used by the Police were also subject to the assessment and professional judgment based on the actual circumstances at the scene.
The Police have stringent guidelines on the use of force. Police officers may use appropriate force only when it is necessary. Warnings should be given prior to the use of force as far as circumstances permit, while the persons being warned should be given every opportunity whenever practicable to obey police orders. Once the purpose of using force is achieved, the Police will cease to use force. All police officers must be accountable for their use of force, and commanders will monitor them at the scene to ensure they use force in a lawful manner. The use of weapon mentioned in the question complied with the guidelines of the Police.

Police officers have to go through professional training on the use of different equipment and weapons. In addition to the performance and the use of the equipment and weapons, the professional training also includes on how to make professional assessment and tactical interaction, etc. As the specifications, features and use of specific equipment and weapons by the Police, particularly in facing serious violent situations, involved operational details and the Police's tactical deployments, it is not appropriate for disclosure or else it may undermine their operational efficacy.

Efforts on rodent control and epidemic prevention

18. **MR JIMMY NG** (in Chinese): President, since the announcement by the Government in May last year that three cases of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus had been found, a total of eight such cases have been recorded in Hong Kong, with the death of one infected patient. Some members of the public are concerned about whether there has been a small outbreak of this infectious disease in the community. In addition, it has been reported that pneumonic plague cases have been found in recent months in various districts in the northern part of the Mainland, once triggering panic about human-to-human transmission of the disease. There are comments that as the residents of Hong Kong and the Mainland commute between the two places frequently, the risk of these epidemics being imported from the Mainland to Hong Kong cannot be ruled out, and that there is an immense need for the Government to improve its efforts on rodent control and epidemic prevention. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that while the total number of rodent complaints received each year by the District Council members of various districts was between 300 and 900, the Rodent Infestation
Rates ("RIRs") compiled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") failed to reflect the actual situation as they all along indicated that rodent infestation in various districts was on the low side, and, of the latest progress of the Government's efforts in enhancing the sensitivity of RIRs;

(2) as FEHD's annual reports have indicated that the number of rodents killed by FEHD in each of the past 11 years was between 20 000-odd and 40 000-odd, and its annual average expenditure on rodent control was $150 million (representing an average cost of more than $4,000 for killing each rodent), of the Government's new measures to enhance the cost effectiveness of the anti-rodent efforts;

(3) as a research report has pointed out that quite a number of "three-nil" buildings (i.e. buildings without owners' corporations, owners' committees or property management companies) are hygiene and rodent blackspots, how the Government will improve this situation;

(4) as there are comments that rodent infestation problems in public places often cannot be eradicated due to the lack of coordination among the various government departments, how the Government will strengthen the cooperation among the government departments concerned in their anti-rodent efforts;

(5) regarding the prevention of the aforesaid infectious diseases, whether the Government conducted last year any researches jointly with local and international academic institutions specialized in infectious diseases and public health; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) regarding the prevention of the import of plague from places outside Hong Kong, whether the Government will review its standing practices concerning epidemic prevention at the boundary control points, the Outbound Travel Alerts, etc., as well as introduce new measures for prevention of epidemics; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President, the Government has formulated a comprehensive rodent control strategy targeting the three fundamental survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, i.e. to eliminate their food sources as well as hiding places and block their dispersal routes as fundamental measures, supplemented by direct control measures including poisoning and trapping. The Pest Control Steering Committee ("PCSC") led by the Food and Health Bureau is responsible for formulating policies on pest control, promoting inter-departmental coordination and regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the measures carried out by bureaux and departments.

With the efforts of PCSC, the Government launched a territory-wide cleaning campaign in May 2019 with focus on enhanced prevention, coordination and surveillance as well as raising public awareness of maintaining environmental hygiene. The Government will continue to intensify its efforts in this aspect.

In consultation with the Security Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) At present, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") conducts Rodent Infestation Rate ("RIR") surveys by setting baits in selected areas. The percentage of baits bitten will be used to infer the distribution of rodents in public places. There is no internationally adopted RIR. FEHD devises RIR with reference to overseas practices and the actual situation of Hong Kong.

FEHD is studying the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function for monitoring the areas and extent of rodent activities. Initial test results have shown that the data can quantify and assess the effectiveness of anti-rodent work by directly comparing the rodent population density before and after anti-rodent operations. The technology can also be used to identify rodents' entry points, travel routes and areas they frequently visit, so that rodenticides and trapping devices can be placed in a more effective manner and more targeted rodent control measures can be implemented. FEHD has further conducted field trials in the Kowloon City District in early 2020 with a view to assessing the feasibility of quantifying rodent surveillance by the technology.
In devising and implementing rodent control work, the government departments concerned will, apart from making reference to the RIR surveys, pay attention to complaint figures and reports, views of the local community and trails left by rodents found during inspections, in order to have a comprehensive assessment of the rodent problem in the district concerned and carry out targeted operations in problematic areas.

(2) The annual average expenditure of FEHD's rodent control work was about $150 million in the past 11 years. In addition to trapping and poisoning, rodent control work also includes inspecting rodent black spots, taking enforcement actions, providing technical support for various departments/organizations, conducting joint inspections, carrying out publicity and education work as well as following up on complaints about rodent infestation. The mere dividing of the expenditure on rodent control by the number of rodents trapped and poisoned in public places is therefore a sweeping generalization that cannot fully and truly reflect the outcome and effectiveness of FEHD's rodent control work.

(3) and (4)

With the efforts of PCSC, various government departments have strengthened their cleaning and anti-rodent work as well as inter-departmental coordination. Among these, FEHD, the Home Affairs Department and the Highways Department have, through intelligence exchanges, carried out improvement works and enhanced cleaning at back alleys where hygiene is relatively bad. The Hong Kong Housing Authority, with technical support from FEHD, has installed rodent-proofing structures in public housing estates. The Buildings Department and the Architectural Services Department have also promulgated guidelines on incorporating rodent-proofing design in new buildings for building professionals' reference. These guidelines will also serve as reference for renovation of old buildings. In addition, FEHD has stepped up enforcement against irregularities of food premises such as food preparation at rear lanes.
These efforts have yielded positive results. In 2019, the numbers of enforcement actions taken against rodent infestation and rodents caught increased, whereas the number of rodent-related complaints recorded a decrease. A comparison of the figures on rodent control work conducted in 2019 and 2018 is at Annex.

Moreover, an inter-departmental platform has been set up to facilitate communication between the frontline staff of FEHD and other departments on the execution of specific rodent control work. This includes monitoring and eliminating the survival conditions of rodents in venues/sites under the purview of various departments, and disseminating anti-rodent messages to the community through respective networks. FEHD will continue to provide technical support and professional training to various government departments.

FEHD will conduct anti-rodent operations in designated target areas on a regular basis. The eight-week anti-rodent operations in designated target areas will be carried out in May and November 2020. FEHD will identify target areas in each district by taking into account factors including RIR, the number of complaints received, views of the local community, the number of food premises and "three-nil" buildings. FEHD will also consider the views of District Councillors and step up its work on environmental hygiene, street cleansing and rodent control in a targeted manner. In addition, FEHD will collaborate with District Councils and District Offices to organize anti-rodent promotional activities and encourage active participation of the community in anti-rodent work.

(5) and (6)

Plague is a notifiable disease under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599). The Centre for Health Protection ("CHP") detects plague cases through a communicable disease surveillance system. All suspected or confirmed cases must be notified to CHP for further investigation. For plague cases that occur in the Mainland, CHP will contact the National Health Commission under the notification mechanism to obtain the latest information of the cases concerned for risk assessment. Besides,
the Port Health Division of CHP carries out regular inspections at boundary control points ("BCPs") to ensure good environmental hygiene. Routine health surveillance at all BCPs using infrared thermal imaging systems to check the body temperature of inbound travellers is ongoing. Suspected cases of serious infection will be referred to public hospitals for isolation treatment immediately.

Furthermore, CHP closely monitors the global situation of plague and disseminates outbreak news of other places through the website of the Travel Health Service. If necessary, CHP will timely step up risk communication, for example, by issuing press release and alerting local doctors and hospitals to the latest situation of plague. CHP also disseminates relevant health information, including travel advice, to the public and stakeholders through various means. Besides, CHP has developed contingency plans and regularly conducts exercises and drills with a view to enhancing the overall preparedness and response.

To better inform the public of the possible public health risks, the Government has since 2015 enhanced the Outbound Travel Alert ("OTA") to issue travel alert on public health ground. Should there be such reasons, based on the advice from the Food and Health Bureau, the Security Bureau will issue an OTA on countries/territories seriously affected by infectious diseases to help the public to better understand the possible health risks. The Department of Health will also disseminate travel health advice under the OTA web page, providing specific advice corresponding to different health risks, so as to assist the public and the travel industry in getting a clearer grasp of the possible health risks involved and to make corresponding arrangements.

To monitor and assess plague risk in Hong Kong, FEHD regularly conducts rat-flea surveys at all BCPs and specific areas, such as markets, industrial areas, and rear lanes. Subject to the findings of the surveys, FEHD will carry out corresponding rodent and flea control work so as to mitigate plague risk in Hong Kong.
Comparison of figures on rodent control work conducted in 2019 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of live rodents trapped</td>
<td>16 504</td>
<td>23 727</td>
<td>+43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of filled rat holes</td>
<td>9 129</td>
<td>12 963</td>
<td>+42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of poisoned dead rodents</td>
<td>27 874</td>
<td>30 259</td>
<td>+8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of complaints</td>
<td>11 663</td>
<td>11 329</td>
<td>-2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Promoting the development of innovation and technology

19. **MS ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Chinese): President, as a major initiative of the Government, InnoHK aims at developing Hong Kong as the hub for global scientific research collaboration. This involves the establishment of world-class research clusters at the Hong Kong Science Park ("HKSP") with research and development ("R&D") laboratories set up by world-renowned institutions and commercial entities to conduct collaborative scientific researches. On the other hand, the Government indicated in October last year that it was pressing ahead with the establishment of two world-class research clusters at HKSP, with one being Health@InnoHK focusing on healthcare technologies and the other being AIR@InnoHK on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies, and that it had already received 65 proposals from world-renowned universities and research institutes. On promoting the development of innovation and technology, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective progress in the establishment of the aforesaid clusters; the number of admission applications received, approved and rejected by the authorities to date in respect of each cluster, as well as the average amount of subsidy granted to those institutions/entities whose admission and subsidy applications have been granted;

(2) among the admission applications (i) received and (ii) approved in respect of each cluster, of the respective numbers of those submitted by world-renowned institutions and commercial entities, and set out the name of the world-renowned institutions and commercial entities whose applications have been approved;
(3) given that the authorities will adopt the seven criteria set out in the Guidance Notes for Admission to Health@InnoHK & AIR@InnoHK ("the Guidance Notes") when vetting and approving applications for admission to the clusters, of the weighting of each criterion in the assessment, and whether the criteria include "peer assessment"; as the Guidance Notes stipulate that the proposed R&D programmes must "have a reasonable likelihood of being adopted or commercialized, if the R&D programme is successful", whether those admission applications with R&D programmes not involving commercialization will be considered;

(4) given that non-profit-making R&D laboratories set up by non-profit-making institutions at the aforesaid clusters may only get R&D subsidy for a period of four to five years in respect of each R&D programme, how the Government ensures that such institutions will still be able to continue taking forward the relevant R&D programmes upon expiry of the subsidy period;

(5) of the strategy formulated by the Government to dovetail InnoHK with Hong Kong's re-industrialization;

(6) as the Chief Executive indicated in last year's Policy Address Supplement that the Government would examine the establishment of the third InnoHK research cluster, (i) of the progress and timetable of the relevant work, (ii) the area of focus of that cluster, and (iii) whether its mode of operation will be different from that of the aforesaid two clusters; and

(7) as a think tank has suggested the Government to set up mega research institutes similar to the Broad Institute of the United States and the Francis Crick Institute of the United Kingdom to encourage intensive collaboration among researchers from different disciplines and institutes across the world and conduct cutting-edge research programmes, whether the Government will consider the suggestion; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (in Chinese): President, we have allocated $10 billion for the establishment of the first two InnoHK research clusters, namely "Health@InnoHK" focusing on health care
technologies and "AIR@InnoHK" focusing on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies, in the Hong Kong Science Park.

Our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2)

The InnoHK initiative has received enthusiastic response, with a total of 65 proposals from world renowned universities and research institutes. After a rigorous assessment process, we are following up with the institutions concerned. As discussion is still in progress, we are unable to announce for now the number and the list of laboratories that will be set up in the two research clusters and the funding amount involved.

(3) The Innovation and Technology Commission ("ITC") has considered a basket of factors holistically when assessing the proposals. The major factors considered include the scientific merits of the research programmes, the impact of the research (if successful), the academic standing and research achievements of the collaborating institutions and the key research personnel in the relevant research areas, track record of research achievements, past experience of research collaboration, experience and the capability of technological adoption/commercialization, local talent development, benefits and contributions to the local community, etc. We have also consulted the InnoHK Steering Committee on the assessment of the proposals.

The Government hopes that the research programmes under the InnoHK research clusters will bring about benefits and contributions to the society if they are successful. Therefore, whether the funded research programmes will have reasonable opportunities to be applied or commercialized when the research is successful is one of the assessment criteria.

(4), (6) and (7)

Through the establishment of InnoHK research clusters, the Government's vision is to develop Hong Kong as the hub for global research collaboration and to converge top-notch researchers from around the world to conduct world-class and impactful collaborative
researches. Non-profit-making research centres can receive government funding for five years under the InnoHK initiative. During this five-year period, the centres need to submit regular progress reports to ITC. The research centres may continue to receive funding if they have good governance and research progress. As compared to the establishment of a single research institute, this arrangement allows the Government and the relevant research institutes to maintain flexibility. On the one hand, the Government can provide research funding for world top-notch global research collaboration in the medium to long term. On the other hand, subject to the latest trend of research and technological development, the research focus of InnoHK research clusters can be adjusted.

The Government is committed to the InnoHK initiative in the long term. The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement has mentioned examining the setting up of the third InnoHK research cluster so as to further promote global research and development ("R&D") collaboration in Hong Kong. We will review factors including the strengths of Hong Kong and the global technological development in considering the research focus of the third InnoHK research cluster. There is no fixed timeline for now.

(5) Encouraging R&D is key to innovation and technology development and an important part in the promotion of "re-industrialization". The Government believes that the InnoHK research clusters will not only help capture and consolidate Hong Kong's R&D strengths, but also promote the development of advanced technology and the relevant industries locally, thereby fostering the development of advanced manufacturing industries that are based on new technologies and smart production in Hong Kong.

Video clips recorded with video cameras by the Government

20. MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Chinese): President, at present, disciplined services such as the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF") and the Immigration Department ("ImmD"), as well as government departments such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department, have installed
closed-circuit television ("CCTV") camera systems in areas under their purview or in public places, or provided their staff with body-worn video cameras ("BWVCs"). As the authorities may identify the individuals recorded by comparing their facial features recorded by CCTV cameras with the personal data in relevant databases, some members of the public are worried that law enforcement agencies may use the CCTV cameras in public places for recording large quantities of video clips, possibly intruding on personal privacy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the existing CCTV cameras installed by each of the government departments concerned (set out in the table below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of CCTV camera systems</th>
<th>Government department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Installation location(s) and quantity of cameras</td>
<td>HKPF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Use(s) of video clips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Brand(s) and model(s) of camera lenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Resolution of cameras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Retention period of video clips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) Date of installation/updating of system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii) Procurement date and amount of expenditure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(viii) Name of supplier and the country to which it belongs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ix) Whether auto-tracking function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x) Whether face detection function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xi) Whether pickup function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(2) of the number of occasions last year on which HKPF requested other government departments to provide the CCTV video clips recorded by them, with a tabulated breakdown by (i) the month in which the request was made, (ii) the name of the department concerned, (iii) the date on which the video clip was recorded, (iv) the location where the video clip was recorded, (v) the length of the video clip, and (vi) whether the request was acceded to;

(3) of the number of video clips recorded last year during public events by police officers using BWVCs and hand-held video cameras, with a tabulated breakdown by the month in which the video clip was recorded and the public event concerned; the current storage details of such video clips, including the respective numbers of video clips which (i) have been retained due to their evidential value, (ii) will be produced in court as evidence, (iii) have been destroyed, and (iv) have been retained for more than 31 days; the number of requests, made under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) by persons recorded in such video clips, for access to the relevant video clips, and the number of such requests acceded to; and

(4) whether HKPF has, since January last year, (i) made use of software such as video explorer, advanced image processing and facial recognition to identify individuals in the video clips recorded by CCTV cameras, and (ii) sought other government departments' permission for using the personal data in the databases under such departments' purview (e.g. the Smart Identity Card database under ImmD) for making comparisons with the facial features recorded by CCTV cameras for the purpose of identification of individuals?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President, the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) ("PDPO") is applicable to both the public and private sectors. All organizations/departments are required to comply with PDPO and its relevant Data Protection Principles when collecting and using personal data. From the perspective of safeguarding personal data privacy, government departments will make reference to internal guidelines when capturing images or videos and using closed-circuit television ("CCTV") systems
in public spaces. These guidelines state that only authorized officers are allowed to use the systems, and seek to ensure that the use of the systems, the collection of recorded images, and the handling of data are in compliance with PDPO, so as to safeguard the protection of citizens' personal data privacy.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by Mr Charles Peter MOK is as follows:

(1) The Government does not maintain statistics on the details of the CCTV systems of each department.

Furthermore, information on CCTV systems involve security matters, disclosing detailed information of the systems may reveal to criminals relevant government departments' security arrangements, as well as the capabilities and investigatory techniques of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, it is not appropriate to disclose such information.

(2) One of the statutory duties of the Police is crime prevention and detection. Personal data collected by the Police in the course of criminal investigation will only be used for the purposes of crime detection and prevention, the collection of which must also be in compliance with the law. The personal data will be retained having regard to the purpose of data collection and the required period of data retention. Once the personal data is no longer necessary for the particular purpose, the data will be destroyed within a reasonable time unless further retention is otherwise required by law. The Police have not maintained the statistics as requested in the question.

(3) The Police have clear and strict guidelines and procedures for handling video clips captured by body-worn video cameras ("BWVCs") and digital camcorders. Video clips with investigative or evidential value will be classified as evidence and be retained until the relevant investigation or judicial procedures are completed. Video clips carrying no investigative or evidential value, or constituting no other legitimate purpose, will be deleted after 31 days from the date of recording.
In 2019, the Police recorded 160 clips and 5,347 clips using BWVCs and digital camcorders respectively at public order events, among which 25 clips and 3,804 clips respectively with investigative or evidential value were retained. The remaining clips have been deleted in accordance with the established mechanism.

The Police do not maintain the statistics of requests to review video clips made under PDPO.

(4) The Police have always been proactively applying any technology that can assist law enforcement and investigation, and have from time to time reviewed the effectiveness of various types of investigation tools and equipment. Should there be a need to obtain any data from other departments in the course of criminal investigations, the Police will do so in compliance with the law. As for the other information requested in the question, it is not appropriate for disclosure lest it compromises the Police's technologies and capabilities in the prevention and detection of crime.

Implementation of the amendments made to the Nurses Registration Ordinance

21. PROF JOSEPH LEE (in Chinese): President, it is learnt that since 1997, the nursing sector has been advocating the enhancement of the credibility, transparency and governance capabilities of the Nursing Council of Hong Kong ("NCHK") as well as the achievement of the aim of professional autonomy through the introduction of amendments to the Nurses Registration Ordinance (Cap. 164). In June 1997, the former Legislative Council passed the amendments to the Ordinance, which included the addition of section 3(2)(ca) to stipulate that six of the members of NCHK shall be elected among registered nurses and enrolled nurses in a manner provided for by the Ordinance. However, that provision has not yet been implemented so far. In addition, the Government indicated in May 2018 that according to legal advice, further amendments to Cap. 164 were needed before the subsidiary legislation for the election of the aforesaid six members could be introduced. The authorities would invite NCHK to submit proposals to follow up the recommendations in the
Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development published by the Government in 2017 and related matters. The issue of that provision not having been implemented would then be dealt with together. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of the latest progress of the follow-up work undertaken by the authorities for implementing that provision, as well as the timetable for the implementation of that provision?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President, in June 2017, the Government published the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development ("the Strategic Review"). The Food and Health Bureau subsequently wrote to invite the Nursing Council of Hong Kong ("NCHK") in April and July 2018 respectively to follow up and submit proposals on the development of nursing specialties and the recommendations put forward in the Strategic Review, which include ensuring lay involvement in NCHK, making continuing professional education and/or continuing professional development a mandatory requirement, and reviewing the mechanisms for complaint investigation and disciplinary inquiry, etc.

NCHK is following up on the above issues. After receiving proposals from NCHK, the Government will conduct a comprehensive review of the Nurses Registration Ordinance having regard to the situation of the nursing profession, present circumstances, international practices, and possible legislative amendments arising from the implementation of the proposals. The issue of the outstanding provisions of the Nurses Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 1997 will then be dealt with together.

