



**Legislative Council of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

Finance Committee

**Report on the examination of the
Estimates of Expenditure 2021-2022**

July 2021

Finance Committee

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Chapter I : Introduction

1.1 At the Legislative Council meeting of 24 February 2021, the Financial Secretary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government introduced the Appropriation Bill 2021. Following the adjournment of the Bill at Second Reading and in accordance with Rule 71(11) of the Rules of Procedure, the President of the Legislative Council referred the Estimates of Expenditure to the Finance Committee for detailed examination before the Bill was further proceeded with in the Council.

1.2 The Finance Committee set up under Rule 71(1) of the Rules of Procedure comprises all Members of the Council except the President. The Committee held 21 sessions of special meetings over five days from 12 to 16 April 2021 to examine the Estimates of Expenditure. The purpose of these special meetings was to ensure that the Administration was seeking a provision no more than was necessary for the execution of the policies of the Government for 2021-2022.

1.3 To facilitate the smooth conduct of business, members of the Committee were invited to submit written questions on the Estimates of Expenditure using a web-based application system. A total of 3 287 written questions were received and forwarded to the Administration for replies. The Administration provided all replies before the special meetings. Members' questions and the Administration's replies have been uploaded onto the Council's website.

1.4 Each session of the special meetings from 12 to 16 April 2021 was dedicated to a specific policy area and attended by the respective Director of Bureau and Controlling Officer. The schedule of the 21 sessions is given in **Appendix I**. At the start of each session, the Director of Bureau/Controlling Officer concerned gave a brief presentation on the spending priorities and provisions sought under his/her programme areas. The Chairman then invited members to put questions to the Administration. The records of the proceedings of the 21 sessions are given in Chapters II to XXII. Supplementary questions and requests for further information from members were referred to the Administration for written replies after the meetings, while broad policy issues raised during the meetings were referred to the respective panels for follow up, where necessary.

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1.5 A total of 53 supplementary questions and requests for additional information were referred to the Administration for reply after the special meetings. All the written replies to these questions were forwarded to members prior to the third Budget meeting on 28 April 2021. A summary of the number of the questions and additional requests for information is given in **Appendix II**.

1.6 The attendance of members and public officers at the special meetings is given in **Appendix III**. The speaking notes of Directors of Bureaux, the Secretary for Justice and the Judiciary Administrator at the special meetings are contained in **Appendix IV**.

1.7 This report, published in both Chinese and English, would be presented to the Legislative Council on 14 July 2021 in accordance with Paragraph 53 of the Finance Committee Procedure.

Chapter II : Civil Service

2.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Patrick NIP, Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS"), briefed members on the civil service establishment and the financial provisions relating to the policy area of central management of the civil service (Appendix IV-1).

Civil service establishment and promotion system

2.2 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB072, Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the measures adopted by the Administration for addressing the high wastage rates in a number of policy bureaux/departments ("B/D"). Citing Annex B to Reply Serial No. CSB038, Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed concern about the wastage rates of civil servants in the age groups of 20 to below 30 and 30 to below 40. He was worried that the Administration might face a retirement wave and the succession problems arising therefrom at the same time, which would in turn affect the operation and quality of public services. Dr CHENG Chung-tai also noted an upward trend in the departure of civil servants belonging to the age group of 20 to below 30 in 2017-2018 to 2019-2020, including a year-on-year growth in the number of resignees. He enquired about the reasons for the aforesaid increase and the number of resignees in 2020-2021.

2.3 SCS remarked that the number of resignees was 1 519 in 2020-2021 (as at end-February 2021), and the number of resignees over the past three years (i.e. 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020) remained at less than 1% of the strength of the civil service. He pointed out that over 60% of the resignees left the civil service during the probationary period, and the departure of these younger officers had resulted in high wastage rates in the relatively low age groups. In face of the peak period of civil servants' retirement, the Government would closely monitor the wastage situation as well as succession arrangements in various B/Ds, and seek to attract, retain and motivate talents by adopting measures such as improvements to the working environment and the implementation of various commendation schemes. In response to the further question raised by Dr CHENG Chung-tai, SCS remarked that although a number of reasons of wastage were categorized as other reasons, retirement had been the primary reason for the departure of civil servants from the civil service.