Legal aid services

22.  MR TONY TSE (in Chinese): President, under the Legal Aid Ordinance (Cap. 91), a person granted legal aid ("aided person") may nominate solicitor/counsel of his/her own choice to be his/her legal representative. The Legal Aid Department ("LAD") may, on the grounds that the number of legal aid cases assigned to that nominee has exceeded the limit, reject the nomination and ask the aided person to make another nomination from the Legal Aid Panel. However, some members of the legal sector have relayed that currently there are
still quite a number of solicitors/counsels who have been assigned a large number of legal aid cases and, among those solicitors/counsels, some have delayed the handling of such cases on various grounds possibly due to excessive workload. Such situation may jeopardize the interests of various litigation parties and compromise justice. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of solicitors and counsels to whom the number of legal aid cases assigned exceeded the limit, in each of the past five years;

(2) of (i) the respective numbers of legal aid cases taken up by the top five solicitors and counsels who were assigned the highest numbers of legal aid cases, and (ii) the total amount of fees received by each of the top five solicitors and counsels who had received the largest amounts of fees respectively for civil and criminal legal aid cases, in each of the past five years;

(3) whether LAD has compiled information on its rejection of the nominations of solicitors/counsels made by aided persons;

   (i) if so, of the number of such cases in the past five years, the respective numbers of solicitors and counsels involved, and the reasons for rejecting such nominations; if there were no such cases, whether LAD will review if the current criteria and limits for assigning cases are too lax;

   (ii) if not, how LAD reviews the effectiveness of the criteria concerned, and whether LAD will compile the relevant information; and

(4) whether LAD uncovered, in the past five years, any case of solicitors/counsels unreasonably delaying the handling of the legal aid cases assigned to them; if so, whether LAD reviewed if such solicitors/counsels had concurrently taken up too many legal aid cases, and of LAD's follow-up actions taken?
CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION (in Chinese): President, according to section 13 of the Legal Aid Ordinance (Cap. 91) ("the Ordinance"), the Director of Legal Aid ("DLA") may act for the aided person through Legal Aid Counsel or assign any lawyers in private practice who are on the Legal Aid Panel ("the Panel") nominated by either DLA or the aided person. Having regard to the principle that an aided person's interest is of paramount importance, if an aided person nominates a lawyer pursuant to the Ordinance, the Legal Aid Department ("LAD") takes the view that the nomination should be given due weight and should not be rejected unless there are compelling reasons. Examples of such reasons include unsatisfactory past performance of the nominated lawyer, disciplinary actions taken against the nominated lawyer by regulatory body, or the number of assignments taken up by that nominated lawyer has exceeded the limit.

For the various parts of the question, my response is as follow:

(1) LAD has established procedures on assigning lawyers to handle legal aid cases and assignment limits. According to the Manual for Legal Aid Practitioners, the overall legal aid (including civil and criminal) assignment limits for solicitors and counsel are respectively 60 and 45 within the past 12 months.

In the past five years, no solicitors or counsel have been assigned with cases more than the relevant permitted limits.

(2) The numbers of cases assigned to the top five solicitors and counsel in the past five years are listed in Annex 1.

The total civil and criminal legal aid fees paid to the top five solicitors and counsel in the past five years are listed in Annex 2.

(3) In the past five years, the numbers of times when LAD rejected the nomination of solicitors or counsel by the aided persons are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under certain circumstances, an aided person may nominate more than one solicitor or counsel with respect to the same case, or that he/she may request the change of representing lawyer(s) at different stages of a case. LAD only keeps record on the number of times of rejecting aided persons' nominations, but not the number of cases involved, nor how many solicitors and counsel are involved.

The reasons for DLA's rejection of aided persons' nominations are mainly that the nominated solicitor or counsel has already been assigned with cases reaching the limits in the past 12 months. Other reasons include that the experience or expertise of the nominated solicitor or counsel has not yet satisfied the minimum requirement of the assigned case, or that there is record of unsatisfactory past performance or misconduct.

(4) LAD has been monitoring and imposing sanctions on cases of unsatisfactory performance or misconduct of assigned solicitor or counsel according to the established mechanism. In the past five years, LAD handled 34 cases where the assigned cases had been unreasonably delayed. Nonetheless, no evidence suggests that cases being unreasonably delayed are owing to a solicitor or counsel having been assigned with too many cases at the same time.

If it is proven that there is indeed unsatisfactory performance or misconduct (including cases being unreasonably delayed), LAD can issue advisory letters to the solicitor or counsel concerned, put the solicitor or counsel in the Record of Unsatisfactory Performance/Conduct, or even remove his/her name from the Panel.
Annex 1

The number of legal aid cases assigned to the top five solicitors and counsel each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil and Criminal Cases</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solicitor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Counsel**               |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1                         | 32   | 32   | 34   | 32   | 31   |
| 2                         | 31   | 32   | 32   | 27   | 28   |
| 3                         | 31   | 31   | 31   | 27   | 27   |
| 4                         | 30   | 28   | 29   | 26   | 27   |
| 5                         | 30   | 25   | 27   | 26   | 26   |

Note:

The solicitors and counsel ranked top five in terms of the number of cases assigned in one year may not be the same as the other year.

Annex 2

The total civil and criminal legal aid fees paid for each of the top five solicitors and counsel each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fees for Civil Legal Aid Lawyer (million dollars)</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solicitor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>8.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>5.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Fees for Civil Legal Aid Lawyer (million dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fees for Criminal Legal Aid Lawyer (million dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Counsel |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1    | 1.22 | 2.07 | 1.59 | 2.78 | 3.76 |
| 2    | 1.13 | 1.01 | 1.28 | 2.30 | 2.80 |
| 3    | 1.03 | 0.98 | 1.23 | 2.11 | 2.72 |
| 4    | 0.99 | 0.92 | 1.12 | 1.87 | 2.30 |
| 5    | 0.95 | 0.88 | 1.06 | 1.87 | 2.14 |

Notes:

1. The information on the legal aid fees paid to solicitors or counsel is cash based. The amount paid to an individual solicitor or counsel may not correspond entirely with the legal aid work assigned to him/her within the same period.

2. The solicitors and counsel ranked top five in terms of the legal aid fees paid in one year may not be the same as the other year.

3. The solicitors and counsel ranked top five in terms of the legal aid fees paid in one year may not be the same as those assigned with the largest number of cases.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now suspend the meeting until 2:30 pm.

1:35 pm

Meeting suspended.

2:30 pm

Council then resumed.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

First Reading and Second Reading of Government Bills

First Reading of Government Bills


INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (TAX CONCESSIONS) BILL 2020

INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (SHIP LEASING TAX CONCESSIONS) BILL 2020

CLERK (in Cantonese): Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2020
Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Ship Leasing Tax Concessions) Bill 2020.

Bills read the First time and ordered to be set down for Second Reading pursuant to Rule 53(3) of the Rules of Procedure.
Second Reading of Government Bills


INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (TAX CONCESSIONS) BILL 2020

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, I move the Second Reading of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 ("the Bill").

The Bill seeks to implement the concessionary tax measures proposed in the 2020-2021 Budget.

The Bill provides for reductions of salaries tax, tax under personal assessment and profits tax for year of assessment 2019-2020 by 100%, subject to a ceiling of $20,000 per case. The reductions will be reflected in taxpayers' final tax payable for the year of assessment concerned. The measures will benefit 1.95 million taxpayers of salaries tax and tax under personal assessment as well as 141,000 tax-paying corporations and unincorporated businesses. The government revenue forgone in 2020-2021 will amount to $20.8 billion.

President, we provided this Council on 4 March with a paper explaining the proposed legislative amendments to the Inland Revenue Ordinance. The proposed tax concessions will ease the tax burden on taxpayers, which are important during the current economic downturn. I hope Members will support the passage of the Bill so that taxpayers can benefit early.

I so submit. Thank you, President

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 be read the Second time.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the Second Reading debate is adjourned and the Bill is referred to the House Committee.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese):
President, I move the Second Reading of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Ship Leasing Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 ("the Bill").

The Bill seeks to amend the Inland Revenue Ordinance to provide for a dedicated tax regime to give profits tax concessions to qualifying ship lessors and qualifying ship leasing managers, for the purpose of attracting ship leasing enterprises to Hong Kong for business expansion, thereby elevating the status of Hong Kong as a ship leasing centre in the Asia-Pacific region and an international maritime centre.

The shipping industry is a highly liquid global business facing keen international competition. With some 80% of global freight volume carried by water today, the demand for water transport will likely continue to spur demand for ship financing. The Maritime Leasing Paper released by the Financial Services Development Council, Hong Kong in May 2018 estimated that the capital expenditure for newbuilding vessels was about US$80 billion to US$100 billion a year. Among the many ship financing models, ship leasing has been developing rapidly in recent years with growth potentials.

As one of the three financial centres in the world and also an international maritime centre, Hong Kong has advantages in the area of high value-added maritime services. In view of the growth potentials of ship leasing business, the competitive environment in the region and the firm foundation of Hong Kong’s financial and shipping services, the Government announced in the 2018 Policy Address tax concession measures for ship leasing business. The Bill seeks to implement these tax measures so as to enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong in ship leasing activities and strengthen the development of ship leasing business. As ship leasing serves to facilitate ship ownership and operation in the industry, it also helps attract more commercial principals of the maritime industry, such as shipowners, lessors and carriers, to set up their business in Hong Kong, thus expanding Hong Kong’s shipping core and maritime cluster.

The Bill proposes to waive the tax on the qualifying profits of qualifying ship lessors carrying out operating lease and finance lease activities. Moreover,
to facilitate the operation of ship lessors which often find it necessary to engage ship management companies to manage their leasing business, the Bill proposes to halve the tax on the qualifying profits of qualifying ship leasing managers carrying out ship leasing management activities for qualifying ship lessors (e.g. the set-up or management of special purpose companies for the ownership of ships for leasing, arrangements for procuring or leasing of ships, management of leases, etc.) so that the general tax rate will be 8.25%.

As regards tax base, the Bill proposes a tax base concession whereby the tax base in respect of an operating lease will be equal to 20% of rentals, after deduction of expenses (excluding depreciation), derived by a ship lessor. The tax base concession is not applicable to ship lessors of finance leases which are not entitled to depreciation allowances. And the tax base for ship leasing management activities will be equal to the management fees, after deduction of expenses, received by a ship leasing manager.

At the same time, to prevent abuses of tax concessions, the Bill has incorporated anti-abuse provisions, including prohibition against loss transfer, requirements for central management and control and substantial activities, the arm's length principle, main purpose tests and tax symmetry, so as to safeguard the integrity of the tax regime and comply with international tax rules. Given that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is developing new international taxation rules and principles to deal with tax avoidance, we have included in the Bill substantial activity requirements to provide that qualifying ship lessors and qualifying ship leasing managers must fulfil two conditions in Hong Kong, i.e. the company must have an adequate number of full-time qualified employers and an adequate amount of operating expenditure, to ensure that only entities which undertake core income generating activities in Hong Kong will benefit from the tax regime, thereby achieving the policy objectives of promoting economic activities and creating job opportunities in Hong Kong.

President, the proposal contained in the Bill has fully taken into account the views of the industry and international taxation requirements. The Government consulted the Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council on the proposed tax regime on 26 November last year. Members expressed general support and urged the Administration to expedite work with a view to formulating the legislative proposals as soon as possible. Industry stakeholders also
supported the proposal and opined that the introduction of tax concessions would be conducive to enhancing Hong Kong's attractiveness as a base for ship leasing business.

I hope the Legislative Council will support and pass the Bill as soon as possible to implement a new dedicated tax regime, which will fully promote the development of ship leasing activities in Hong Kong and boost the demand for the local shipping, financial and various professional services industries. This will also generate economic benefits, including provision of 6,400 to 11,200 direct job opportunities over 10 years and a cumulative added value of around HK$20 billion to HK$35 billion. This move will further consolidate Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre and build up its strength as an international shipping centre.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Ship Leasing Tax Concessions) Bill 2020 be read the Second time.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the Second Reading debate is adjourned and the Bill is referred to the House Committee.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Government motion. The Secretary for Financial Services and Treasury will move a proposed resolution under the Public Finance Ordinance.

Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN will move a total of four amending motions to the Secretary's motion.

The purposes of the motion and the amending motions, and the debate and voting arrangements, are set out in the Appendix to the Script.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council will proceed to a joint debate on the motion and the four amending motions. Each Member may speak once and for up to 15 minutes.

I will first call upon the Secretary to speak and move the motion. Then, I will call upon Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN to speak, but they may not move their amending motions at this stage.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The joint debate now begins. Members who wish to speak please press the "Request to speak" button.

I call upon the Secretary to speak and move the motion.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION UNDER THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Cantonese): President, I move that the motion, as printed on the Agenda, be passed.

The purpose of this motion is to seek funds on account to enable the Government to carry on its services between the start of the financial year on 1 April 2020 and the time when the Appropriation Ordinance 2020 comes into operation. This is a long established and essential procedure. The specific arrangements also follow those of recent years.

According to the Budget timetable this year, the Legislative Council will resume the Second Reading Debate of the Appropriation Bill 2020 at its meeting on 29 April 2020. As such, the Appropriation Ordinance 2020 would not come into operation before that date. To ensure that Government will not need to halt public services, including services closely related to people's livelihood such as education, social welfare, health care and security, due to the lack of funds when the new financial year starts on 1 April 2020, we need to propose this motion.

The funds on account sought under each subhead in accordance with the fourth paragraph of the resolution have been determined with reference to the relevant provisions in the 2020-2021 Estimates of Expenditure. The initial
amount of funds on account under each head which has incorporated requirements at the subhead level is provided in the form of a footnote to this speech. In gist, the proposed funds on account should be able to cope with around two months of the Government’s operational requirements. The aggregate amount of funds on account is $215,865,713,000 before the Appropriation Ordinance 2020 comes into operation. This represents around 34% of the total appropriation of $627,233,901,000 under the Appropriation Bill 2020. Due to the irregular and lumpy nature of the non-recurrent subheads, 100% of their provisions as shown in the draft Estimates is sought. Hence, an increase in funding for the non-recurrent expenditure in the 2020-2021 financial year has led to an increase in the percentage of total funds on account sought against the total appropriation.

Subject to the above aggregate amount not being exceeded, the resolution enables the Financial Secretary to vary the funds on account in respect of any subhead, but these variations must not exceed the provision for that subhead in the 2020-2021 Estimates of Expenditure. To enhance transparency and in line with the established practice, we will report to the Finance Committee of this Council if the Financial Secretary has exercised this authority to meet necessary requirements.

The Government has to make payments for a large number of expenditure items every day. Taking the first week between 1 April and 7 April of the 2020-2021 financial year as an example, numerous government expenditure items to be settled during the week include:

(a) subvention payments of around $6.2 billion to the Hospital Authority;

(b) payments for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and Social Security Allowance totalling around $1.3 billion to about 120,000 families and 140,000 individuals respectively;

(c) grants of around $1.7 billion to universities funded by the University Grants Committee;

(d) subvention payments of around $800 million to the Vocational Training Council;
(e) subsidies of around $700 million to about 760 kindergartens; and

(f) pension gratuities of around $800 million to retired civil servants.

There are also other expenses such as salaries of contract staff as well as accounts payable to suppliers.

It takes at least two to three working days for government departments and banks to process a large number of payments made by autopay. It also takes some days to complete the statutory procedures after the passage of the Vote on Account resolution, including the gazetral process and the procedures for issuance of the Vote on Account warrant, so that the Government can make payments starting from 1 April as usual.

In order to ensure that Government has the necessary resources to continue services provided to the public, I urge Members to support the motion today. In fact, failure to secure the passage of the Vote on Account resolution in a timely manner would pose a real and serious threat to the continued operation of the Government. It would create anxieties amongst the public sector, the subvented sector, the business sector and ultimately the entire community which counts on the services by and funding support from the Government.

The vote on account will be subsumed under the Appropriation Ordinance 2020 upon its enactment and commencement.

President, I beg to move.

Footnote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of Expenditure</th>
<th>Amount shown in the Estimates 2020-2021 $'000</th>
<th>Initial amount of funds on account $'000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Chief Executive's Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department</td>
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<td>Head of Expenditure</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>24 Audit Commission</td>
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<td>23 Auxiliary Medical Service</td>
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<td>92 Department of Justice</td>
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<td>45 Fire Services Department</td>
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<td>151 Government Secretariat: Security Bureau</td>
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<td>Initial amount of funds on account</td>
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<td>79 Invest Hong Kong</td>
<td>161,178</td>
<td>32,236</td>
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<td>174 Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service</td>
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<td>11,009</td>
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<td>80 Judiciary</td>
<td>2,264,028</td>
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<td>90 Labour Department</td>
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<td>106 Miscellaneous Services</td>
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<td>180 Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration</td>
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<td>114 Office of The Ombudsman</td>
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<td>116 Official Receiver's Office</td>
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<td>120 Pensions</td>
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<td>118 Planning Department</td>
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<td>136 Public Service Commission Secretariat</td>
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<td>160 Radio Television Hong Kong</td>
<td>1,046,340</td>
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<td>162 Rating and Valuation Department</td>
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<td>163 Registration and Electoral Office</td>
<td>1,491,634</td>
<td>298,327</td>
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### Head of Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of Expenditure</th>
<th>Amount shown in the Estimates 2020-2021</th>
<th>Initial amount of funds on account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>169 Secretariat, Commissioner on Interception of Communications and Surveillance</td>
<td>24,395</td>
<td>4,879</td>
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<tr>
<td>170 Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>94,496,841</td>
<td>28,663,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181 Trade and Industry Department</td>
<td>1,648,055</td>
<td>1,303,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186 Transport Department</td>
<td>8,614,118</td>
<td>2,496,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188 Treasury</td>
<td>509,246</td>
<td>101,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190 University Grants Committee</td>
<td>22,791,608</td>
<td>5,394,322</td>
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<tr>
<td>194 Water Supplies Department</td>
<td>9,293,414</td>
<td>1,966,030</td>
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<tr>
<td>173 Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>625,334,901</strong></td>
<td><strong>215,806,713</strong></td>
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<td>59,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>627,233,901</strong></td>
<td><strong>215,865,713</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:**

* The initial amount of funds on account under Head 106 includes $1 billion under Subhead 789 Additional commitments for contingency.

**The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury moved the following motion:**

"RESOLVED that—"

1. Authority is given for a sum not exceeding $215,865,713,000 to be charged on the general revenue for expenditure on the services of the Government in respect of the financial year commencing on 1 April 2020.

2. Subject to this Resolution, the sum so charged may be expended against the heads of expenditure as shown in the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-21 laid before the Legislative Council on 26 February 2020 or, if the Estimates are changed under the provisions of the Public Finance Ordinance (Cap. 2)
as applied by section 7(2) of that Ordinance, as shown in the Estimates as so changed.

3. Expenditure in respect of any head of expenditure must not exceed the aggregate of the amounts authorized by paragraph 4 to be expended in respect of the subheads in that head of expenditure.

4. Expenditure in respect of each subhead in a head of expenditure must not exceed—

(a) for an Operating Account Recurrent subhead of expenditure, an amount equivalent to—

(i) except if the subhead is listed in Schedule 1 to this Resolution, 20% of the provision shown in the Estimates in respect of that subhead; or

(ii) if the subhead is listed in Schedule 1 to this Resolution, the percentage of the provision shown in the Estimates in respect of that subhead that is specified in that Schedule in relation to that subhead; and

(b) for an Operating Account Non-Recurrent subhead of expenditure or a Capital Account subhead of expenditure, an amount equivalent to—

(i) except if the subhead is listed in Schedule 2 to this Resolution, 100% of the provision shown in the Estimates in respect of that subhead; or

(ii) if the subhead is listed in Schedule 2 to this Resolution, the amount that is specified in that Schedule in relation to that subhead,

or such other amount, not exceeding an amount equivalent to 100% of the provision shown in the Estimates in respect of that subhead, as may in any case be approved by the Financial Secretary.
## Schedule 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of Expenditure</th>
<th>Subhead</th>
<th>Percentage of provision shown in Estimates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59 Government Logistics Department</td>
<td>Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme—levies</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 Labour Department</td>
<td>Contribution to the Occupational Safety and Health Council</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contribution to the Occupational Deafness Compensation Board</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 Pensions</td>
<td>Employees' compensation, injury, incapacity and death related payments and expenses</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136 Public Service Commission Secretariat</td>
<td>Operational expenses</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152 Government Secretariat: Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch)</td>
<td>Operational expenses</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 Government Secretariat: Innovation and Technology Commission</td>
<td>Operational expenses</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Head of Expenditure Subhead Percentage of provision shown in Estimates

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Head of Expenditure</th>
<th>Subhead</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>170 Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>Assistance for patients and their families</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal and law enforcement injuries</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compensation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>177 Emergency relief</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>179 Comprehensive social security assistance scheme</td>
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<td>180 Social security allowance scheme</td>
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### Schedule 2

**[para. 4(b)]**

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>106 Miscellaneous Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>184 Transfers to 991 Funds</td>
<td>Payment to the Civil Service Pension Reserve Fund</td>
<td>$0&quot;</td>
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</table>

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury be passed.
DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, my amending motion mainly seeks to cut the expenditures of the Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force. The intentions of these two amending motions cannot be clearer. Does Hong Kong still have to use public coffers or public money to support these departments or this Chief Executive who wrecks havoc on Hong Kong and sabotages the rule of law, bringing disgrace to Hong Kong and worse still, plunging Hong Kong into a much more serious crisis to the detriment of the interest of Hongkongers?

First of all, we have to ask: Does Hong Kong still need Carrie LAM? Hong Kong now faces such huge predicaments and such a severe epidemic. Is Carrie LAM leading us to an abyss or helping Hongkongers out?

In its headline news today, Apple Daily made a comparison to illustrate that the Hong Kong Government is outrageously slow in its response. Even when a comparison is drawn with the Macao Government, a government which closely toes the lines of the Central Authorities and listens to everything the Central Authorities said, we were still slower in every step we made.

Let me read out a chronology of the examples cited in this news report, in order to draw a comparison between Hong Kong and Macao in the measures taken to tackle the Wuhan pneumonia. First, on the allocation of face masks for the people, Macao made an announcement on 23 January, whereas Carrie LAM admitted unsuccessful attempts to procure masks for the public on 4 February. She failed to provide any masks for the public, and all she did was to admit failure. At first she said that some 30 million masks were on the way but their whereabouts ended up unknown until lately when some masks are eventually made available for distribution to cleansing workers, residential care institutions, and so on. But let us look at the governments of several other countries, such as Singapore or Taiwan and Macao, and other places. They can all guarantee that masks are allocated to the people in an orderly manner at an affordable cheap price. This is a most important tool for preventing an outbreak and yet, the Hong Kong Government cannot make a guarantee to the people. What else can this Government do?

Just now the Secretary was still saying in this Council that masks are just one factor, sounding as if masks are unimportant. Without a mask, how can the people go out? This is just common sense in view of the current outbreak but the SAR Government makes these outrageous remarks. Carrie LAM took the lead to say that wearing a mask is unnecessary and so, people who neither meet the basic
requirements nor suffer from an illness should take off their masks even though they have already put them on. How dare she make these remarks which utterly defy common sense and science. Was she not wearing a mask when she showed up today? Whenever I saw her, I had to ask why she had put on a mask. And there is also her trusted lieutenant, LAW Chi-kwong. He can set a world record by not wearing a mask for 20-odd days in a row despite the severity of the outbreak. I wonder if he meant to show off or wanted to disseminate a wrong message.

Regarding the announcement of class suspension, Macao already made an announcement on 24 January whereas an announcement was made in Hong Kong only on 31 January. Regarding the announcement of a ban on entry by visitors from Hubei, Macao gave effect to the ban from the afternoon of 26 January whereas Hong Kong took action only at 10:30 pm at night. Regarding the announcement of giving cash handout, Macao made an announcement on 31 January whereas Hong Kong made an announcement in the Budget on 26 February. On requiring passengers on public transport to wear masks, Macao expressly stated this requirement on 3 February whereas such requirement has yet to be imposed in Hong Kong. Regarding the 14-day isolation of inbound visitors, Macao already made an announcement on 16 March that all people arriving in Macao, except for visitors from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, are required to undergo isolation with effect from 17 March, whereas Hong Kong, acting like a dog following its master's footsteps, announced the same on 17 March but the requirement took effect only from 19 March. On the isolation of people who had been to places such as the United Kingdom and the United States in the 14 days prior to their entry, Macao made an announcement on 14 March and the requirement took effect from 17 March whereas in Hong Kong, an announcement was made on 15 March and the requirement took effect only from 19 March. Hong Kong is always acting like a dog following its master's footsteps, and is always lagging behind.

Macao has announced an entry ban on all non-residents. All people are banned from entering Macao except for residents in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and also holders of a Non-resident Worker's Identification Card. Macao made this announcement on 17 March and the ban already took effect from 18 March but there is no such ban in Hong Kong.

We have seen many experts calling on the Government to take actions and implement a lockdown as the current cases are imported from overseas rather than
the Mainland but the Government simply refused to do so. I wonder if Carrie LAM is allergic to the word "lockdown". She turned antagonistic every time it was mentioned and in the end she said that a lockdown, whether implemented or not, had become meaningless. It is, of course, meaningless because the virus has already been brought into Hong Kong.

Compared to other countries in the world, the current situation of the outbreak in Hong Kong is not too serious and the scale of infections is not considered that large, and so far, our health care system has not collapsed as in the case of Italy. Shall credit be given to the Chief Executive? Is it because of something the Chief Executive has done? Certainly not. It is attributed to health care workers exerting themselves to fight the epidemic and help all the patients infected with the disease. It is attributed to all Hongkongers having an awareness of hygiene and wearing masks, rather than listening to the officials who talk rubbish. Hongkongers are smart. They would not be fooled by Carrie LAM. They refused to listen to the words of the officials in the SAR Government. These officials would rather die than wear masks at first in order to defend the anti-mask law. Even when an outbreak had emerged, they still came forth to say that only the sick should wear masks. This is downright putting politics before everything, with politics overriding science, and the lives and safety of the people. What is the use of such a Chief Executive?

The popularity of Carrie LAM has indeed set a record. Expert pollster Robert CHUNG said that Carrie LAM's rating has plunged to a point so low that it cannot be lower. At the end of January this year, nearly 60% of people gave Carrie LAM a rating of zero. Can Members imagine that the head of the government in a place is given a rating of zero by more than half of the people in that place? She really has no sense of shame. What use is there for her to hang on? Every time I saw her, I felt a pang of disgust rising from the bottom of my heart. So please, Carrie LAM, what use is there for you to hang on? Why should we spend public money on this person? Actually, we can abolish the Chief Executive's Office. It will be fine and even better by just following the footsteps of Macao. She is standing in the way of Hong Kong. Everything she does is wrong and slow. She is forever catching up with others. What use is there for us to have such a Chief Executive?
We Members cannot seek additional funding or resources to provide more support for health care personnel or recruit more health care workers, or employ more manpower to help the disadvantaged groups and equip them with more basic protective gear. Since we can only ask for reducing instead of increasing resources, let us then cut the expenditures of the incompetent departments. Is there any political leader in the world who is more incompetent than Carrie LAM? Without her, the number of deaths in Hong Kong would have been far smaller than it is now, and Hong Kong would have a bright future, rather than being caught in this sorry state today. How many people died because of the evil deeds of Carrie LAM from the "anti-extradition to China" movement till now? How many wrong decisions have Carrie LAM made? Carrie LAM simply does not regard the lives and interest of Hongkongers as her first and foremost consideration. The sheer existence of this person and that of the Chief Executive's Office will only do harm to Hong Kong. So, simply put, cut her expenditure and not to give her a penny. She is totally incompetent and useless.

Second, the Police Force. The Police Force has already degenerated into "authorized gangsters". Just look at how they behaved. Reporters videotaped what they had done in Tseung Kwan O recently. They even threatened the reporters in a bid to get hold of the video footage. We have all seen it, and there have been too many such instances. We saw this whole bunch of cops swearing like thugs, and even passer-bys were made to apologize to the cops one by one. They acted just like gangsters. Clad in black and armed to the teeth, they looked as if they were ready to kill anytime. How dare they treat the public in such a way. A housewife was intercepted by several fully-geared anti-riot policemen who were holding pepper spray and aiming at her head at close range. Have we not seen enough of these scenes? These incidents happen every week. As the epidemic prevails, there are fewer of these incidents and we really have to be thankful for that. Let us look at Uncle CHAN. He is over 70 years old and he was only making a phone call but they aimed pepper spray at him as if they were going to spray it on him. What did they want? What threats could he pose? An elder aged over 70 was walking down the stairs, making a phone call. What threats could he pose to the Police? What offence did he commit? These cases are not the worst. Their brazen behaviours videotaped by the media were out-and-out torture. To subdue people who were completely incapable of putting up any resistance, they could break these people's arms and legs. Had they not done so, why would the health care workers have been so indignant? This is why, during the movement, so many health care workers had come forth to point out that the physical injuries inflicted on the protesters were entirely unnecessary.
The Police are the body guards of Carrie LAM. Carrie LAM is counting on these 30,000 policemen as her staunch backing. They are relying on each other and this is why the Chairman of the rank-and-file police officers' association could come forth to do the finger pointing without even giving a damn to Matthew CHEUNG. This is all but a mess. This is Hong Kong's new order brought about by the collusion of Carrie LAM and the Police Force. They are the most villainous. They who have guns in their hands are invincible. In this Budget, those with guns in their hands have the biggest share of funding. They can recruit an additional 2,000 people and procure more weapons. Is this the way to govern Hong Kong? Hong Kong is a civilized society, an advanced society and an open society. The Basic Law has promised Hong Kong democracy, an open society, and that the rule of the law, social order, the economy, and the basic rules in society shall remain the way as we have always enjoyed in Hong Kong. But these people are taking the lead to wreak havoc. They listen to the orders of "Grandpa" in everything and worse still, they do more than they should even when no instruction is given by "Grandpa". When they made mistakes, they acted like scoundrels by beating around the bush, refusing to admit their mistakes. Now there is no check and balance, and there is no way to punish these people. Institutionally, there is just no way to obtain justice for Hong Kong people and protect their fundamental interests.

My speaking time is about to end and I cannot speak further. The Police Force have committed heinous crimes. Over 80% of Hong Kong people demand the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry but the Government adamantly refused to do so. This Chief Executive and the Police Force are holding each other in their arms, defending each other and shielding each other. This is what the HKSAR Government is like nowadays. So, simply put, regarding this Vote on Account Resolution, the expenditures for the Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force should all be cut because they do not worth a single penny.

MR WU CHI-WAI (in Cantonese): In his opening speech, the Secretary highlighted the importance of the funds on account, but he failed to point out that Hong Kong people should also be mindful of two other things in addition to the funds on account. First, the performance of the SAR Government which is given a score of zero by many people, and the trustfulness of the Police Force which also receives a score of zero from over half of Hong Kong people. If the Government cares about public sentiment, the most effective way to show its care is to take out the expenditures of the Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force.
Force, so as to allow members of the public to clearly express their views in the Chamber on issues that they are most concerned about.

However, that is not the case these days. The Secretary has used the hijacking tactics to bundle up the closely-watched funds on account and the expenditures of the much-loathed Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force. This represents the philosophy of the SAR Government's governance. Thinking that people cannot overturn it, the Government resorts to institutional violence in the legislature to do whatever it likes. Then the SAR Government plays the bundling trick to prevent us from speaking our minds and making clear our stance on its deeds, and obviate the need to seriously reflect on itself the reason why its doings have caused considerable resentment towards the Chief Executive, the SAR Government and police brutality. As over half of the population have given a score of zero, and the overall score is less than two, has the Chief Executive done any soul searching on the performance of the Government?

The Democratic Party has proposed amending motions to amend the Vote on Account Resolution exactly for the purpose of responding to such public sentiment. We demand the full deduction of the expenditures of the Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force, for the reason that over the past half year or so, the Government has failed to respond to the two issues, namely Carrie LAM and police brutality, which have triggered public resentment. Carrie LAM has connived at police brutality, connived with the Police Force, and jeopardized Hong Kong's rule of law. Her evil doings are simply innumerable. Worse still, she has caused the Heritage Foundation to lower the freedom score of Hong Kong. Has she reviewed the mistakes she made that cost Hong Kong its crown as the world's freest economy, a position which she has constantly boasted about? Has she examined herself, or kept blaming others?

As far as this Vote on Account Resolution is concerned, we obviously see that Carrie LAM, who has served in various government departments and has good knowledge of our fiscal system, is manipulating the procedures, taking advantage of institutional loopholes, and inflicting profound damage on our social system. From this Vote on Account Resolution to the Budgets in recent years, we can see that the Government's fiscal management has started to crumble with the use of sneaky means to strip the Legislative Council of its function to scrutinize its funding requests. This function is enshrined in the Basic Law and is the responsibility of the Legislative Council. Like what she did last year when raising the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security
Assistance ("CSSA"), Carrie LAM is again manipulating the procedures, saying that the proposal is already set out in the Budget and asking Members back why they failed to notice it. If the Budget is passed, Members will be forced to accept the proposal. This is obviously for the sake of convenience and taking advantage of loopholes.

Budget of this kind has four fiscal black holes. First, the Budget covers individual new items with an allocation exceeding $30 million. As far as public finance is concerned, many individual new items with an allocation exceeding $30 million or even $100 million should obviously not be placed under the Appropriation Bill and the Vote on Account Resolution. Once the Legislative Council passes the Appropriation Bill, these new items will be automatically passed and need not be submitted to the Finance Committee for further scrutiny.

The allocation of funding for the replacement of armoured personnel carriers of the Police Force, which has triggered a public outcry, is certainly a good example. In recent years, the Government has already bundled up many proposals that cost billions of dollars with the Appropriation Bill, and placed these "unauthorized" items under the Budget. For example, in the 2018-2019 Budget, $200 million was reserved under Head 148 (Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (Financial Services Branch)) as provision for the Insurance Authority. In the same year, many projects, each costing more than $30 million, were placed under Head 95 (Leisure and Cultural Services Department) and tied up with the Budget. In last year's Budget, the Government went one step further by reserving $3.36 billion under head 148 to meet the funding requirements for a centralized platform for the administration of Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") registered schemes. All these expenditure items have bypassed the normal scrutiny process of the Finance Committee. In this year's Budget, the Government has placed the $71 billion cash payout scheme under the non-recurrent expenditure of Head 147 (Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)) and there are also individual new items that cost more than $10 billion under Head 44 (Environmental Protection Department).

I have gone through the Budgets over the past 10 years or so. In the 2011-2012 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced the proposed injection of $6,000 into each MPF account, but he only submitted the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for separate examination. The incumbent Financial Secretary has said that he will not exercise his power, if any, to facilitate separate examination of the expenditure of the Police Force or the cash payout proposal.
The Financial Secretary is not lying, but he has only told part of the truth. The whole truth is the Financial Secretary is empowered to separate the proposals. While a former Financial Secretary submitted a cash payout proposal to the Finance Committee for separate examination, the incumbent Government has chosen to bypass the Finance Committee for administrative expediency.

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward YAU said yesterday at the Panel on Commerce and Industry that he was grateful to the Panel for according priority to the examination of the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme—Special 100% Guarantee Product proposed in the Budget. He was also grateful to the Finance Committee for allowing the item to jump the queue and be dealt with at the Finance Committee meeting on the coming Friday, instead of after the passage of the Appropriation Bill. We have asked the Government earlier the reason why the $70 billion cash payout proposal could not be taken out and dealt with separately, and the Government replied that it faced many difficulties. But if we take out the proposal and deal with it separately, we may also allow our colleagues to …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr WU Chi-wai, this joint debate aims at letting Members indicate whether they support the Vote on Account Resolution proposed by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury and the amending motions proposed by Members. Please get back to the topic of the debate.

MR WU CHI-WAI (in Cantonese): President, you need not interrupt me, as I am now presenting my full argument. I am now saying that the Chief Executive has advanced a straw man fallacy and taken advantage of loopholes. I have been explaining that the Chief Executive has taken advantage of loopholes with her good knowledge of the procedures. I want to point out that proposals in the Budget can be dealt with separately, but the Government did not do it. This also indicates that the Chief Executive has, in dealing with this issue, failed to take into account public concerns, and failed to face up to the social movement triggered by the "China extradition bill" over the past half year or so. She has continued to use bundling up as a means to put in place various "unauthorized" items, so that calm discussions on the issues concerned cannot be held in the community. Is the practice of fishing in troubled waters and creating fiscal black holes the instruction of the Financial Secretary or the Chief Executive? Is
it the new fiscal philosophy of Carrie LAM? Is this not the same as what Carrie LAM did when she dealt with the eligible age for elderly CSSA? The Secretary may not be able to give me a reply right now, but I have raised such question for the special meeting of the Finance Committee this year. I hope the Government will give me a detailed reply at that time.

The second fiscal black hole concerns the problem that part of the funds on account may not be used, and this likewise derives from the above mentioned problem. Secretary James Henry LAU said in his opening speech that the aggregate amount of funds being sought is about $215.8 billion, but as I said earlier, the provision for many non-recurrent expenditure items can only be used after the passage of the Appropriation Bill, and thus the actual amount of funding that may be used is roughly estimated to be $100 billion. For this reason, it is actually misleading for the Secretary to claim that $215.8 billion is required, as the use of funding allocated under many items are conditional. I do not know whether there will be any legal consequences, but if the Secretary claims that this figure is the exact amount of funding that may be used, and a bigger constitutional crisis will ensue should the Resolution be not passed, does it mean that even before the passage of the Appropriation Bill which contains the new items by the Legislative Council, the Government can use the funding by means of a funds on account mechanism? I believe the Secretary must give me a reply.

Third, funding formulas devoid of any policy intentions can be put in place as long as the Financial Secretary exercises his power. In fact, government resolutions over the years have all failed to clearly explain to Members the rationale behind the various funding formulas. As for certain non-recurrent expenditure items, 100% of their provisions as shown in the Budget is sought, but are the two factors of "irregular" and "lumpy" nature the rationale for seeking 100% of their provisions? Are such expenditure items time-limited? Can they be dealt with at a later stage or must they be dealt with within these two months? If they must be dealt with within these two months, the Government needs to give us a proper explanation, for this is another way to escape Members' scrutiny of the funding proposals concerned.

The last fiscal black hole is the ample leeway provided for the Financial Secretary in the last sentence of the Resolution to make changes to the amount of funds on account under any subhead at any time. We understand that very often, the Government needs flexibility to deal with contingencies, but given a low level...
of public trust in the Government, the vesting of such power in the Financial Secretary under the Resolution must be subject to specific restrictions, such that the Financial Secretary will be required to seek the endorsement of the Legislative Council for exercising such power.

I have said a lot on the problems with the Vote on Account Resolution, and next I will talk about my proposal on cutting the funds on account for the Chief Executive's Office. On 9 June last year, some 1 million people marched peacefully demanding the withdrawal of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 ("the Bill"), but Carrie LAM rejected them downright. On 16 June, people took to the streets again, but Carrie LAM stood her ground, only saying that the Bill would be suspended. She was not willing to set up an independent commission of inquiry, nor was she willing to fully withdraw the Bill. Subsequently, no matter how people took to the streets, what public opinion polls indicated, or how people from various sectors or social strata demanded the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry, the Government remained nonchalant, saying that the Government could only rely upon the Police Force. It can only rely upon police brutality to suppress the voices or views of the public. To put the blame on others is exactly the nature or characteristic of the Carrie LAM Government. She herself makes no mistakes, and all mistakes are made by others. This indicates how inept the SAR Government is, and explains why so many people have given it a score of zero.

In addition, Carrie LAM, by solely relying upon the Police Force to deal with peaceful petitions in a modern city, has actually made a big mistake. Her connivance to police brutality has relegated an outstanding police force in Asia to an authoritarian tool to suppress members of the public, and unleashed the tyrannical genes in the Police Force, such that the Police Force has regressed to the state of being "authorized gangsters", which were what they were called in the 1960s. In fact, the reason why Hong Kong has become an international financial centre and our rule of law enjoys a worldwide reputation is that every one of us is willing to stay committed to our work with professionalism and impartiality. However, what the Carrie LAM Government has brought to Hong Kong is partiality. At the scenes of protests and clashes, the Police Force enforces the law with prejudice, releasing "blue ribbons" and arresting "yellow ribbons" when scuffles have erupted between the two sides. Members of the public find these biased law enforcement practices unacceptable.
There have been calls in society for establishing an independent commission of inquiry by the SAR Government, but she has refused to do so, saying that she would not sell out the Police Force. Instead, she has sold out Hong Kong people. Not only has she sold out Hong Kong people, but she has also given up Hong Kong's professionalism and impartiality at the expense of our deserved status as an international city. Yesterday, the Central Government issued an order to expel American news workers stationed on the Mainland and this order would be extended to Hong Kong. This is an incident that deals a heavy blow to Hong Kong's "one country, two systems". Is there any response from the SAR Government? No. This indicates that Carrie LAM has sold out Hong Kong, and thus all her salary must be withheld.

MR ANDREW WAN (in Cantonese): President, every year when the Government put forth the Budget, the pro-democracy camp usually will wait till the examination of the Appropriation Bill to propose amendments to reduce the remuneration of heads of departments or Directors of Bureaux and certain unjustified expenditure of the Police Force. In the past, I had proposed amendments to the Appropriation Bill too. Since the Government has been extremely incompetent, I have once proposed cutting the expenditures of the Chief Executive and the Central Policy Unit. Yet, in general, the funds on account sought under the Public Finance Ordinance ("PFO"), which we are discussing today, had seldom aroused controversies in the past. The Government has been shrewd enough to bundle up less controversial expenditure items. Hence, Members often waited until the examination of the Appropriation Bill to debate these issues.

Yet, President, we have no alternative but to intervene earlier this year. There are two main reasons. First, since last June, the performance of the Police has disappointed Hong Kong and the world as a whole, which is obvious to all. The Chairman of my political party, WU Chi-wai, has just talked about part of the concept and now I will focus on the reasons for cutting all the expenditure of the Police Force.

I have mentioned just now that the performance of the Police Force is the worst of all, and some people have described it as "junk grade". The reason I propose cutting the expenditure of the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF") is simple. First, this is definitely a gesture of protest and I admit this honestly. The public have urged us to block the passage of the motion. Second and more
importantly, we have to prevent the Government from playing the financial tricks by first seeking funds on account to serve its covert motive of enabling the Police Force to obtain the funds in advance for such use as procuring multi-purpose vehicles. In other words, the Police Force may commence its procurement early to create a fait accompli. I hope the Secretary will give his reply on this technical aspect later … I will discuss this point in detail later. The funding includes two parts. Regarding the specialized vehicles, some subheads are provided with footnotes while others are not, so I hope he will explain whether this is an attempt to confuse the public. I think they may or even wish to take advantage by confusing the public.