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2.4 Referring to Annexes A and B to Reply Serial No. CSB080, Mr Tony TSE requested the Administration to explain why there were 24 landscape architect posts at the Architectural Services Department in 2020-2021, whereas the strength of such grade stood at 19 as at 31 January 2021. Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service ("PSCS") said that Annex B only reflected the strength of the grade as at 31 January 2021, the vacancies concerned might be the result of ongoing recruitment exercises or retirement of officers. In response to the further question raised by Mr TSE, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1 ("DS(CS)1") said that time-limited supernumerary posts were already included in the estimated establishment of the grades relating to the Architectural, Surveying, Planning and Landscape professions in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

2.5 In response to the enquiry of Mr Christopher CHEUNG regarding the promotion system and criteria of directorate officers, SCS advised that civil servants were promoted on the criteria of character, ability, experience and any qualifications prescribed for the higher rank as set out in the Civil Service Regulations ("CSRs"). The promotion board recommended the most suitable officer to fill a post at a higher rank. Moreover, all appointments and promotions concerning civil service posts with a maximum monthly salary at Master Pay Scale Point 26 or more generally had to be advised by the independent Public Service Commission ("PSC").

Oath-taking by civil servants

2.6 Mr CHAN Chun-ying noted that some civil servants tendered their resignation because the Administration had required all civil servants to take an oath or make a declaration that they would uphold the Basic Law, bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR"), be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. He requested the Administration to provide the numbers of civil servants resigned during the period from October 2020 to March 2021 and during the same period in the previous year, so as to draw a comparison to find out whether there were any changes in the number of resignees since the Administration issued the relevant circulars. Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB001, he also enquired how the Administration would follow up the cases in which civil servants neglected or refused to take the oath or to duly sign and return the declaration.

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2.7 SCS remarked that as at 1 April 2021, around 170 000 civil servants had duly signed and returned the declaration, while only 129 civil servants neglected or refused to duly sign and return the declaration. The respective departments had issued letters to request explanations from the officers concerned and had received replies from some of them. For civil servants who neglected or refused to duly sign and return the declaration without reasonable explanations, the Government would, based on the facts of each case, consider taking actions under section 12 of the Public Service (Administration) Order to require the officers concerned to retire from the service in the public interest, because the Government had lost confidence in these officers continuing to discharge duties as civil servants. According to the established procedures, the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") would notify the officer concerned in writing and invite him/her to submit representations within 14 days. CSB would take into account the representations (if available) made by such officer and submit the case to PSC for advice if the post of the officer fell within PSC's purview. CSB would then make a final decision and notify the officer concerned.

Civil service fringe benefits

2.8 Mr Christopher CHEUNG noted from Reply Serial No. CSB012 that the estimated expenditures of the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme ("Commendation Award Scheme") and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme ("Travel Award Scheme") stood high at \$250 million in 2021-2022. He enquired whether the Administration would consider giving recognition to civil servants with exemplary performance in a lower-cost way to tide over difficult times with the public. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung also suggested the Administration review whether it should continue setting aside huge funds for the Travel Award Scheme amidst the economic downturn. Mr POON Siu-ping and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired respectively how the Administration would handle situations in which the awardees of the Travel Award Scheme (especially those who had reached the retirement age) were unable to travel to places outside Hong Kong in 2021-2022 due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic.

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2.9 SCS advised that apart from the Travel Award Scheme, the Government had rolled out other civil service commendation schemes such as the Commendation Award Scheme, the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme and the Commendation Letter Scheme, with a view to rewarding civil servants by awarding certificates of appreciation or commendation letters. He stressed that the Travel Award Scheme aimed to recognize serving non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, and who had a track record of consistently very good performance and had not received any government travel award before. The award was granted on a one-off basis and quota-based. In 2020-2021, there were 64 000 eligible awardees, whilst the number of awards was less than 2 400. Due to the pandemic, the Government had extended the validity period of the travel awards of relevant awardees to 31 March 2022. Awardees who retired during this period were also exceptionally allowed to use the award after their retirement until 31 March 2022. Hence, the total estimated expenditure for 2021-2022 in fact covered the expenditure for the travel awards in two years. The Government would keep a close watch on the latest pandemic situation before deciding on the ways to handle cases in which the travel awards could not be utilized due to the pandemic.

2.10 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB033, Mr KWOK Wai-keung suggested the Administration further review the number of days of the paternity leave provided for eligible government employees, with a view to driving private organizations to enhance this family-friendly practice together. SCS advised that the Administration would keep in view the implementation of the statutory paternity leave and the Employment Ordinance (Chapter 57).