President, as at the end of March, HKPF has an establishment of 35,863 officers. In 2020-2021, an additional 2,500 officers will be recruited, representing an increase of 7%. By the end of March next year, the manpower of the Police Force is expected to exceed 38,400 officers. Which department can be so resourceful to have a 7% increase in manpower in one year?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Andrew WAN, this joint debate seeks to allow Members to discuss whether the Vote on Account Resolution proposed by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury should be supported. As for views on the Budget, Members may wait for the special meetings of the Financial Committee to be held in early April or the second and third Budget meetings of the Council scheduled for the second half of April to present their views.

MR ANDREW WAN (in Cantonese): President, I understand that. Yet, I need to explain why I propose reducing the relevant expenditures.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I am just reminding you to return to the question of this motion.

MR ANDREW WAN (in Cantonese): President, thanks for your reminder. I hope the President shows more patience as I have to build up my argument. The Government does not go insane out of the blue—though it often goes insane—but is pressing forward step by step. I have to explain how it has forced us to take action against the funds on account. This is crystal clear.
I have mentioned earlier that the performance of the Police is poor, yet its manpower will be increased significantly. This is unprecedented. The speech of the Financial Secretary is also strange. He said that in view of the gloomy economic outlook, the challenge would be great, and since the short-term outlook would not be optimistic, the Government should reduce its expenditure and avoid unnecessary spending. Yet, under this situation, the expenditure of the Police shoots up unexpectedly and the description of the items involved is rather vague. I will go into details later. Hence, I implore the President to listen to me patiently. How is the performance of the Police now? As pointed out by two colleagues earlier, it is comparable to the era of the "Four Great Sergeants" including LUI Lok, that is 1974, prior to the establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The situation in the 1950s and 1960s was similar to the present situation. Yet, the present situation may be even worse, for the Police are equipped with more powerful weapons nowadays and they can put on full gear to suppress the people. Just now, some colleagues called them "authorized gangsters". This is actually the impression of the public.

It is mentioned earlier that some police officers had used swear words to force passers-by to offer apology in Tseung Kwan O. If we merely listen to the audio recording without watching the footage, we will really think that someone is interrogated by triad members. President, more so, John TSE, the former Chief Superintendent of the Police Public Relations Branch who has just been transferred to Kwai Tsing District, dares to say that the Police has been righteous and open. Nonetheless, what we see is that they are beating protesters and young people within their sight rather than being righteous. Kwai Tsing District is a case in point. People convened a resident meeting to discuss the Wuhan pneumonia and their opposition to setting up a clinic in the district. After the meeting and the departure of journalists, police officers returned to the scene to arrest a dozen of people and charged them for illegal assembly. This is really ridiculous, is it not? Even if they have to meet quotas, they should not frame the young people up this way, should they not? This is why we are dissatisfied with the Police. To avoid being videotaped by journalists, police officers are getting smarter, for they will take actions one hour after the journalists have left. Yet, President, more often than not, this should not be done. How do the Police act when journalists are present? They will shine strong light at the eyes of journalists, push them, throw them to the ground, pepper spray at them, taunt them as "bad journalists" and insult their parents with swear words. President, these scenes are common. This is the behaviour of the Police Force which we have seen so far. If we allocate funding to the Police Force like this, how will
the public be convinced? Can it still be regarded as a disciplined force? President, it is really ludicrous, is it not?

President, in response to your earlier reminder, I have explained why the public are so angry that they want to vote down this resolution. Another reason is that the devil is in the detail. Among the items included in the funds on account, I notice several high-risk items. Really, the devil is in the detail. If the present motion is passed, not only will HKPF receive funding amounts to 20% of the recurrent expenditure under the Operating Account, but also 100% of the non-recurrent expenditure. Let us look at Subhead 603 (Plant, vehicle and equipment) under the Operating Account Non-Recurrent subheads, which includes the provision for procuring the six widely controversial armoured personnel carriers.

Regarding subhead 695, it is stated vaguely that the funding is for the procurement and replacement of police specialized vehicles without any detailed description. Although the footnote to subhead 603 points out that the funding concerned will be sought in the context of the Appropriation Bill 2020 ("the Bill"), it is not stated that the funds on account being sought, once obtained, will not be used by the Government right away. If the funds will not be used immediately, what is the urgency for their inclusion in the funds on account? If approval is to be sought in the context of the Bill, why all the hurry? We do not trust the Government at all and suspect that it will act secretly to have its way upon obtaining the funding. A government cannot govern without the trust of the people. The Carrie LAM administration acts guilefully and adopts dirty tactics. The public have unequivocally expressed their distrust in her. I have grave doubts about this part, so the resolution should not be passed hastily.

As for the earlier mentioned Subhead 695 (Police specialised vehicles), this is even beyond dispute. Obviously, there is not any requirement or footnote under the subhead. In other words, the funding, once obtained, can be used for procuring specialized vehicles. What kind of vehicles are these? The likes of water cannon vehicles used for suppressing the people. President, this authorization is extremely ridiculous. As I said earlier, the Appropriation Bill is related to the examination of public finance, so the present Vote on Account Resolution made under the Bill should indeed deal with items with urgency. Yet, what is the urgency of these items? Are they so anxious to purchase the equipment to suppress the people? What is the urgency for the Police Force to procure the said equipment? Why is the Legislative Council not given the time
to discuss these controversial items? They are in the majority, so why can they not wait till May? Why are they in such a hurry? How hideous they are! They do not even bother to put on an act, do they? They are too eager to beat people. Am I right?

President, I find it even more ridiculous when I check the past record of the deliberation of the Finance Committee. I discover that in 2017-2018, the Government did account for the usage of funds under this subhead, including the procurement of specialized crowd management vehicles, that is, the water cannon vehicles which I mentioned earlier. In the 2018-2019 Budget, this subhead did not include water cannon vehicles but a large number of Police Tactical Unit ("PTU") vehicles. President, as the description is too vague, we do not know how the funding under subhead 695 will be used eventually but it will not go beyond that. Given the prevailing condition of the Government, the performance of the Police and the lack of trust of the people in the Government, is the Government trying to take advantage by confusing the public? Why does it still seek additional funding?

President, apart from this devilish detail, there are other such details as well. In addition to vehicles, the expenditure of HKPF has never been transparent. Among the existing subheads, I cannot find any expenditure relating to weapons. In fact, such expenditure is always difficult to identify. Nonetheless, there is no reason for not discussing the expenditure on weapons in the context of funds on account. Where is such expenditure shown? Some time ago, we had asked the former "No. 1" of HKPF as well as TANG Ping-keung on several occasions, and they kept saying that new equipment would be introduced to cope with the needs of society and the Police Force. Yet, where is such expenditure shown? Is it included under the funds for stun guns mentioned earlier? No explanation is provided here. Which subhead is it put under?

At present, the public do not trust the Police Force at all. President, how can we allow the Government to put forth such an ambiguous resolution and approve the funds on account? What is more, there are still a lot of devilish details which make it likely for the Police Force to procure tear gas canisters, other weapons for suppressing the public, stun guns and even water cannon vehicles. The procurement will definitely, not just likely, take place, as they have said so unequivocally.
Some time ago, colleagues from the pro-establishment camp said that the Democratic Party and the pro-democracy camp were playing tricks by proposing the amendment motions to do away with police officers. But the greatest challenge we are now facing is to fight the epidemic, and that is what the Chief Executive says. Do police officers do patrolling? No, they have admitted that no patrolling is done. Are police stations open? No, they are close all the time. What police duties have the Police Force performed daily to protect the citizens? When quarantine centres are also manned by the Civil Aid Service and the Fire Services Department, the Police Force do not need so much resources. Unfortunately, most anti-epidemic resources have been allocated to the Police Force. If the Police Force need not bother to fulfil these duties, their resources may be redeployed to the departments which are doing these jobs. In that case, the funds on account will no longer be necessary and we may take our time to deal with these items in May.

President, the performance of the Police Force on "21 July" and "31 August" as well as in the protest movement as a whole, such as patting on the shoulder of triad members, has stirred up fierce public anger. If the Police Force do nothing, triad activities, on the contrary, will not be that rampant and this may do more good to the public. We notice over the years that the Carrie LAM administration has some extraordinary skills—it is most proficient in blowing water (meaning bragging) and talking cannons (meaning bluffing), together they make "super water cannon vehicles", so why bother about procuring water cannon vehicles? Why do they "鬼鬼祟祟偷番薯" (meaning stealing things sneakily) and take advantage by confusing the public? They just give a vague account and try to take advantage by confusing the public. Do they really need to act this way? No, there is no such need. Stop confusing the public.

President, we will not allow the passage of the resolution. We will not provide the funding. Let us call it a day. We will not approve the procurement of water cannon vehicles. Thank you, President.

MS TANYA CHAN (in Cantonese): President, my vocabulary is not as rich as that of Mr Andrew WAN, who knows such Chinese idioms as "鬼鬼祟祟偷番薯" (meaning stealing things sneakily). However, we in the Civic Party express our support for the amending motions proposed by him and other Members on the Vote on Account Resolution. I also wish to present the relevant reasons here.
On every mention of Carrie LAM, I used to be getting angry. But I wonder if it is because I could see only half of her face these days, and thus I would not feel so angry at the sight of her. Every time I saw her, I would think of these words: "a thorn in the flesh". Certainly, the occasion which left the deepest impression on us is when she said that she would told the people wearing masks within her sight to take them off. She was so cocky in talking about the anti-epidemic work. There was no need to do anything except focusing on the fight against the epidemic. However, at first she went so far as to turn a deaf ear to expert advice, saying that if she saw anyone wearing a face mask, she would tell him to take it off. Buddy, what kind of Chief Executive is that? She openly sent out a wrong message. Fortunately, everyone, including her, eventually came to know what the situation was. Hence, President, I am also worried about you. You are not wearing a face mask, though there are not many people around you. We hope the officials had better wear face masks too.

President, first let me take out this placard for illustration. I originally intended to use this placard for discussion with my colleagues. This is "Wuhan pneumonia". Did Members read the article published by Prof YUEN Kwok-yung today? Please do not be so fussy, arguing here whether it is "Wuhan pneumonia" or how it should be called. Do not be so senseless, buddy. The most important thing is to make people understand what we are discussing, which is simply the epidemic. This table shows—I have not yet added today's figures—the weekly figures to facilitate our discussion on the relevant issues. As we can see, now we may be facing a third wave of imported confirmed cases. In the last seven days, there were a total of 47 confirmed cases. There had never been so many confirmed cases within seven days before. Even during the outbreak of such cases as those of the family sharing a hot pot meal, there were at most only a total of 31 cases in seven consecutive days. Certainly, now we see that the situation overseas may be even worse. So we suddenly feel that Carrie LAM's performance is not too bad. But we should not forgive her too quickly. I clearly remember that in mid-February when the outbreak situation was more serious, the media reported that Carrie LAM had submitted a secret report to the Central Authorities to inform on others. Up to now, she still dares not admit it. President, that report was intriguing. Come to think about it. What did her office do? Why do we demand cutting its expenditure? That report—I think it was really amazing—attributed the failure of the anti-epidemic measures to social movements, blaming the opposition camp for the sharp fall in the public confidence in the Government. Mud-slinging, rumour-mongering, discord-sowing and conflict-inciting—I am not rapping—had made the anti-epidemic work even more daunting. President, hearing that, one would
really think she had nothing to do with this at all. It tells a great deal about Carrie LAM herself and her Chief Executive's Office … President, I took the trouble to look up the aim and brief description of her office. It has a great aim, which is to provide support to the Chief Executive in policy formulation and delivery of pledges made in the Policy Address, and to ensure the efficient management of the Chief Executive's Office building. Most importantly, the Chief Executive's Office is responsible for ensuring that the Chief Executive effectively undertakes public engagements in the formulation and coordination of policies. President, is it operated effectively? Of course not. Carrie LAM fully embodies several characteristics: bootlicking, arrogance, staying on shamelessly and uselessness. As mentioned by an Honourable colleague just now, her popularity rating could unbelievably drop to a single digit. President, I really find it hard to believe. I was startled when I read it that day. A further drop of 2% will bring it down to a mere 7%. As we all know, she and "7" make a good match. Her popularity rating may plummet to only 7% before long. With just 2% to go, the goal will be reached very soon, right? How difficult will it be?

President, as we can see, Carrie LAM allows herself to be preoccupied with anti-epidemic work and nothing else. We demand setting up an independent commission of inquiry. She refused but said smugly that she would set up a review committee. Regarding this review committee, the reporters have recently pressed her for the details. She responded that now she would only focus on anti-epidemic work. What? In that case, why does her office need so much money? Better shut it down. Her performance in fighting the epidemic is not that remarkable, is it? Sometimes I find Carrie LAM really something. She has the Independent Police Complaints Council ("IPCC") write the report for her. Against her expectation, IPCC could not publish the report because of a lawsuit. It does not matter. What matters most is that halfway, a group of foreign experts had issued a statement on Twitter about their lack of power to conduct any investigation before jumping ship collectively. After that, nothing has to be done. Carrie LAM continued to make excuses. Thick-skinned and unabashed, she insisted on setting up a review committee. Yet no one could tell her next announced move would be the fight against the epidemic. Forget it. If she cannot find anyone to serve as the Chairman, just admit it. So much for this part. The money involved is not too much. Both Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr WU Chi-wai have proposed relevant amending motions.

Next, I wish to talk about the expenditure of the Police Force. As mentioned by Mr Andrew WAN just now, we should be particularly aware that
"operating account" and "capital account" are two things. Since June, countless incidents of indiscriminate arrests and abuse of force by the Police have taken place. If this funding proposal is passed, that means the Police are given permanent approval for buying arms and expanding their establishment. Why did I say that? Because "capital account" is permanent appropriation. This Vote on Account Resolution covers the full amount of the "capital account". If this resolution is passed today, that means the Police can buy six armoured personnel carriers right away. President, you know we have grave concern. "Replacement of armoured personnel carrier" is clearly written under the "Capital Account" of subhead 603. One, two, three, four, five, six. There are six in total.

Moreover, as we all know, once the so-called Vote on Account is approved today, the money under the "capital account" will all be gone. After obtaining the money, the Police can act immediately. In his earlier opening remarks, the Secretary has of course enumerated many urgent items, such as the need to disburse an additional one month's allowance, this and that in order to help people with urgent needs, so on and so forth. Do the Police badly need this funding now? We are fighting the epidemic … Speaking of fighting the epidemic, President, how do the Police do this? This photo is most classic. We all remember this cruise ship. The health care workers only wore a pastel blue plastic coverall, while the police officers stood miles away. How hard did they fight the epidemic? They were in full gear—I am not talking about the full gear they were dressed in when fighting the people, but the full gear for fighting the epidemic—standing miles away, what epidemic were they fighting? As mentioned just now, they are not guarding the quarantine centres, but their anti-epidemic supplies are pretty bountiful. President, they have the largest stock of N95 face masks, the largest stock of bleach as well as the largest stock of full protective suits. The only thing for which they rank second—What a pity! I wonder why the Police Force would rank second—is that their surgical masks are slightly fewer than those of the Department of Health. Come to think about it. Are the Police Force fighting the epidemic? I really do not know. I only know that the Policy Bureau to which Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN belongs is indeed drowned by anti-epidemic work, especially—as I mentioned just now—a third wave of the epidemic is highly likely in the coming days. The imported cases will be even more rampant than before. As for whether there will be another outbreak in the community, the next couple of weeks is the most critical period. So we have got to be very careful and cautious.
Then there are also some operating accounts. Just now creation of posts was mentioned. After obtaining 20% of the appropriation under the operating account, they will start staff recruitment. Will they possibly dismiss the staff afterwards? It is impossible, is it not? Furthermore, President, after all, the severity of the abuse of force by the Police Force lies in the following points: payments for the arms are made by us. Wages are paid by us. Their OT (i.e. overtime) allowance is also paid by us. Also, if the injured person or arrestee who was assaulted has to be admitted to a public hospital, we will have to pay the fees. Then, if the person concerned asks the Legal Aid Department to file a claim against the Commissioner of Police, we will have to offer assistance—just now I saw the news report that the MTR Corporation Limited has to hand over the CCTV footage relating to the incident on 31 August—President, please do not forget that in the end, we may be required to pay and the amount involved will be huge. Since the police officers assaulted people indiscriminately, if the claim is substantiated, the Commissioner of Police, which also means the Special Administrative Region Government, must make compensation. Why do we have to pay their wages as well as the medical fees and compensation for the injured beaten up by them? Are you kidding? Now they have assaulted members of the public. Did they use their brains? Do they think that there will be no consequences for assault? Now this bunch of police officers bear no consequences for assault. It is only that personally, they bear no consequences, but all of us have to shoulder the cost for them. How can that be? Do they think that we need not foot the bill? Right, they may not need to foot the bill personally, but all of us have to do it for them. Not only for one generation. Now we have lost the faith of two or even three generations, the young generations. How can that be? And they still wish to seek funding from us? What wishful thinking!

President, there is also devil in the details. What devil is in the details? Now Tamar Park is no longer called Tamar Park, President. Instead, it is the "Water Barrier" Park. There are water barriers everywhere. Even the footbridge is full of water barriers for no reason at all. Three fifths of the road have disappeared. And the streets are crowded. Back then, the fight against the epidemic had not started yet. It was such a hassle for us to go back and forth between the eateries and our offices during lunchtime. Okay, now that the water barriers are not needed and are just casually put aside. When they are not used, they should be removed. Why is everywhere still surrounded by water barriers? How is the money originally allocated for buying water barriers used? Fortunately, the **South China Morning Post** found a whistle blower, who
disclosed that the money for buying water barriers was incorporated in the expenditure of the Policy Bureaux and Secretaries of Departments. President, the money was used not only for buying water barriers. Why? Their reason was that the money was used for protecting the departments because that place was the Central Government Offices. I heard that the departments concerned need not pay the police officers' wages, but they are responsible for paying the wages of the retired police officers recruited. How can they do that? President, because there is something called "allocation warrant". The Police will be paid a total of $95 million which is incorporated in various expenditure items named "other security facilities". What facilities are they? Are they only water barriers? What else? President, I really have no clue. Actually, are we making things difficult for them if we ask them to remove the water barriers? All the police stations have shut their gates. President, my job requires me to go to the police station to bail out my clients or accompany them to the police station. But when I arrived, I found that the gate was closed. I had to call the police station before being let in. I even had to make the call at midnight, wondering how I could get in. Helping an arrestee is already that difficult, not to mention the need to wait for some 10 hours. I do not bother to talk about these things today. Wages of retired police officers also have to be paid. Transport expenses of police officers have to be paid, too. Buddy, can we lawyers charge any transport fees for travelling to the police station to help? Can money be charged for that? No way! All these are included in "general administration expenses", ranging from $27 million to $696 million. What on earth are these?

Moreover, now we cannot raise any questions. Secretary, why? At that time we did not know what these things were. We had especially compiled a table. My colleagues worked really hard. When comparing the percentages relating to the items of the three offices of the Secretaries of Departments and 13 Policy Bureaux, they found that some went up and some went down. The growth of some items reached 87%. There were all sorts of things. Had there not been a whistle blower, how would a government spokesperson have been forced to come out to make a response? It turns out that we have to make this kind of payment. Not really! President, if I have time, I will also make an enquiry. It seems the word "Police" is written on the water barriers near the Legislative Council. To whom do they belong? Were they bought by us for the Police, or are they loaned to us and we need to pay a rent? Or do they help and protect us in passing? I really have no idea, buddy. What the heck is going on?
We certainly will not support the Resolution. Carrie LAM is so useless without a tiny bit of leadership. She would only make those secret reports to inform on others—she made those reports not to stab us in the back because we are used to being stabbed by her. We would not feel the pain of the stab. Now when I see her, I would smile because she is incompetent and useless. But she made a secret report to inform on the pro-establishment camp. President, I wonder if the many criticisms and "greetings" she had received made her feel bitter and submit a secret report, taking the opportunity to stab us in the back, accusing us of standing in her way, making the people lose all the confidence in her, influencing the public and sowing discord among the people. I wonder if we have the ability to break up the relationship between the pro-establishment camp and her as well. It depends on how brilliant Carrie LAM is.

Today, I wish to thank Dr Fernando CHEUNG and the two Members of the Democratic Party here for proposing the amending motions. We in the Civic Party will support the amending motions and vote against the Vote on Account Resolution.

Thank you, President.

MR CHAN CHI-CHUEN (in Cantonese): President, this is the eighth year for me to take part in the scrutiny of the Budget, and this is also the eighth year for me to participate in the debate on the Vote on Account Resolution. I remember that I spoke on the Vote on Account Resolution every year in the past. In fact, not many Members spoke on the Vote on Account Resolution in the past, as seeking funds on account is like a ritual, it is just a matter of formality in that the resolution would always be passed. The Secretary indicated today—actually the same has been said every year—that as the Budget would not be approved until May at the earliest, it is necessary to seek funds on account for the period from April to May to enable the Government to carry on its normal operation. Therefore, even some Members of the pro-democracy camp might not oppose the Vote on Account Resolution in the past because everyone considers it necessary to keep the Government running, it just follows the same logic.

I recall that the Legislative Council inadvertently negatived the Vote on Account Resolution one year when I have not yet served as a Member—Ms Tanya CHAN also casted a vote at that time—because some Members of the pro-establishment camp had left for meetings of the Standing
Committee of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. It was as if the sky were to fall. But times have changed. Even though the Secretary reiterated that problems A, B, C, D, E and F would arise if funds on account could not be secured, Members of the pro-democracy camp will—I believe so, though I have not asked them one by one—resolutely oppose this Vote on Account Resolution. The logic is very simple. We do not even support the Budget in its entirety, how come we would support the Government when it seeks approval from the Legislative Council today for funds on account representing 34% of the total appropriation under the Budget?

Before moving onto the reasons why I oppose this Vote on Account Resolution, I would like to bring up some issues for a start. I have said that it was just a matter of formality for us to scrutinize the Vote on Account Resolution in the past. Even if we, the filibustering Members, speak, people will criticize us for making use of the subject to put over our own ideas. No matter how we vote in the end, the resolution will be passed anyway, and that we are just taking the opportunity to rebuke the Government. Yet, very few people will look carefully into the details of the funds on account. I am going to put forth the following questions in the hope that the Secretary will respond if he has time when giving his reply later, so as to address the many concerns of the Members and the public.

All along, the logic of the Government is that the Legislative Council will still be scrutinizing the Budget in April to May, it is hence necessary to seek funds on account to meet the operational requirements for these two months. However, if you take a look at the Vote on Account Resolution this time, the Government has sought a funding of $215,865,713,000, representing 34% of the total appropriation. Why is it 34%? Such an amount is indeed unusual, and I have also done some research on it: Funds on account sought was $95.1 billion in 2017, $113.1 billion in 2018, $131 billion in 2019, and $215.8 billion this year, an amount which has increased drastically. The Government has also noticed this, because even if people do not examine it carefully, such a large amount with a substantial increase over the figure in the previous year will definitely arouse people's attention. Therefore, the Government has provided a so-called footnote, pointing out that "due to the irregular and lumpy nature of the non-recurrent subheads, 100% of their provisions as shown in the draft Estimates is sought."—that is to say, it is taking this opportunity to seek the appropriation in full—"Hence, an increase in funding for the non-recurrent expenditure in the
2020-2021 financial year has led to an increase in the percentage of total funds on account sought against the total appropriation." That is really a significant increase, as much as 34%.

In fact, I also have a question previously. The Government often claims that the funds on account can meet the operational requirements for two months, but I believe that 20% of the total appropriation can actually meet the expenditure of more than two months, or, as a matter of fact, two to three months. But why does the Government claim that it is for two months? Because the Government will come out in late April to cry wolf, asking us not to filibuster, otherwise it will create a financial cliff, and problems A, B, C, D, E, F and G—actually, the Government has the money, but it claims on purpose that it can only cope with the expenditure of two months in an attempt to make everyone feel more anxious, for some people still believe in it. However, far less people will believe it nowadays. Even if they believe that the Government will really be unable to cope with its expenditure, they will just let it be; should there be a financial cliff, just let it be. As the Government was unwilling to handle the pay increase of the Police separately, we even voted against the civil service pay rise. Since there are many projects involving lavish decoration for police stations and police officers' clubs under the Capital Works Reserve Fund, we can vote against them as well. No matter it is the funds on account or the total appropriation under the Budget, we can also vote against them because so many injustices are hidden therein. Do not think that by saying "'Slow Beat', you have finally succeeded in fighting for a rebate of $10,000"—some reporters still remember that I have been asking for a direct rebate to the entire population since my first year in office, and I have finally succeeded this year—that said, will I support the Budget? Of course not. Go to conduct a public opinion poll, as members of the public will not be blinded by this $10,000. Handing out this $10,000 is something that the Government ought to do, and it has only done this too late—Donald TRUMP only needs a few weeks to give the cash handout—we will hence vote against it as well.

Having said that, Secretary, honestly, is 20% of the total appropriation able to meet the expenditure for two months? In addition, the funds on account sought this time actually represent 34% of the total appropriation. Why has the amount increased significantly? Some Members mentioned just now that the Secretary had made a great remark. He said, "Subject to the above aggregate amount not being exceeded,"—that is, not exceeding $215.86 billion—"the resolution enables the Financial Secretary to vary the funds on account in respect
of any subhead, but these variations must not exceed the provision for that subhead in the 2020-2021 Estimates of Expenditure." But the problem is, taking "Head 122—Hong Kong Police Force" as an example, the provision amounts to $25.7 billion. In theory, supposing that I am doing an academic study, the Government now seeks funds on account of $215.8 billion, and everyone knows that the Police have all the say now, even Carrie LAM and Matthew CHEUNG are at their disposal. So, theoretically, the Government can take out from the funds on account the entire sum of $25.7 billion required by the Police for the whole year, and then allocate the funding to them first. Does the Government have such a power in theory, and will it do so? This involves the amendments proposed by many Honourable colleagues, that is, the questions that they will ask when proposing to reduce the expenditure of the Police Force. My friends, we must first sort out what the meaning and actual effect of the so-called reduction of funds on account are. The meaning of proposing amendments to the Vote on Account Resolution is, of course, to show the strong dissatisfaction of all of you towards the relevant departments, including the Police Force and the Chief Executive's Office, or express this on your behalf. That said, even if these amendments are passed today, it does not imply that their annual overall expenditure has been reduced by 20%. The actual effect is merely that they will not be allocated that 20% of the total appropriation today. The final outcome still depends on the Budget debate in the Legislative Council to be held in late April to May. They will be deprived of this sum of funding if we can really reduce the expenditure of the Police Force. Otherwise, theoretically—I believe this will not happen in reality—that 20% of the total appropriation will still be allocated to them upon passage of the Budget. In other words, the funding allocation will only be postponed, and the actual effect will not be the deletion of such an amount.

The Secretary mentioned earlier that the Financial Secretary has the power to deploy the funding as long as it does not exceed the provision earmarked for a particular subhead. Such being the case, can the relevant departments utilize the funding before we pass the entire Budget? As some Members have also asked just now, can the Police Force utilize the funds on account to procure water cannon vehicles and replace equipment such as armoured vehicles? The answer is "no" according to my understanding, am I right? Of those non-recurrent expenditures for which 100% provisions can be sought, can the Government utilize the whole of this sum? Or is it merely some sort of formalities or usual practice for the Government to seek funding this way? Why do I ask such a question? It is because the Secretary did not make such a remark last year. I
wonder if the Secretary can remember what he said last year. He indicated last year that the aggregate amount of funds on account that could be utilized by the Government was some $131 billion—I have rounded off the figure here—before the Appropriation Bill 2019 would come into operation, and this represented around 25% of the total appropriation of some $515.7 billion under the Appropriation Bill 2019. However, he did not specifically mention that the provisions could be deployed due to the irregular and lumpy nature of the non-recurrent subheads. If this can be done, then it will be meaningless to reduce the expenditure of individual departments or Policy Bureaux when we formally scrutinize the Budget, right? For instance, the Government is aware that I will propose to reduce the provision for "Head 122—Hong Kong Police Force", such that the Government allocates the funding to them now—the Government can allocate the provision to them as long as it does not exceed $25.7 billion—and they spend all the funding immediately. What is done cannot be undone. So, theoretically and technically, what will happen if the amendments to reduce the expenditure of the Police Force are passed at the Committee stage during scrutiny of the Budget in the future? Does this mean that they owe the Government this sum? The Secretary must explain this.

In fact, theoretically, the spirit of the law behind our scrutiny of the Vote on Account Resolution today is to enable the Government to meet the recurrent expenditure incurred earlier, such as the expenditure on civil service pay, the Hospital Authority, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, grants to universities, civil service pension schemes, etc. before Members are given the opportunity to indicate whether they will support the new Budget of the Government. Yet, insofar as the new initiatives are concerned, even if they involve non-recurrent expenditure of the so-called irregular and lumpy nature, in theory, it does not imply that they will certainly secure the support of the Legislative Council, right? Even if this sum has already been transferred to the account of the relevant department from an accounting perspective, will the relevant department not be able to utilize the funding? I hope the Secretary will explain this to us clearly. If it is a new project, why should this sum be included in the funds on account, such that the Government is actually seeking for 34% of the total appropriation today? The figure is unprecedentedly high, and it is not only high in percentage terms, but the actual amount is huge as well. If the Government seeks funds this way, can it seek funding for the rebate of $10,000 now? The rebate of $10,000 is also a one-off expenditure, can the Government seek to obtain this sum in the funds on account? I think this is impossible.
I will certainly support all the amendments proposed by Honourable Members, which mainly involve the Chief Executive's Office and the Police Force. If we really want to have a discussion, there are actually many departments that we may talk about. But the President will remind us that we should have a discussion only upon resumption of the Second Reading Debate of the Appropriation Bill 2020 after Members have raised thorough questions at the special meetings of the Finance Committee and proposed amendments. We only have 15 minutes to speak on this occasion. I do not even have enough time to follow what fellow Members have done by enumerating the unbearable acts and wrongdoings committed by the Police. But I want to say that since it is the public's demand to disband the Police Force, whilst the Government considers such a demand too extreme, it is then fair to set up an independent commission of inquiry, which has yet to be formed up to this moment. When we asked Carrie LAM, she said we should not ask her about this as the community was fully committed to the fight against the epidemic outbreak at present, so that she would only talk about issues on fighting against the epidemic outbreak for the time being. That is to say, we should not ask her about issues on an independent review committee or independent commission of inquiry. On the other hand, it has been said that the report of the Independent Police Complaints Council cannot be published due to a judicial review and will be withheld temporarily. Such being the case, the provision for the Police should be put on hold as well. If the Vote on Account Resolution is passed, theoretically, the $25.7 billion can be directly paid into their accounts. "A person can never get his money back once it is handed to a swindler." In the next two months, they, being strong and powerful, can keep on beating up our people given their abundant manpower and firepower. How can we support this?

**MS CLAUDIA MO** (in Cantonese): In this Council, Members from the pro-democracy camp shout themselves hoarse, doing a backbreaking job. At first, a Vote on Account motion, given its temporary nature, would normally get passed eventually, and there was nothing special about it. However, to quote what "Slow Beat", Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, said just now: I now do not wish to approve the funding, as Hong Kong people are indignant. The percentage of funds on account sought against the total appropriation surprisingly stands at 34%. Has it gone too far? Members of the public are indignant with various government departments, and I would focus on three groups. First, the Police Force. Second, the Security Bureau, the Food and Health Bureau, the
Immigration Department and even the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, etc., about which I will go into detail later. Third, it is certainly the Chief Executive's Office.

We have heard much about the Police Force over the past six months or so. People keep saying "dirty cops" every day. What a harsh term. Members of the public are supposed to like the Police. They should feel safe seeing the Police on the streets, thinking that they are friendly. But they just feel the other way round now. I am not going to list what have happened one by one. People can tell right from wrong, with a clear answer in mind. As a matter of fact, the 25% increase in the Police Force's expenditure is shocking indeed. Which department will be like that? The provision for Radio Television Hong Kong has remained unchanged at $1 billion.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind Honourable colleagues of the choice of diction. We should not say "abuse of violence" because violence itself is a bad thing, which will not turn into a good thing even if it is not abused. Honourable colleagues should say an abuse of force and police brutality.

Nevertheless, have we wronged the Police Force? The latest news exclusively covered by Reuters quoted four veteran diplomats—should be diplomats from China, or Hong Kong, with no specific details given—saying that during the "anti-extradition to China" protests, China deployed 4 000 members of the Armed Police Force—the People's Armed Police Force—to participate in the crackdown on the protests in Hong Kong. It was strange. Did they come to observe, learn or get to know more about Hong Kong, or participate in law enforcement? Was that possible? We saw from live broadcast on television or photos flooding the Internet capturing police brutality that those officers were masked with their face completely covered by helmets, eye shields and face shields, and we simply did not know who they were. Is that the truth? Can it serve to clear the name of the Police Force?

Please listen up. We are now talking about 4 000, not 400, members of the Armed Police Force. The Security Bureau should come forward to make clarification. I have written to the Security Bureau to enquire about that, and I may get a reply a month later stating "Thank you for your letter. A reply will be given to you in due course". It is totally unacceptable. I do not know if officials of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau have heard about the report of Reuters titled "Exclusive: China's internal security force on
frontlines—frontlines—of Hong Kong protests". Is it not shocking? Does "one country, two systems" still exist? Does it mean that Beijing has all the say?

The Government now strikes the same attitude in proposing the Vote on Account motion, which is a high-handed approach. In a word, with such a high-handed approach, the Government can do whatever it pleases after the funds have been approved. We have all along been demanding the Chief Executive set up an independent commission of inquiry into police brutality. Yet she adamantly refused, and said subsequently that an independent review committee would be formed. Now the Chief Executive has refused to answer any questions from journalists about the progress of the committee, indicating that she will take no questions except the ones relating to anti-epidemic efforts. In that case, she can do whatever she pleases, which is not fair to the Police Force. She really needs to give a proper response. Otherwise, Hong Kong people will feel indignant with the Police Force, while the authorities maintain that the Police Force cannot be left out from the funds on account. But all in all, how can it be possible for the Police Force's expenditure to increase by one-fourth?

Second, when it comes to the Security Bureau, we all know why. The Security Bureau is above the Police Force. Members of the public also feel indignant with the Food and Health Bureau, the Immigration Department and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. What makes them feel indignant? Because the Basic Law stipulates that immigration matters of Hong Kong are affairs which the Hong Kong SAR Government may administer on its own. Now Beijing has obviously ordered certain journalists from the Washington Post, New York Times and Wall Street Journal to return their media passes by the deadline, virtually expelling them. Is it joking? How can that be? As long as it is an order from Beijing, it will be executed by whatever means, will it not? The SAR Government dares not give any response. It is heard that there is a Government spokesperson. I have these questions now: What is the name of the Government spokesperson? What is his or her rank? What is his or her pay? Where does he or she work? What kind of Government spokesperson is that? Why is no one giving a response even now? Do they lack the guts to give a response? Are they still saying that "one country, two systems" has been working well? If Beijing now orders not to extend the work visa of a certain journalist, the SAR Government had better play it smart.

Do Members recall that some time ago, we put our question here loud and clear: Has Beijing now made an order to forbid Victor MALLEY, journalist of the Financial Times of the United Kingdom, from continuing to work as a journalist
or editor in Hong Kong? The Secretary dared not answer, saying that he would not comment on individual cases. I believe he will give the same answer this time around. If so, the Government can expect nothing. No matter whether they are funds on account or not, I will not give my approval. I even hope the entire sum of appropriation will not be approved eventually.

As for disease control, we heard the public officer's reply to the oral question this morning, and were taken aback hearing the latest figures of the epidemic. It is now a world pandemic. It is more than an epidemic, and has turned into a pandemic. In fact, there are still 6,000 Mainland visitors entering Hong Kong weekly on average, with continuous inflow and outflow. We can understand the Government's move to evacuate Hong Kong people from Wuhan, rescuing them back to Hong Kong from Wuhan. There are also students studying abroad who are children of Hong Kong people. We certainly need to take them back. But for those Chinese passport holders coming to Hong Kong mainly for visiting relatives, can they wait a minute? The Government has really disappointed Hong Kong people in so doing. Has the Secretary asked Carrie LAM to talk it over with the Security Bureau? But Carrie LAM may not listen to him. Nevertheless, this is their internal affair, and I will not interfere. The crux is public indignation. The Hospital Authority currently gives people a negative impression as it issued a letter, as a reprisal gesture, to health care workers who went on strike demanding a full border closure. How could that be? It is under the Food and Health Bureau, which should also be overseen by the Secretary.

Lastly, I certainly have to talk about the Chief Executive's Office, which is really amusing. As exclusively reported by the Apple Daily, the Chief Executive backstabbed and snitched on the bootlickers from the pro-establishment camp. But before long, she campaigned for the bootlickers from the pro-establishment camp for the election in September. That means she has paid no heed to the epidemic despite its severity, only obsessed herself with snitching and saying such things about the epidemic, which is downright unbecoming. I casually made enquiries with the Chief Executive's Office about the news report, not expecting to get any reply. But someone really answered me right away. He replied in English: "This allegation is too serious". I said I was talking to him on the basis of something written in black and white, and he gave me no further reply. Carrie LAM gave no response either. Having to bite the bullet, she acted as if nothing had happened, thinking that Hong Kong people were forgetful and would lose their memory anytime. She clearly expressed her hope that the epidemic could create a good atmosphere favourable to the pro-establishment
camp for the Legislative Council election in September. We may think that the Chief Executive of Hong Kong serves all Hong Kong people. But that is not the case. Grossly biased, she openly declares her preference.

Now according to some, the behaviour of a few newly elected District Council members who state things like "No blue ribbons allowed, and no service for them" is really inappropriate and those holding public office should serve all people. I agree that everyone should be served. As the head of the entire SAR, Carrie LAM dared make such remarks but dared not deny it. In fact, if she dared say it, she should dare admit it. She had the guts to make such remarks, which were then recorded in black and white. If she dared not deny saying that, the so-called Chief Executive's Office might as well close down! That is it!

**DR KWOK KA-KI** (in Cantonese): We are now discussing the Vote on Account Resolution. Many people said that we must not vote down this resolution because the Government must count on the funds on account to meet the various expenditures starting from 1 April this year until the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2020 by the Legislative Council.

When a normal government seeks funds on account to pay for salaries or provide the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"), health care services, and so on, a normal Legislative Council would certainly have to endorse it. But is this Government normal? In what way is it normal? Carrie LAM said that she had no one by her side except the 30 000 policemen for the past few months. Secretary, actually your presence in this Chamber is not necessary, for she simply thinks nothing of you and other civil servants at all. She did not ask the three Secretaries of Departments and 11 Policy Bureaux and the 180 000 civil servants to throw weight behind her. Instead, she relies on those 30 000 policemen among the 180 000 civil servants, that is, those "raptors" in green uniform or clad in black who know only to beat people. Every night they beat people on the street as they please until the people have blood all over their faces and their bones broken. These scenes that we had never thought of happening in Hong Kong are shown before our eyes every day. Why can this Government be considered normal? In what way is it normal? The truth is that it is a big mess, and its policies are all wrong.

For example, the Government said earlier that they would definitely be people-based and that giving cash handout would not be an option because it was most important to spend the money on health care and social welfare services. All
ended up in an absolute mess. The Government cannot do well in health care services, nor can it do well in social welfare services. Several thousands or even several tens of thousands of elderly passed away while waiting for a place in a residential care home for the elderly. Cancer patients who run out of medicine do not have the means to buy medicine. This is our Government.

Then the Government proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. We have all seen what happened and I do not wish to spend time detailing what happened for some months last year. Finally they are going to use our hard-earned money for atonement for their sin. Hongkongers do not have to thank the Government, for this is not Carrie LAM's money. The several thousands of billion dollars in the Exchange Fund, financial reserve and many funds are savings amassed bit by bit by the 7 million-odd Hong Kong people. The Government is so vicious as to think about using indulgences to have their sin pardoned by giving out $10,000 to the people and several tens of billion dollars to all industries in difficulties. Honestly speaking, why would the industries suffer? If the Government had been effective in its policy administration and willing to accept views rather than allowing the several tens of thousands of policemen to beat people everywhere, would the entire Hong Kong have collapsed? Business is slack in the catering and tourism industries, and we know only too well that this is because the Government is ineffective. It is because Carrie LAM is rubbish as she is taking the entire Government, the entire Hong Kong down the path of mutual destruction and after that, she asked Hongkongers and the Legislative Council not to remember these things and not to remember anything. She said that investigation would be unnecessary, adding that she would select a few people to her liking to carry out an independent review and that would suffice. But strangely enough, she cannot find anyone who is willing to do it. It is because anyone who carries out an independent review for the Government would be tantamount to taking the scapegoat for the Government. Are these people silly? Of course nobody is willing to do it. No normal person will do it.

Speaking of normal persons, we have seen that normal persons who ever go near the Government will become a clown anytime. The Dean of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, Prof Gabriel LEUNG, who had been the Under Secretary for Food and Health, is a normal person. His performance is often up to par when giving comments on ways to fight the epidemic and issues relating to public hygiene. But he ran into bad luck one day as Carrie LAM arranged for him to sit beside her. When he was asked whether people should wear masks—perhaps people who often stay near to Carrie LAM will really make a volte face—he said that one who had put on a mask would not be able to speak.
Secretary, is it that you are unable to speak? Is it that so many Members of us here are unable to speak? How true it is that once you turn blue, you become a cuckoo.

Now things have come to this pass and Carrie LAM wanted us not to remember these things, telling us that all we need to do is to approve the funds on account. I support the amending motions proposed by Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN. Such a Chief Executive still dares to seek our approval for funds? Why on earth should we approve funds for these policemen? Secretary, this morning we discussed the Shatin to Central Link—this has nothing to do with you, Secretary—Frank CHAN asked for an additional $10 billion, $600 million of which will be used for reprovisioning the Police Sports and Recreation Club, including the construction of a clubhouse at Boundary Street at some $290 million plus another $300 million for developing a super luxurious clubhouse in Causeway Bay. Are you kidding? This Government is solely at the beck and call of the Police. No wonder the public are calling them "dirty cops".

This Government has degenerated into a state of having this Chief Executive Carrie LAM who can turn to nobody for assistance but only has some 30 000 policemen known as "dirty cops" by her side. This is really the case. Carrie LAM said so herself. As we all know, she surreptitiously made a report to the Central Authorities and let me quote what she said in it. I really hope that the pro-establishment camp will voice their views later. They are defending the Government every day but what did she say? She snitched on the pro-establishment camp and certain Members of the Executive Council, accusing them of not defending the Carrie LAM Administration and what is more, she accused them of standing on the wrong side and as a result, the Government has no one to turn to for assistance. They have made painstaking efforts to stand by Carrie LAM, fending off everyone for her and even making preposterous arguments. Members of the Executive Council even have to come forth—the "elder sister" is not in the Chamber today—those people such as Regina IP have to defend her every day and heap praises for her all the time. But I really would like them to read this surreptitious report carefully. She said that "the pro-establishment camp did not stand on the side of the SAR Government". In other words, they did not stand closely enough, they were not crazy enough, and they were not stupid enough, or probably they should get a stick and beat up people because there are not enough "dirty cops" and so, the Executive Council and the pro-establishment camp may as well join them to beat up people and in that case, perhaps Carrie LAM will think that they are doing a good job and that they have not left her behind and better still, they are standing on her side.
Just imagine this: This Chief Executive whom you people embrace every day has written such a report. Secretary, actually you are also a Member of the Executive Council, and I would say that your performance is not up to par either as you are not doing a good job in defending her. Now she has snitched on you, and as to whether you can be reappointed in the next term, you know it only too well. Of course not, because you are not doing enough. John LEE is different. John LEE is doing a great job. She has not chided John LEE because he has done a good job in defending her. TANG Ping-keung is not bad. TANG Ping-keung is awesome indeed in counting on his 30 000 brothers to defend her.

Speaking of health care services in Hong Kong, we all know that it is the health care workers who are fighting against the virus in hospitals today. They lack masks; they lack N95; they lack protective gowns; they lack manpower; and they lack funding. They are in lack of everything but the Government is only telling the health care workers to help and provide support, and that they must keep going without saying anything pleasant. In 2003 during the SARS outbreak, eight health care workers died. Now that 17 years have passed and they were only telling the truth and urging the Government to implement a lockdown. At that time, several tens of thousands of people came to Hong Kong and the Government simply refused to implement a lockdown. Now we can still see some 6 000 people coming to Hong Kong a week and the number will go up in future. Then the World Health Organization declared a pandemic and we called on her to impose a ban on the United Kingdom, United States, Europe, and so on, and she still refused to do so. That said, I understand why she refused to impose a ban. Think about this: In the Mainland alone there were already 81 000 cases and over 3 000 deaths, the highest in one single country, and she did not impose a ban on the Mainland. Despite death cases in Iran, and fatalities and an outbreak in Italy, their numbers were still less than those in the Mainland alone. If a ban was imposed on Italy and Iran, people would question why a ban was not imposed on the Mainland. It is correct to say so, but it is unreasonable. This is why we are forced down the path of mutual destruction as visitors are required to undergo compulsory home quarantine only as some window-dressing gestures and in a casual manner, thus plunging Hong Kong into this sorry state. A dozen new cases are reported today.

Worse still, now it is said that the health care workers would be subject to reprisal. While the outbreak has yet to subside, letters have been sent to department heads asking them to provide a name list and saying that it would reserve its rights. Those 7 000 health care workers had taken the greatest risk of sacrificing their prospects. We all know that the name lists have been submitted to the senior management, and there is this pro-China Chairman, Henry FAN, and
many others. What was said in that report made by the Chief Executive? She made it very clear that those people in hospitals who refused to help her are black sheep and black sheep should not be allowed to go on working in hospitals. How dare she make such disdainful remarks. Health care workers are toiling day and night for every patient, every member of the public, not to mention that they lack everything. They do not have enough funding, manpower and medicine, but they still hang on, and what they get in return is this remark of "black sheep should not be allowed to go on working in hospitals". This is the Hong Kong Government. This is cast-iron evidence. Just look at the report surreptitiously made by Carrie LAM.

Carrie LAM is really quite evil-minded. When we are discussing how the situation of the outbreak has aroused concern among Hongkongers or how Hongkongers are going to fight the epidemic, she talked about the outbreak as if it is a way of electioneering for her. She said that the outbreak provided the best opportunity for this Government to make a comeback. Actually this is correct. Had she been able to tackle the outbreak effectively, her popularity should not have dropped so substantially to a single digit of 9%. She really has not the slightest sense of shame, and she does need some lectures on it.

But strangely enough, she could not perform better even when she had a chance. Why? She could not even do the least thing not to let down Hongkongers by providing each Hongkonger with enough masks. Let us look at Taiwan, Macao, and Singapore. And what about Hong Kong? Hong Kong has several thousands of billion dollars in the foreign exchange reserve and financial reserve but it was unable to procure masks. Some elderly people, recipients of CSSA or the Old Age Living Allowance, and people living in subdivided units are really miserable. This Government is downright an unbearable mess. All that it has done are evil deeds. Why? She said that she had to take advantage of the outbreak to help herself rise to power. I wonder if Carrie LAM is so silly as to think that she can be re-elected to serve a second term. If she does think so, she really has to take some tests to see if there are problems with her intelligence and mental state.

She has treated this outbreak as an electioneering campaign and what is more, she wanted to lecture the pro-establishment camp and make them bear in mind that this is also an electioneering campaign for the pro-establishment camp and that it is very important. She said that she is offering this opportunity for them and yet they do not know how to seize it. In fact, it is not true that they do not know how to seize the opportunity as they have engaged in the production of
masks. But it turns out that the story does not just end here as each mask manufacturing factory can get $144 million, which is really lucrative. So we realize only now that for everything that the Government does, there is invariably some "follow-ups". The Government's buddies must bear in mind that $144 million can be obtained at most. Do not let this chance slip by. Not only can you reverse your fortunes, you will have money to put into your pockets.

We have seen that what this Government has done is repulsive. This comment is not made by us as people from the health care workers' union also said that what the Government has done in dealing with the epidemic is repulsive, which is true. So many human lives are involved; four people died already; and such a great deal of loss is incurred, causing various trades and industries in Hong Kong to suffer. All these are the result of this Government always being a total failure. She herself already made it clear that this Carrie LAM who has nobody by her side counts on the Police. We must see her true face clearly. Why can we not refuse to make provisions for the Chief Executive and the Government that is the enemy of the people and for the 30,000 policemen who keep on beating the young people of Hong Kong?

With these remarks, I support all the amending motions.

IR DR LO WAI-KWOK (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of the Vote on Account Resolution for the 2020-2021 financial year proposed under the Public Finance Ordinance by the SAR Government. This proposed resolution is both necessary and urgent. As the Second Reading debate on the Appropriation Bill 2020 ("the Bill") will only be resumed in the Council on 22 April, in order to ensure that various public services will not be suspended due to a lack of resources between the start of the new financial year on 1 April and the time when the Bill comes into operation, it is necessary to adopt transitional measures through the passage of the proposed resolution by this Council to provide authorization of funds on account to fund or subsidize various public services. This, coupled with the fact that the Administration should be allowed a few days to complete relevant statutory procedures upon the passage of the Vote on Account Resolution, further highlights the urgency the Council's scrutiny of this proposed resolution.

President, as pointed out by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury in moving the Vote on Account Resolution, this is a long established and essential procedure. The specific arrangements also follow those of recent
years. However, given the difficulties faced by Hong Kong currently, I reckon this is not only a conventional practice but a matter of particular urgency.

It has been the case of "it never rains but it pours" in Hong Kong for a better half of last year. After months of extremely violent protests, it is hit by the novel coronavirus epidemic recently. Various industries are facing unprecedented hardships. A large number of small and medium enterprises in Hong Kong are struggling and the labour market deteriorates sharply. According to the latest labour force statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department on 17 March, the seasonally adjusted unemployed rate increased to 3.7% between December 2019 and February 2020, which is the highest in more than nine years. The underemployed rate also increased to a five-year high of 1.5%. The year-on-year rate of decline in total employment widened to 2.5%, the largest since the Asian financial crisis. In the better half of last year, some violent protesters threatened with "mutual destruction" repeatedly, but what we see is wage earners being laid off first.

Apparently, many small and medium enterprises in Hong Kong and ordinary wage earners are caught in dire straits. The SAR Government dares not procrastinate. The $30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund introduced in February and passed by the Finance Committee ("FC") of the Legislative Council should be able to slightly alleviate the hardships faced by some people and enterprises. The Financial Secretary Paul CHAN announced one-off relief measures amounting to more than $120 billion in the Budget, including a $10,000 cash handout to all residents. Society also anticipates the rapid passage of the Budget by the Legislative Council as these relief measures are of great urgency that can brook no delay.

President, various sectors of society have grave concerns over the full-on filibustering by opposition Members in the Council, which has become a new norm. Not only is there a huge backlog of business on the agenda of the Council, FC and Public Works Subcommittee, even the election of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the House Committee has no end in sight due to filibustering. There are only four months left in this term of the Legislative Council. If filibustering continues, it is almost impossible to complete all the backlog agenda.

While opposition Members may continue to filibuster in the Council, various government services are indispensable and cannot be suspended abruptly even for a moment. A large number of expenditures has to be paid every day.
The funds on account cover expenditures for services such as health care, social welfare, education and security, as well as the remuneration of contract staff and accounts payable to contractors. As pointed out by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury in his speech, taking the first week of the 2020-2021 financial year as an example, the Government has to make subvention payments of around $6.2 billion to the Hospital Authority ("HA") and payments for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and Social Security Allowance totalling around $1.3 billion to about 120,000 families and 140,000 individuals respectively. These expenditures are closely related to people's livelihood and the present anti-pandemic efforts. I declare that I am a member of HA but I have no pecuniary interest in it. Many people are now concerned about whether frontline health care personnel in HA hospitals have sufficient protection gears against the epidemic. If HA services are seriously affected because the Government fails to obtain the funds on account, is it what Hong Kong people wish to see? Can Hong Kong society bear the dire consequences?

In fact, the approval of public works funding by the Legislative Council has been sluggish due to filibustering in recent years. FC has approved only about $65.1 billion of public works funding in the last legislative session, less than half of the $140.2 billion recommended by the Public Works Subcommittee, with more than $75 billion still awaiting approval. As of 13 March, FC has approved only about $67 billion in the current legislative session, including the $22.5 billion Capital Works Reserve Fund Block Allocations. Most of the provision is only backlog public works funding accumulated as a result of the vandalizing of the Legislative Council Complex last year and failure to hold additional meetings due to various reasons. Only about $36 billion of backlog funding has been processed, compared with the new public works projects amounting to more than $100 billion annually, the approval of public works funding by the Legislative Council progresses very slowly. This has made a major impact on the construction industry as construction procedures are closely inter-linked. Delayed funding approvals mean all procedures can hardly commence and a large number of construction workers will be forced out of work.

The construction industry is a major victim of "mutual destruction". The unemployed rate in the construction industry is higher than that in other industries, reaching 5.7% in January. The novel coronavirus epidemic only makes thing worse. The latest figure in February increased to 6.8% while the underemployed rate reached 6.2%. Currently, the engineering sector is facing
the interruption of three chains: work chain, supply chain and capital chain. The livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of construction workers and professionals are affected. Many small and medium enterprises are in jeopardy. Nevertheless, those who always talk about livelihood and bringing a better future for young people are actually preaching one thing and doing another. As long as all forms of filibustering continue, the entire construction industry will be jeopardized, livelihood-related projects will be delayed and the general public will eventually suffer.

An example of stalling public works by filibustering is the site formation and infrastructure works for public housing development at Wang Chau, Yuen Long which costs $1.8 billion and involves 4 000 public housing units. The Public Works Subcommittee endorsed the item and recommended it to FC in March 2019. However, due to filibustering in the Council and vandalizing of the Legislative Council Complex on 1 July, FC was unable to hold additional meetings. After much procrastination, funding for the item was approved by FC eventually on 13 March this year (i.e. last Friday). As a result of this one-year delay, the construction of 4 000 public housing units has been postponed for one year and 4 000 households waiting for public housing have to wait one more year. Assuming that the monthly rent paid by each household, even for subdivided units in deplorable conditions, is $7,000 higher than public housing rent, that means $84,000 a year and a total of $336 million for 4 000 households. This is the money the grass roots actually have to pay with their meagre income. I do not have to go further into the harmful effects of filibustering and pan-politicization.

President, I can hardly agree to the amending motions proposed by several opposition Members. The amending motions proposed by Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr WU Chi-wai seek to reduce the total amount of the funds on account to the effect that the disposable funds of "Head 21—Chief Executive's Office" will be reduced to zero. First of all, under Articles 43 and 48 of the Basic Law, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be the head of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, shall represent the Region and lead the government of the Region. Secondly, fighting the epidemic is like fighting a war. Corresponding measures must be taken in no time to counter the rapidly changing situation of the epidemic, while cooperation with government agencies both inside and outside Hong Kong must be strengthened. Reducing the disposable funds of the Chief Executive's Office is tantamount to pulling the plug on the nerve centre of the Government.
The other amending motion proposed by Dr Fernando CHEUNG and the amending motion proposed by Mr Andrew WAN seek to reduce the total amount of the funds on account to the effect that the disposable funds of "Head 122—Hong Kong Police Force" will be reduced to zero.

President, the violence of some extremists has escalated in the past half year or so, spreading to all parts of Hong Kong. Their violent acts have become increasingly brutal. Road blockage, vandalism, arson, damaging railways and transportation facilities, assaults on police officers and vigilante attacks happened nearly every day. These violent acts are serious offences against which the Police must take stringent enforcement actions. Many friends of mine are puzzled that opposition Members blamed the Government and the Police for these incidents. A friend specially drew my attention to a piece of news: The Police raided a number of locations in Hong Kong on 8 March, arrested 17 people, seized three unfinished home-made bombs and 2.6 tonnes of chemicals for bomb-making. These dangerous goods were not stored in the countryside but in the city. If the Police had not cracked down the case quickly, serious casualties could have been caused should accidents happened during the manufacturing process or the explosives be placed in a large-scale public gathering.

If one has paid some attention to the anti-epidemic news in Hong Kong, one must have noticed that the Hong Kong Police, in addition to their duty to maintain public order, also shoulder the heavy workload of supporting the anti-epidemic efforts of other government departments, assisting in the execution of quarantine orders, guarding quarantine centres and contacting people under mandatory quarantine. What is the intention of opposition Members to arbitrarily demonize the Hong Kong Police? Who will benefit if the Police are not able to function effectively or even come to a standstill? Who will suffer from it ultimately?

President, with these remarks, I oppose filibustering, mutual destruction and pan-politicization. I support the passage of the Vote on Account Resolution for the 2020-2021 financial year. I also hope next month, honourable colleagues will scrutinize and pass the Appropriate Bill 2020 expeditiously bearing in mind that people's pressing needs and hardships should be addressed.
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now suspend the meeting until 5:15 pm.

4:39 pm

Meeting suspended.

5:15 pm

Council then resumed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr SHIU Ka-chun, please speak.

MR SHIU KA-CHUN (in Cantonese): President, hearing Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok's eloquent speech just now, I was indeed suddenly enlightened. He said a reduction of the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office would affect the Government's backbone. I see, it will affect the nerve centre of the Government. This gives me an even stronger reason for supporting these amending motions. Nevertheless, I am a Member who makes comments based on facts. Therefore, I will take the time to expound my reasons for supporting the amending motions proposed by Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN.

President, the subject of discussion today is the Vote on Account Resolution proposed by the Government under section 7(1) of the Public Finance Ordinance (Cap. 2). The Government seeks funds on account amounting to $215.865 billion from the Legislative Council in order to cope with the expenditures of various departments between the start of the financial year on 1 April 2020 and the time when the Appropriation Ordinance 2020 comes into operation. The amending motions proposed by the three Members in respect of the Vote on Account Resolution respectively demand cutting all the expenditures of the Chief Executive's Office and the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"). President, I am also going to cite the Basic Law. According to Articles 73(2) and 73(3) of the Basic Law, the Legislative Council may examine and approve budgets introduced by the Government, and exercise its powers and functions to approve taxation and public expenditure. Moreover, the Public Finance Ordinance empowers the Legislative Council to carry out its functions. The
Legislative Council may exercise its powers to provide funds on account for the Government and amend the funding. Hence, the Legislative Council absolutely has the power to impose limitation and conditions on the Government's vote on account. Since both the Basic Law and the Hong Kong legislation have vested powers to the Legislative Council, the three Members have the right to propose amending motions on the Vote on Account Resolution, and criticize and restrict unreasonable funding and abuse of public funds. The reason for the three Members to propose cutting all the expenditures of the Chief Executive's Office and HKPF is actually very simple. It is so simple that I think many members of the public will agree to cut the expenditures of these two departments after only looking at the headings without the need to read the contents. I will first explain why I support cutting all the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office, and then explain why I support cutting all that of HKPF.

President, after proposing amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, the Chief Executive and her office never played their roles properly. One time after another, they ignored the people's voices against the proposed legislative amendments. Being the Chief Executive, the head of the Special Administrative Region ("SAR") Government, Carrie LAM indicated the need to plug the loophole in law. Disregarding the fact that the amendments would undermine the independence of the Hong Kong jurisdiction, she pushed ahead with the amendment exercise, neglecting the people's opposition and turning a blind eye to the concerns of the international community and the media about the amendments. Carrie LAM's insistence to push ahead with the amendments led to the rally participated by 1.03 million people on 9 June, hitting a record high since the handover of sovereignty in 1997. However, the Carrie LAM Government immediately issued a press release, stating that the amendment exercise would be conducted as scheduled. As a result, public resentment was aggravated, thus directly giving rise to the incident of police brutality on 12 June. Many people consequently got bloodsoaked in the street. Some were arrested and charged. Afterwards, the Chief Executive even described the peaceful activities spontaneously initiated by the people on 12 June as riots. Yet she was completely indifferent to the abuse of force by the Police. All these examples proved that Carrie LAM was bent ongoing her own way. She had no qualms about resorting to all kinds of administrative violence and force of the Police to push through the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 ("the Bill"). Later, using hypocritical rhetoric, Carrie LAM announced to the public suspension of the amendment exercise, claiming that the exercise would stop. There had been
quite a number of opportunities, but she still refused to withdraw the Bill, claiming that she would accept criticisms, make improvement and serve the community at large with the greatest sincerity and humility. However, she rejected the five demands which had gained public consensus. Not only did she not withdraw the Bill, she also turned a deaf ear to the five demands, such as refraining from prosecuting the protesters, conducting an independent investigation into the abuse of force by the Police, retracting the "riot" classification and implementing genuine dual universal suffrage. I believe I need not repeat what happened afterwards. We all know it very well, that is, the Government called on the community not to dwell on the wording and stated that the Bill was dead. It is evident that Carrie LAM has acted as an enemy of the people again and again. In her eyes, there is only power. She never keeps the people in her mind or gives them any regard.

People staged rallies, protests and assemblies, launched crowdfunding to put up advertisements in various major newspapers around the world, held sit-in demonstrations, went on a hunger strike, composed and sang songs, shouted slogans every night, created Lennon Walls in every district, initiated labour strikes, boycott of classes and strikes by businesses, and promoted a yellow economic circle. They even sacrificed their own future and lives to insist on the five demands, while Carrie LAM, sitting in her office every day, kept condemning the people, denouncing Hongkongers who contributed their blood and sweat to the future of Hong Kong. Hanging onto the Police no matter what, she continued to let them use improper force against innocent people. She even expressed support for continuous escalation of force by the Police, hanging tightly onto the 30,000 police officers. So far, not a single police officer is criminally liable for the abuse of force.

With the Wuhan pneumonia going rampant these days, the people of Hong Kong, including experts on infectious diseases, doctors and professionals, share the view that Hong Kong should close all the boundary control points to avoid an outbreak in the community and prevent Hong Kong's health care system from being overloaded by the epidemic. Experts and health care officers have repeatedly made it clear through the media the importance and necessity of closing all the boundary control points, but Carrie LAM refused again. She even deliberately distorted the demand of the health care officers, thus forcing the alliance of health care workers to launch a strike. They did not demand higher pay or less work for themselves. Rather, it was for public interest that they requested the Government to close all the boundary control points. Owing to the
Government's inaction, the people could not but find their own ways to save themselves. Members of the public, including the elderly and persons with disabilities, had to queue up overnight to buy face masks. They went global in search for face masks by themselves and made alcoholic disinfectants by themselves. Then they helped and supported each other. At this very moment, Carrie LAM's Chief Executive Office submitted a secret report to the Central Government, attributing all the deficiencies and faults of the anti-epidemic work to social riots caused by the anti-extradition to China movement. It alleged that the health care officers who initiated the strike, being radicals against the Bill, were taking advantage of the situation to stir up troubles. It also alleged that the democratic camp and those members of the community who criticized the Government took an antagonistic attitude. The opposition camp and radical netizens were said to have adopted the same tactics used in opposing the Bill, such as mudslinging, spreading rumours, sowing discord, and intensifying the conflicts between the Mainland and Hong Kong, to further undermine the governance of the SAR Government.

President, Hongkongers are fighting the epidemic together, but the Chief Executive's Office keeps mudslinging. We make efforts in fighting the epidemic, but she makes efforts in mudslinging. Both sides are having a hard time.

How disgusting is Carrie LAM's administration? We can probably see it clearly through the poll results of the Hong Kong Public Opinion Program. The latest popularity rating of Chief Executive Carrie LAM is 22.1. In fact, members of the public do not support Carrie LAM to serve as Chief Executive. Given the lack of support for Carrie LAM, all the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office, which assists Carrie LAM in her work, should certainly be cut.

As regards the Police Force, "Their slogan of honour, duty and loyalty is rubbish!" This is Hongkongers' true feeling. The people of Hong Kong already have zero trust in the Police Force. How can funds be allocated to the Police? In particular, the funds on account involve allowing the Police to buy all kinds of equipment to oppress the people. It is in fact unacceptable to the public. Let me cite the following series of dates: on 12 June, police officers, disregarding people's lives, fired tear gas to oppress the people in Admiralty; on 21 July, the Police collaborated with triad members; on 11 August, a young woman was shot in the eye; on 25 August, a police officer fired live ammunition in Tsuen Wan; on 31 August, there was the "train of horror" in Prince Edward; on
4 October, the Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation was introduced; on 11 October, regarding student CHAN Yin-lam's suicide case, it was concluded sloppily that there was no suspicion; on 14 November, student Alex CHOW fell from height; on 11 November, over 1,000 tear gas canisters were fired within half an hour in The Chinese University of Hong Kong; and on 16 November, the battle of besiegement broke out in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

On each and every day, the Police did not do their job properly, disappointing and enraging the people of Hong Kong again and again. The Hong Kong Police keep overturning Hongkongers' definition of daily expressions. What is meant by "pushing with one's foot"? What is meant by "yellow object"? What is meant by "being imperfect, acceptable and in need of improvement"? After all, even though they have done something wrong, they can still say that they are open and above board. If I apply the logic of Commissioner of Police TANG Ping-keung, who loves the television programme called The Happy Dictionary, I am afraid they are "open and above board" in the sense that they can lie openly in broad daylight.

The latest example of abuse of power and force by the Police is seven police officers surrounding an ordinary citizen and threatening him with swear words in a corner in Sheung Tak Estate, Tseung Kwan O. Had they not been dressed in uniform, I would have thought that it was what happened in a prison or a disgusting scene of gangsters bullying an ordinary citizen in a triad film. "Honour, duty and loyalty"?

I recall some inmates in the prison told me that "honour, duty and loyalty" is the short name of the four main divisions of a certain triad society. Actually, these incidents could have been handled in a most simple way. I do not understand why it turned out to be so complicated. If one has done something wrong, one should just admit it. For example, some police officers have damaged the belongings of the street sleepers in Sham Shui Po. The wrongdoers should be arrested, bear the consequences and be held responsible. In fact, Hongkongers' request is very simple. They want justice. They want a clear distinction between right and wrong. Why should the whole Government go down with the Police and burn together? These terrible scenes symbolize the return of the Hong Kong Police to those dark days of half a century ago when police officers were "authorized gangsters". Enforcing the law in a villainous way by bullying people with power, I am afraid, will gradually become common in people's everyday life.
Hong Kong is currently shrouded by the epidemic. With greater attention attached to health protection, a slight reduction in the number of participants in civil disobedience is inevitable. The Police did not focus on fighting the epidemic. Neither did they take the opportunity to mend their relationship with the public. Instead, they took the opportunity to strengthen suppression and nip public meetings in the bud. On 8 March, people gathered in Sheung Tak Estate to commemorate the death of Alex CHOW, the student of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology who unfortunately passed away four months ago. They were oppressed by the Police with excuses. Again, this example exposed the violent acts of the Police and the fact that Carrie LAM's regime is beyond cure. That day, 348 people mourned the death of Alex CHOW. The Police said that offensive weapons were found in a car park nearby, accused the people of having an unlawful assembly and intercepted pedestrians here and there, trying every way to stop people from going in the direction of the memorial event. The people's peaceful activity was actually carried out in an orderly manner. They did not ruin social peace. How would there be any unlawful assembly? There were only nonsense and lies of the Government, which deprived the public of their legal rights to act freely.

I am indeed curious. In the upcoming Ching Ming Festival, will there be suppression again? People will pay respects to many different fellows on that day. Will there be unlawful assemblies and another pretext for suppression too?

If the Police had seized offensive weapons, of course they had to conduct a thorough investigation. Yet on what grounds could they mix one thing with another, linking all the weapons to the memorial activities, and thus forbid people to pay respects to the deceased? Recently, the most popular expression of the Police is "according to the intelligence", implying that someone may take the opportunity to use the remaining unseized weapons to disrupt social peace. However, in the past, a lot of such intelligence was not substantiated after investigation, and the cases fizzled out in the end. Actually, was the intelligence inaccurate or fabricated? Or did it provide a pretext for the Police to act at will?

Therefore, President, I really find it necessary to take this opportunity to criticize and address the practice of the Police to bully the minority when they are the majority, refuse to apologize and forbid people to leave.

Hence, President, I will support the amending motions proposed by Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN to cut all the expenditures of HKPF and the Chief Executive's Office. Carrie LAM wants us
to be tolerant of the police officers. This reminds me of a famous quote from Lu Xun: "A courageous person in anger brandishes his sword to challenge the mighty, but a coward in anger bullies the vulnerable." Now Carrie LAM blatantly asks us to be tolerant of the mighty and ride roughshod over the vulnerable. In no way can I do so.

President, I so submit.

DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): I will first state my position. Regarding this Vote on Account Resolution and the Budget to be scrutinized by us later, I think there is no need to further propose any amendments to them this year. Rather, they should be negatived outright, for the rights and wrongs involved are unarguable. Now that the Hong Kong SAR Government is already a police state, is there still any room for us to debate under a police state led by Carrie LAM? Is this a problem merely to do with excessive police power and lack of monitoring of the Police Force, or is it that the entire SAR Government is guilty? Even if sins can be atoned with money, I believe that money, no matter how much there is, cannot compensate for the damage the SAR Government has inflicted over the past half year on Hong Kong people, Hong Kong society and Hong Kong's century-old civilization. My position is very clear.

As for the Vote on Account Resolution today, some pan-democratic Members hold that the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office or the Police Force must be cut. Regarding the expenditure of the Police Force, I will talk about it in the Budget debate later. In fact, as I talked about the Police Force in the Budget debate in each of the past three years, I myself have grown weary of it, and I have no new points to raise. However, regarding the former, namely the Chief Executive's Office, I have had some new thoughts since the controversy surrounding the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance unravelled last year.

There was the trade war between China and the United States early last year, followed by the controversy surrounding the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, and now China and the United States or various other countries have initiated political maneuvering in response to the epidemic. Over the past several decades, Hong Kong has survived thanks to "one country, two systems". The Basic Law safeguards the international status of Hong Kong, so that Hong Kong can have certain room to cope with the maneuvering among major powers in a relatively free and neutral manner. We have limited resources and have no
natural resources such as oil, gold and diamond. Hong Kong people only enjoy a comparative geographical advantage, and we have, through decades of hard work, developed our advantage in terms of technology. Given our rule of law and the specific room provided under the Basic Law, we have fortunately fared well over the past several decades.

President, I will not go too far from the subject. Last year when the trade war between China and the United States started, I, as Members present probably remember, raised a question three or four times in the oral question session or through other means. Even Dr CHIANG Lai-wan of the pro-establishment camp told me that I seemed to have changed as the question I raised was also the concern of the pro-establishment camp, and asked why I was so concerned about the economy of Hong Kong. I want to say that Hong Kong people have no votes, which we have got accustomed to over the past decades, and now we have only notes, or Hong Kong dollars. We have nothing left except for money. The problem is that over the past two years, Hong Kong people have learnt that given the ever changing Sino-American relations and world situations, we have no place to shelter ourselves, and our legal system can one day become the same as that of the Mainland.

President, pan-democratic Members have mentioned about the dereliction of duty on the part of the Chief Executive's Office, and, in particular, Carrie Lam, as the Chief Executive, has become a living dead politically these days. Frankly speaking, Carrie Lam has virtually been ousted at this moment, and the pro-establishment camp knows this perfectly well. She has not been ousted is probably only because of the outbreak of the epidemic. This is purely my guess. That said, an incident happened today, and I did not expect that Members would react to it so slowly. I am talking about the order of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing which demands the return of the media passes of the journalists of five American media outlets stationed in China, including Hong Kong and Macao, and their departure from China within 10 days. These five American media outlets are the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, Voice of America and Time Magazine.

I understand that Members and particularly the general public have not yet digested this piece of news. There are a large number of Chinese journalists in the United States, and the number seems to have exceeded that required for normal news coverage. The government of the United States demanded several days ago that Mainland journalists stationed in the United States be reduced by
40%, as these journalists seemed to be engaging in diplomacy or intelligence collection. Then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs retaliated today by demanding that certain American journalists stationed in China, including Hong Kong and Macao, return media passes within 10 days. Some pan-democratic Members have said that this is related to freedom of the press, but I would like to tell Members that this is actually related to the autonomy of Hong Kong. Today, no one comes to the defence of our autonomy because the Chief Executive's Office has gone missing.

President, let me explain to you slowly. Article 27 of the Basic Law concerns the basic rights of Hong Kong people and stipulates that Hong Kong people shall have freedom of the press and of publication. Pan-democratic Members may hold that the order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stripped Hong Kong people of their freedom of the press and of publication as safeguarded under the Basic Law. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be excessively particular about wording and point out that those who are safeguarded under the Basic Law are Hong Kong residents, while those who are affected are foreign journalists. Once the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an order, not a single department of the SAR Government has given any response, and reporters could only ask Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward YAU for a reply. I was embarrassed at that moment. How could Secretary YAU be the one to give a reply? In addition, the Secretary said that the Government would handle the matter under the principle of "one country, two systems". What was he talking about? However, I also understand why he did not know how to reply. Why? Pursuant to Article 22 of the Basic Law—does Dr CHIANG Lai-wan remember what this Article provides for?—"No department of the Central People's Government and no province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government may interfere in the affairs which the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region administers on its own in accordance with this Law". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a department of the Central People's Government, but the SAR Government has given no response. Should Article 22 of the Basic Law be enacted and criminal liability be introduced, will the act of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs be considered ultra vires?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, please return to the topic of this debate.
DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): President, I will get back to the debate. What role does the Chief Executive's Office play? Under our constitutional arrangements, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is unable to exercise any judgment. Even pursuant to Article 27 and Article 22 of the Basic Law, the Chief Executive's Office should have made known its position on the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary can rest assured, as I can give a reply on his behalf. Pursuant to Article 13 of the Basic Law, foreign affairs relating to Hong Kong should be dealt with by an office established by Beijing in Hong Kong, namely the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong. If the Chief Executive's Office knows how to shoot a ball, it should strike the ball towards the Office. President, I have been waiting for one day, and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong has also made no appearance today.

When the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development remarked that the Government would handle the matter under the principle of "one country, two systems", the words he said did not ring true because he was not supposed to be the official who should give a response. The largest share of responsibility lies with the Chief Executive's Office, for it has given no reply and failed to defend the autonomy of Hong Kong. It is neither fish nor fowl, however, for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau to give a reply, as the matter has nothing to do with it. If the affairs Hong Kong administers on its own include security, order, legislative affairs and judicial affairs, why should Edward YAU have given a reply? This certainly falls within the remit of the Chief Executive's Office, but the Chief Executive's Office is surprisingly nowhere to be found. Also, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong has been slow in giving a reply.

Secretary, what has the entire Government been doing? People in any positions have their duty and power. Even pro-establishment Members do not know how to respond today and I have risen to speak instead. This is simply absurd. As regards the order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, people should, as I said just now, play their role under the legal system of Hong Kong. But they have failed to do so. I have yet to talk about the political implications. May I ask under what circumstances foreign journalists should be asked to leave this place?
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, I have already reminded you that you have deviated from the topic in your speech. Please get back to the topic of this debate.

DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): President, if you consider I have deviated from the topic, I can express my views on Facebook in the same way as the Government had presented the Policy Address.

Hong Kong now faces a situation in which China and the United States are paving the way for Cold War 2.0. Journalists and diplomats are first expelled, to be followed by the evacuation of expatriates. Do Members think that this will not happen? At this time last year, I said that the trade war between China and the United States would be earthshaking, and Members laughed …

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, although you are referring to things that are happening at the moment, this Council is now debating the resolution proposed under the Public Finance Ordinance, and hence please get back to the topic of this debate. As for your other points of view, you can raise them on other occasions.

DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): I get it. I have been speaking for some 10 minutes. As such, President, my conclusion is that if the Chief Executive's Office is unable to exercise its power under the Basic Law, its staff members should leave on their own, or go to the Mainland or, specifically, Wuhan to engage in disaster relief operations. It is not only about whether the Government's anti-epidemic work is effective or not. If the Chief Executive's Office is willing to forgo their remuneration, I can also speak on anti-epidemic work. I will merely raise two points.

At the start of the outbreak, Sophia CHAN was sitting here. Members asked her why the figure of Hong Kong was comparable to that of Wuhan and why Hong Kong held the second place, she did not know how to respond and had to wait for Carrie LAM to return to Hong Kong from Switzerland. Our officials have got accustomed to making a decision only after "Elderly Sister" or "Grandpa" has given the final word. As one person alone has the say is the culture of the Chief Executive's Office, the entire Government did not know how to respond to the emergence of the epidemic. Furthermore, this simply reflects
that politics has overridden professionalism. When many professional doctors said that Hong Kong had encountered serious problems, our officials still had to wait for the return of Carrie LAM before taking any action. This also certainly reflects the fact that no official is willing to take responsibility.

President, having been speaking for some 12 minutes, I only wish to tell members of the Hong Kong public that we are now not merely facing a problem concerning health care or the outbreak of an epidemic in Hong Kong, nor are we facing a simple problem of an economic downturn and rising unemployment rate. Rather, the problem is that during the turbulence times in the last couple of years, the SAR Government is unable to provide us with any safeguards. We are now facing the dawn of a great era. The Hang Seng Index has again dropped some 1 000 points today, but no one present can tell us who are in charge. The Chief Executive's Office only knows how to issue notices or release photos on Facebook. Regarding the expulsion of American journalists in the coming 10 days, I would like to see how the Government will expel them. The Chief Executive's Office should give an account to the public right now.

I would like to put on record my conclusion. I will vote against the Vote on Account Resolution and the Budget anyway, but, regarding the amending motions of other pan-democratic Members, I will follow pan-democrats and vote in favour of them, lest supporters of pan-democrats or "yellow ribbons" would query why I did not cast my vote.

I so submit.

MR ALVIN YEUNG (in Cantonese): President, SIMA Zhen, a historian of the Tang Dynasty, wrote Suoyin (《索隱》) for Shiji (《史記》), in which he quoted a remark by GUAN Zhong. I now quote it as follows: "A king's life depends on his people, and food is of paramount importance in people's life. A king should treat what is of the utmost importance to his people as the most important to him." (王者以民為天，民以食為天，能知天之天者，斯可矣。) What did GUAN Zhong mean? He meant that a competent ruler should be able to tell what is most needed, valued and cared by his people.

What do people value? While "food is of paramount importance in people's life" is no doubt universally applicable, when it comes to Hong Kong in 2020, I believe that Hongkongers may not fully agree with it nowadays.
Compared with the most basic living needs of clothing, food, shelter and transport, the most pressing issues cared by Hongkongers presently are ineffective governance and abuse of power by the spoiled Police Force. Simply put, Hongkongers are in fact facing an institutional collapse and a lack of confidence in the public power exercised by the Government. Hongkongers actually do not wish to see Hong Kong descend into an ordinary city of Mainland China. It can even be said that Hongkongers do not want Hong Kong to keep perishing.

To put it simply, the proposed resolution today requests the Legislative Council to approve the Government to "spend future money", so as to avoid bringing the Government to a standstill due to a lack of operating funds in the future, that is, during the period before the Budget is approved. President, in this connection, I would like to ask a question in the first place: So what if the Government comes to a standstill? Or let us dig into the question more specifically, so what if the amendments proposed by the several Members are indeed passed? This should actually be the focus of our debate today.

What is the meaning of reducing the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office? Certainly, the Chief Executive will not be paid, nor will the relevant officials be paid. It also implies that the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive's Office cannot continue to operate and the Executive Council as a whole will be affected as well. Such being the case, the next question that we should ask is, what are the achievements of the Chief Executive, the Chief Executive's Office and even the Executive Council over a period of time in the past? This will inevitably involve what happened in the past year, from bulldozing the amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance to police brutality right before our eyes. The highest organ of power has shut its ears, turned a blind eye and even covered up the Police Force which abused power and force. That being the case, we cannot help but ask this question: Should such an organ be allowed to continue to operate?

Even if we put this aside, can the existence of the Executive Council and the Chief Executive really defend the rights of Hong Kong people? Some Honourable Members mentioned the latest development today in their speeches a moment ago. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made a decision that directly affects Hong Kong, and that is, foreign journalists are not allowed to enter and work in Hong Kong. Such an unprecedented move tramples hard on the principle of "one country, two systems". Has the Chief Executive spoken for
Hongkongers? Has she stood tall and told Beijing that this is wrong? We have not heard this up to this moment.

To say the least, even in the face of an epidemic outbreak, has the Chief Executive in Council really safeguarded the interests and health of Hongkongers? Putting other issues aside, we can now come up with evidence on the Internet suggesting that airlines are preparing to resume flights from Wuhan to Hong Kong in early April. Does this mean that the Chief Executive is preparing to open our border and welcome people from Hubei and Wuhan to come to Hong Kong? All of these are the unknowns, but they are supposed to be the responsibilities of the Chief Executive.

Let us take a further look at the Government's performance in procuring masks. Chief Secretary for Administration Matthew CHEUNG once bragged that 30 million masks would arrive in Hong Kong within a short time. Where are those masks? Are the masks worn by the President, Members of the Legislative Council and the officials part of these 30 million masks? Of course not. Carrie LAM even called on the public to donate masks to the SAR Government yesterday. President, I really want to ask, is there any government that is so unbearable as this? Since the outbreak of the "Wuhan pneumonia", all anti-epidemic supplies, be they masks, hand sanitizers or liquid hand wash, have been sourced by Hongkongers on our own. If Hongkongers have not stayed full alert with a high degree of self-discipline, would the number of confirmed cases in Hong Kong be lower than that of our overseas counterparts?

Having failed to learn a lesson from the SARS outbreak, the SAR Government even reacts much slower than Macao, our neighbour, in the fight against the epidemic. In fact, even if the Government has really made some efforts, it still cannot win the trust of Hongkongers and make people satisfied.

President, having said so much, I would like to call on Members of the pro-Government camp present in this Chamber to ponder over this: Is the existence of the Chief Executive's Office in line with their interests? Just now some Honourable colleagues quoted from a letter, confidential correspondence or report, whatever we call it, that the Chief Executive's Office had submitted to Beijing some time ago—in fact, it has only been divulged recently—and the Chief Executive has not denied it. The allegations against the pro-democracy camp therein can be ignored as politically, the pro-democracy camp is standing on the opposite side. However, the Chief Executive has actually lashed out at the pro-Government camp in the report. Speaking of the amendment proposed
today to reduce the resources of the Chief Executive's Office, I think Members of the pro-Government camp should in fact thank Members of the pro-democracy camp for standing up for them. In addition to backstabbing, the report also cited the wrongdoings of the pro-Government camp and the pro-establishment camp as a whole. For those Members of the pro-Government camp who are present today or who will cast a vote later, do they have the face or have they reconciled themselves to keep on supporting the Government, and continue to allocate funding to Carrie LAM for her to curse them in her heart?

President, let me repeat once again. Members of the pro-Government camp, Carrie LAM is in fact the very person who finds you unacceptable. Do you really want to continue to grant funding to her?

On the other hand, President, another amendment proposed by the pro-democracy camp today is related to reducing the expenditure of the Police Force. After all, has the Police Force stood by Hongkongers over the past period of time? I do not think it is necessary for me to list the incidents one by one here. All I wish to ask is, if we succeed in reducing the expenditure of the Police Force, will it really lead to chaos in society and the world? Or, on the contrary, will it bring about a more peaceful society so that we may sit down together to make Hong Kong a more stable place? Supposing that all police officers take unpaid leave, will it really be the end of the world?

The "21 July" Yuen Long terrorist incident will have taken place for eight months this Saturday. I reckon that members of the public will stage a sit-in at Yuen Long Station to commemorate the tragic and horrifying situation on that day. Let us imagine what if there were no police officers at the scene to maintain law and order. I believe members of the public would leave peacefully after the commemoration, and at most, they would post a note on the Lennon Wall. Actually, the Government is yet to realize the fact that the low crime rate in which Hong Kong has all along been taking pride is not mainly attributed to the powerful Police Force of the SAR Government. To a large extent, it is merely because Hongkongers are self-disciplined.

As regards the work of maintaining law and order on a day-to-day basis, President, even if I put aside politics or the problem of police brutality in the past with a blind eye, can the performance of the Police Force fully convince people that they are competent and are doing a good job, such that we are happy and totally convinced to grant them any resources?
President, let me cite the personal experience of a colleague in my office as an example. Last week, a window fell from a flat in the building where that colleague lives and dropped on to a busy street full of people. Fortunately, no one was injured. Police officers arrived after the management office had made a report, but what did they do? They went upstairs to have a look and left without laying any charges against anyone. President, I just want to point out particularly that in the past, the owners concerned would be prosecuted for negligence in handling their windows even if no passer-by was injured. And the question that I want to ask is, why did they rush away? It appears that what ought to be done has not been accomplished; yet people who should not be arrested have been subject to arbitrary arrest. Is it the proper way of doing things by a disciplined force responsible for maintaining law and order in the city of Hong Kong and ensuring the safety of Hongkongers? If so, given the high degree of self-discipline of Hongkongers, Hong Kong will keep on running instead of being marred in chaos should there be a shutdown of the Police Force.

President, as a matter of fact, the SAR Government should know it full well that funding can be deployed among departments by means of allocation warrants under the Public Finance Ordinance. It is actually not necessary to obtain approval from this Council. As I learnt from the reply to my question given by the Government earlier, government departments secretly allocated funding of at least $148 million to the Police Force last year without the knowledge of the Legislative Council. Subsequently, the South China Morning Post also found out that the 22 departments involved had transferred $95 million to the Police Force for its procurement of water-filled barriers and other equipment. Up to this point, I must emphasize that it is virtually impossible for the Legislative Council to exercise monitoring if the Government adopts such an approach. In fact, it is like the SAR Government is taking the lead in copying the financial tricks of other private enterprises. The relevant departments, each with its own budget, were allocated a sum of funding in the annual appropriation. They would then transfer the surplus funding earmarked to the Police Force. It is already questionable whether such an approach is the most legitimate, not to mention that the political environment was so tense in the previous year. Yet, the SAR Government allocated funding this way to circumvent public supervision. Was it acting in an open and aboveboard manner indeed? The SAR Government owes Hongkongers a clear explanation. It should not wait for Members and the media to make enquiries. So far, no one knows the relevant figures and which the 22 departments involved are. From which departments did the $95 million concerned come? We also have no idea as to which
subheads the funding belongs. Why should we have to keep asking these questions? Why has the SAR Government not brought this up for discussion in an upright manner? I would like to point out that if the SAR Government cares so much about the Police Force, why is it necessary to seek funding from the Legislative Council? The Government can transfer funding internally from its left vault to its right vault, or from its left pocket to its right pocket. There is indeed no need to bother Members of the Legislative Council.

Therefore, after all is said and done, the current situation is that the entire SAR Government is only at the service of the Police, and the entire SAR Government has been brazening it out by paying no heed to people's discontent with and distrust of the Police Force. The Government itself lacks integrity and public recognition. President, even if it keeps on throwing its support behind the much-criticized and much-hated Hong Kong Police Force, two negatives will not make a positive.

Before I finish with my speech, I would like to respond in particular to the allegation against the pan-democracy camp for engaging in filibuster as mentioned by Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok a moment ago. Why would he mention filibuster? Is it possible to stage a filibuster in this legislature nowadays? All the presiding posts, be it the President of the Legislative Council, Chairman of the Finance Committee ("FC"), as well as Chairman of the Establishment Subcommittee and the Public Works Subcommittee under FC, are taken up by Members of the pro-establishment camp. In addition, the Rules of Procedure are all drawn up and amended by you. Assuming that a filibuster really takes place nowadays, it might be attributed to your omissions when amending the Rules of Procedure back then. I have not yet mentioned that the President of the Legislative Council can now decide when a debate will come to a close, whereas arrangements of the Budget debate are essentially determined by the President of the Legislative Council. Can you not see that Mr CHAN Kin-por, Chairman of FC, has been exceedingly brave whenever he presides over a meeting? He cuts off a discussion whenever he so wishes, and puts the question to vote at his own will. Actually, how can one say that there are filibusters? They make such allegations merely to shirk their responsibilities for being slack in their work when introducing amendments to the Rules of Procedure in the past and leaving people with a wrong impression.

The earlier remarks made by Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok is very interesting as well. Citing the public housing development at Wang Chau as an example, he
pointed out that the grass roots have fallen victim to the delay in funding approval, expressing much compassion and sympathy. If Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok really cares so much about matters relating to public rental housing, why has he not offered help by speaking out loudly to fight for any rights for the prospective tenants at the time when Chun Yeung Estate, Fo Tan was requisitioned and used as a quarantine centre? Therefore, such remarks can hardly be justified after all.

President, we will support the amendments proposed by the three Honourable colleagues today, for all of them reflect public opinions. What we must know now is that when there is a public outcry, we have a responsibility to seek justice for the people.

I so submit.

MR TONY TSE (in Cantonese): President, in recent years, whenever the Legislative Council scrutinized the Budget for the coming financial year, the opposition camp would target departments and officials that they wanted to attack and requested to reduce the relevant expenditures or remunerations contained in the Budget. This time, three opposition Members, namely Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr Andrew WAN go even further by not sparing the Vote on Account Resolution. They proposed four amending motions respectively, seeking to reduce the funds on account for the Chief Executive's Office and the Hong Kong Police Force.

According to past practice, the annual Budget is usually announced in February. Then Members will examine and seek written replies from the Administration to questions about the proposed expenditures for various Policy Bureaux and government departments. Hence, the Second Reading of the Budget will normally resume only in late April. If some Members propose thousands of amendments to the Budget as what they did in the past, the voting on the Budget will be delayed to May or even June. In order to pay for the Government's daily expenditures in the new financial year from 1 April until the passage of the Budget in the Legislative Council, the Administration usually proposes a resolution under the Public Finance Ordinance in March, just like this one today, to seek the Legislative Council's approval for the funds on account to ensure that various departments will obtain sufficient funds for continuous operation in this window period, so that the Government will not come to a standstill and public services will not be affected. This is a long-established
usual practice in Hong Kong which is necessary and effective. Therefore, voting in favour of the Vote on Account Resolution does not mean Members have no comment on any item in the Budget or the performance of any department or government official. For this reason, I support the resolution proposed by the Secretary this time.

Opposition Members criticized the Chief Executive for doing a poor job, so they seek to cut the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office. As we all know, even in the pro-establishment camp, some Members hold different opinions on the Chief Executive's handling of the legislative amendment crisis and the recent anti-epidemic efforts. Some have expressed dissatisfaction with her privately or publicly on various occasions. However, is it appropriate and reasonable to reduce the expenditure of the entire Chief Executive's Office by making amendments to the Vote on Account Resolution? President, I do not think so, basically.

Opposition Members are not satisfied with the enforcement efforts of the Police during the legislative amendments crisis. They also questioned the substantial increase of the manpower and expenditure for the Police Force. There are established mechanism and procedures for handling these issues. We should not reduce the funds on account for the entire Police Force, causing all police stations to close or suspend services from 1 April, simply because individual police officers have committed acts of misconduct or violated regulations and law. I would like to ask the opposition Members who proposed the amending motions: If the Police cease operation because of the funding cut, who will be responsible for enforcing the law and catching thieves? Who will be responsible for rescuing people and directing traffic? Will opposition Members be responsible for that? Can it be that the masked mobs in black will maintain public order through vigilantism and vandalism?

President, I imagine that only two types of people wish to see police stations close and the Police not enforcing the law. The first type are criminals and people intending to violate the law, who naturally do not want to see law enforcement by the Police. The second type are those who wish to overthrow the existing law and system, or even consider themselves the law. They think that it is up to them, instead of the law or the judge, to decide whether an act is illegal. Which type do the opposition Members who proposed and support the amending motions to reduce the daily expenditure of the Police Force belong to?
President, I also serve as the Vice-Chairman of the Independent Police Complaints Council ("IPCC") and a member of the IPCC's task force to examine independently recent large-scale public order events. In consideration of the filing of a judicial review challenging IPCC's power to carry out the relevant study, IPCC decided to postpone the release of the first interim report which was originally scheduled for January this year. As pointed out by Dr Anthony Francis NEOH, Chairman of IPCC, yesterday, IPCC has not suspended the study because of the legal proceedings. Instead, it has examined incidents happened after 2 July, including the "21 July" and "31 August" incidents, in a more in-depth manner during this period. If the ruling on the judicial review, which will be heard next Tuesday, finds that IPCC did not go beyond its powers, the full report can be released as early as next month. The study report can also assist IPCC in examining the complaints against the Police arising from the legislative amendments. As I pointed out in IPCC's open meeting yesterday, management of the Police should follow up on the acts of individual police officers which are obviously improper and unlawful regardless of whether any complaint has been made.

The Commissioner of Police has also recently revealed that 21 police officers have been reprimanded during the legislative amendments crisis and stressed that it was merely the beginning. If a police officer has allegedly violated regulations or even the law, the Police will definitely conduct follow-up investigations. I hope the Police can enhance the transparency of the reprimand, investigation and punishment procedures. Then the public can understand that the Police will seriously follow up on the acts of police officers which violated the law and regulations or are improper regardless of whether any complaint was made.

Lastly, some people questioned the effectiveness of the existing two-tier mechanism comprising the Complaints Against Police Office and IPCC for handling complaints and suggested that IPCC be vested with the powers to investigate proactively. President, I remain open-minded on this. Society can hold discussions in this regard and relevant legislative amendments can be made if necessary.

President, with these remarks, I support the original resolution proposed by the Secretary and oppose the amending motions proposed by the three Members.
MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): President, to put it simply, the proposed resolution moved under the Public Finance Ordinance being discussed by us now seeks to deal with the public expenditure yet to be approved upon the commencement of the financial year on 1 April. What should be done in the vacuum period? As the Budget has not been passed and the Government needs to cope with the operational expenditure, the Legislative Council has to approve the Government's request for funds on account, which are in staggering amounts. Honourable colleagues have put forward a few amending motions today, of which the simplest and most straightforward one is to cut the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office amounting to $25 million and all of the expenditure of the Police Force.

Frankly, when it comes to the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office, it is inevitable that not a single penny will go to Carrie LAM. In fact, to be fair, in retrospect, the entire Government under Carrie LAM has actually been out of condition since the outbreak of the disease. Every Hong Kong citizen had an unforgettable Lunar New Year, during which they braved the cold weather, waiting in line to buy masks. The Macao Government has implemented mask rationing to reassure the public, and Taiwan has long become a role model in containing and fighting the disease. But the Hong Kong Government is really ridiculous. Carrie LAM was even out of town for a duty visit at first. President, we vividly recall the Lunar New Year's Eve, on which Chief Secretary for Administration Matthew CHEUNG was still considering whether XRL passengers should be required to fill in health declaration forms, saying such a measure would cause crowds of people to gather in the lobby and increase the chance for infection. That was nothing but a laughing stock. What happened then? Our demand for full border closure was rejected. Later on, Carrie LAM eventually returned to Hong Kong from Switzerland. While we thought she would share with us some bold anti-epidemic plans, she did nothing and just took things as they came in the face of the epidemic.

Carrie LAM's anti-epidemic performance has caused Hong Kong people to live in constant fear and this alone is something that she cannot make up for even if she dies 10 times. Had she implemented border closure from the outset, we would not have had to worry about the occurrence of community transmission. Subsequently, with the successive cases of community transmission, Carrie LAM's Government used facilities in the vicinity of residential areas as quarantine camps, and designated clinics in the vicinity of residential areas as coronavirus clinics. Worried and apprehensive, members of the public came out
to express their views, but were randomly beaten by the Police. Buddy, facing Wuhan pneumonia, members of the public wished to express their views. What was wrong with that? It was because this woman, Carrie LAM, did a poor job. Had it not been for the group of health care workers going on strike, piling pressure on the Government and demanding border closure back then, would Carrie LAM have been willing to close the border? Would Carrie LAM have been willing to close the border partially? She simply has no sense of shame.

Hong Kong still keeps its ground today thanks to Hong Kong people and health care workers. The credit should go to Hong Kong people who help themselves and not because Carrie LAM and her Administration have been doing a good job. With the experience of SARS, we are aware that the virus is highly infectious. While the pandemic sweeps across the world, Hong Kong can still keep things under control. The credit should go to Hong Kong people, and it has nothing to do with Carrie LAM. It is downright ridiculous of her to refuse to hand out masks and repeatedly turn down our demand for border closure.

President, while having claimed that border closure was discriminatory, she indicated her intention to issue travel alerts covering all countries two days ago. So, is the Mainland, where the virus originated, included? Does Carrie LAM now take the lead in discriminating against the whole world? Let us get to the point. It is only fair to cut her salary and all of the expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office. She will not get a single penny! Now Carrie LAM has even shamelessly asked us to donate masks to the Government. We have passed on 3 million masks to organizations in need. Why should she do that? She can look at the fact that the pro-establishment camp is not on good terms with her either. Her well-known snitching report has named the pro-establishment camp, accusing them of failing to do their utmost to assist her. Let us see who are going to speak next. Dr Priscilla LEUNG has pressed the "Request to speak" button. Would she please frankly tell us how much she hates Carrie LAM.

This woman, Carrie LAM, only talks about the situation of the epidemic. She has actually got a golden opportunity to regain popularity through anti-epidemic work, but she has missed out on it time and again, leaving Hong Kong people in a state of anxiety. Now we are really overwhelmed with fear, even when we are walking on the streets. Why? Because I do not know whether I am a carrier. I do not care if I have contracted the disease, but I am very worried about transmission to family members and those around me whom I care about. All Hong Kong people are now living in fear, and those
well-remunerated senior officials certainly know nothing about that. Once they step out of the Legislative Council Complex, they will be picked up by government vehicles, and they simply need not get on board packed MTR trains or buses. Now people are still at sea, not knowing what to do. If we look to the Government for help, we really have to wait till the end of time.

Some people say, "Mr KWONG, it is a hard nut to crack. There is nothing much the Government can do". How about the Macao Government? Like Hong Kong, Macao is also a Special Administrative Region, yet it has done quite a good job. How about Taiwan? Its entry restriction is effective and vigorous, and its own mask production lines will also be launched soon, supplying a large number of masks to members of the public. What has Carrie LAM's Government done? We simply cannot think of any. She knows nothing but to brag about herself and claim credit. But people's eyes are discerning. She will not be given a single penny. The amending motions proposed in respect of the funds on account are well put. If we go to the streets to take the pulse of the general public, asking them whether salary should be paid to Carrie LAM, they will adamantly say no for sure. Not even a single penny will be given to her.

Apart from the epidemic issue, Carrie LAM's performance before the outbreak is also known to all. The perpetuator of the entire movement of opposition to the proposed legislative amendments since June last year is Carrie LAM. She proposed the legislative amendments for no reason, and the pro-establishment camp parroted her. Together they pushed forward the extradition bill, leaving Hong Kong people in a fury. She did not care about the fact that 1 million people took to the streets. When 2 million people took to the streets subsequently, fear started to grip her. While indicating that the legislative amendment exercise would be suspended, she still refused to withdraw the bill. It was only because of our repeated demands that she withdrew the bill, saying that the legislative amendment exercise was dead. Yet, how many young people have been injured, shed blood, got arrested and lost their life because of Carrie LAM?

How many generations had to pass before we could see such a woman? She has really surpassed "689". What is so astonishing about "Ms 777" is that she triggered a movement, in the middle of which she got the Police to clear up the mess for her by random beating, arbitrary arrests and indiscriminate charges, thinking that the issues could be fixed by fixing those who raised them, while
hiding safely behind the defence line of the Police. Does she know that a number of police officers actually detest her and her team of senior officials? They know nothing but to give instructions to frontline officers. Now the frontline officers have started to feel worried. Why? Because rumours have now started to swirl that the senior management would pass the buck to certain police officers. The Commissioner is really tactful, saying that 21 police officers were reprimanded earlier. But what would happen after the reprimand? He then said it was not known what action would be taken. In other words, the Police have got a list setting out the number of police officers who have committed mistakes. In that case, who should be thrown to the wolves first so as to sever ties later on? Should it start with the Commissioner or those police officers? Would they please examine their conscience. Their original aspiration to fight crimes and maintain public order when being admitted to the Police College has been taken advantage of by these senior government officials and senior management of the Police. Those young people are the future of our city. Should such a high-handed approach be adopted every time?

To put it simply, another amendment today seeks to cut the funding for the Police. It is just that simple. Now the whole world knows about the notoriety of the Hong Kong Police. But do the Police want that? No, they may not actually, but it is an objective fact. Social rifts developed at the start of the movement. When the outbreak subsequently broke out, people's reactions were expected because the coronavirus clinics were located on the ground floor of residential buildings, and the quarantine camps were also in the vicinity of residential areas. Buddy, people just went to the streets to express their views, but they were met with pepper spray and random baton beating by the Police. What happened next? The buck was certainly passed to the Police. Hence, the amending motions are proposed today so that the Police Force will be given no money and stripped of the expenditure of $5.5 billion they need. It is just that simple.

In fact, our Honourable colleagues have pulled punches. We are now dealing with the funds on account instead of the Budget. To be fair, where did the some $200 million of public money spent by the Chief Executive's Office go? What has been done? They were never there at crucial times. Where were they when they should contain the spread and fight the disease? They once and again missed out on the most critical window of opportunity. Many people think, in retrospect, that had border closure been fully implemented in Hong Kong right from the outset, there would not have been successive outbreaks or
spread of community cases. President, the number of new cases has again hit new high today. Can we still act as if nothing has happened? We can look at the masks we have at home, which are running out. Chief Executive, what should we do? Does everyone need to rely on themselves and fend for their own well-being?

One thing is ridiculous. While companies, community organizations, NGOs and volunteers have managed to procure masks, Carrie LAM is the only one who has failed to do so. The pre-ordered masks are nowhere in sight, and the CSI masks have found their way onto the market, available for sale online at eBay. After investigation, we have come to know that the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") have started to produce masks every month since 2010. But now, we have realized that we do not have enough masks, not even able to get one, only when we need them. It is the health care workers who deserve pity. According to them, they wear the same N95 mask to perform tracheal suction for a few dozen patients. Owing to insufficient stock, they cannot change the mask even when it becomes wet. While there is currently a shortage of masks, protective apparel and face shields, all the mediocrities of Carrie LAM's Government have gathered together, requesting us to approve the funds on account to cover various items of remuneration and expenditure. How great it would be if the expenditure of $250 million was used to buy masks for the public.

They are reluctant to spend money on good causes but are willing to waste it. Much money was wasted that way in the past. President, we have often heard about cost overruns of infrastructure projects. A further cost overrun of $10 billion for Shatin to Central Link was just discussed this morning. If this sum of $10 billion is used to assist the elderly, it will be enough to cover the disbursement of Old Age Allowance for two years and a half. Carrie LAM's Government is downright lousy, and she is even much loathed by the civil service. Ordering civil servants to resume work in offices, she went so far as to ask them to bring their own masks "just as they had to wear their own clothes". If we just talk about Carrie LAM at the very least, are the Directors of Bureaux and civil servants, based on their conscience, willing to submit to her?

Basically, the only remaining use of Carrie LAM is to announce the formation of an independent commission of inquiry immediately, and then resign and bow out, thereby fulfilling her historical mission. She is of no use at all. The pro-establishment camp should no longer blindly support her. Let us look at the District Council Elections last year. They went down together with
Carrie LAM, and woke up to reality only afterwards. They used to think that they made up the majority of society, and only with such a rude awakening did they realize that they were the minority as their popularity has been gradually eroded by Carrie LAM. Look at the snitching report. It has come through loud and clear, filled with reproachful remarks.

Let us go back to the original point. To put it simply, concerning the Vote on Account Resolution today, Carrie LAM and the Hong Kong Police Force will not be given a single penny. How can we possibly let them procure armoured personnel carriers and water cannon vehicles? Members should note that now the devil is in the details of the funds on account, which allow them to procure equipment. Those armoured personnel carriers are used to intimidate young people and attack Hong Kong people. Are they asking us to pay them to attack Hong Kong people? That is simply wishful thinking.

President, these amending motions proposed by Honourable colleagues before us have actually reflected an important thought in the mind of Hong Kong people, that is, it is time for Carrie LAM to go. Not only the legislative amendment exercise on the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance but also Carrie LAM's political career is dead. If she gets the chance to attend a Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session again, we will definitely give her special treatment. This person is rather quiet these days. Where did she go recently? She went to CSD to assist with packaging masks, and visited residents living in a subdivided unit in Sham Shui Po. On leaving, she was even hounded by people who lashed out at her, and she had to flee the scene. As the Honourable Chief Executive, she is earning tens of thousands of dollars per hour. Yet, she went to package masks and had pictures taken. Come on! Carrie LAM, stop doing that. It is simply pointless. She likes doing pointless things, and her very being is pointless indeed.

Hong Kong people now have a strong aversion to her. Every time I set up a street booth, members of the public will say to me, "Mr KWONG, next time you see Carrie LAM, you must chew her out on behalf of me". The inaction of the entire Government towards the outbreak of Wuhan pneumonia has clearly demonstrated how it treats the general public in Hong Kong. It is ridiculous now that when the cash handout of $10,000 announced in the Budget will be disbursed remains unknown. We requested the Government to take out other items so that they would not be subjected to the same fate as the expenditure of the Police Force. But again, it refused. I wish to tell them that members of the
public are shrewd nowadays. We just do not know how many people are watching live broadcast of the Council meeting at home now. Do they still think that they can muddle it through, proving that Carrie LAM will continue to serve Hong Kong people by simply taking a few pictures and reaching out to the public? Stop kidding around!

I have reproached her for 15 minutes today, but it is not enough. If possible, I do wish to chew her out. But what I wish to say is that we have to deal with the several important amending motions before us, reducing the estimated expenditure of the Chief Executive's Office from $250 million to $0, and the estimated expenditure of the Hong Kong Police Force from some $5 billion to $0. It is just that simple. Why is it necessary to reduce their expenditures? There is no such thing as love or hatred without reason or cause. They should seriously think about how much they owe Hong Kong people. Even if Carrie LAM dies 10 or a hundred times, she cannot make up for it. As a political figure, at the very end of her political career, for the sake of the SAR Government and those civil servants and senior officials still wishing to serve the public, she should resign and step down of her own accord. May good people live a blessed life and evil doers, a cursed life. Let us see when Carrie LAM will be condemned to it.

President, I so submit.

SUSPENSION OF MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now suspend the meeting until 9:00 am tomorrow.

Suspended accordingly at 6:24 pm.