2.11 Furthermore, referring to Reply Serial No. CSB100, Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted that the Department of Health ("DH") adjusted the services provided by dental clinics in 2020 because a large number of staff members had been deployed to take up frontline anti-epidemic work, a significant drop in the number of attendances of civil service eligible persons ("CSEPs") at the dental clinics under DH was thus recorded in that year. He enquired how the authorities would handle the backlog of appointments. SCS remarked that dental clinics had enhanced their service capacity through various means, including increasing the number of dental clinics with extended service hours and extending the services to Saturdays, with a view to arranging necessary dental treatment for CSEPs as soon as

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possible.

2.12 Quoting Reply Serial No. CSB071, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the review progress of the pilot scheme on Civil Service Chinese Medicine Clinics ("the pilot scheme") and the release date of the results. SCS advised that the Government was conducting the relevant review. As the pilot scheme was well-received by CSEPs, the Government would study, under a collaboration model, with the Hospital Authority ("HA") as well as the 18 Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centres operated by HA, non-governmental organizations and local universities, to find out whether there were rooms for enhancing the service capacity of the aforementioned pilot scheme.

2.13 Given the overwhelming demand for Chinese medicine ("CM") services by civil servants, Ms Elizabeth QUAT suggested that consideration should be given to launching a health care voucher scheme for civil servants, thereby allowing them to use CM services in the private market. SCS remarked that the Government would not pursue the suggestion for the time being as it would be difficult to control the quality of CM services provided by the private healthcare sector.

Training and development

2.14 Citing Reply Serial No. CSB024, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired about the ranks of and places for civil servants who would be arranged for attending national studies training on the Mainland in the coming two years. She also suggested the Administration make arrangements for civil servants to work as interns in Mainland Government departments to acquire a better understanding of the country's development. Referring to Reply Serial Nos. CSB002 and CSB004, Mr CHAN Chun-ying asked when the Administration would organize relevant programmes for directorate officers who had not yet attended national studies training programmes on the Mainland. He then proposed that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") should enhance the national studies training programmes organized in Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen University for civil servants at middle, senior and directorate levels in tandem with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA") Development.

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2.15 SCS remarked that CSTDI organized national studies training programmes for civil servants at various levels. In addition to local programmes, CSTDI also provided training programmes, thematic visits as well as staff exchange programmes on the Mainland for civil servants. To further enhance national studies training, CSTDI would increase the number of training places in the national studies programmes currently co-organized with nine Mainland institutions, extend the Civil Service Staff Exchange Programme between Hong Kong and the Mainland to cover the Mainland municipalities in the GBA and continue to enhance the contents of the thematic visits to the Mainland municipalities in GBA. The Government had also set some targets in relation to gradually enabling all directorate officers to attend the aforesaid training programmes co-organized with Mainland institutions, arranging for civil servants to attend exchanges and training at Mainland Government departments to gain first-hand experience about the country's latest development, as well as enhancing the National Studies Foundation Course provided for new recruits within their three-year probationary period.

2.16 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB002, Mr Tony TSE asked whether the Administration would consider increasing the number of national studies training programmes delivered by way of e-learning programmes, thereby reducing the training expenses for participants' travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland and their accommodation. SCS advised that in 2020, owing to the epidemic, all training programmes, thematic visits as well as staff exchange programmes in the Mainland had to be cancelled, while some local programmes and seminars had to be delivered by way of e-learning programmes instead. The Government took this opportunity to promote e-learning, and the Cyber Learning Centre Plus ("CLC Plus") had thus recorded around 6.6 million page views in 2020, a substantial surge when compared with 2019. He undertook that the Government would further enhance the e-learning programmes provided for civil servants.

Extension of the service of civil servants

2.17 Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted from Reply Serial No. CSB074 that the Chief Executive had approved the Hong Kong Police Force's ("HKPF") proposal to launch a scheme for all serving police officers at non-directorate level who joined the Government before 1 June 2000 to apply for extending

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their service to the age of 60. The Chief Executive had also given in-principle approval for other disciplined services departments to explore launching a similar scheme. She suggested the Administration expeditiously draw up the relevant timetable. The Administration noted the aforesaid views.

Civil service disciplinary matters

2.18 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB047, Mr Tony TSE enquired about the salary arrangements of the civil servants who were arrested and interdicted for suspected involvement in unlawful activities arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. SCS advised that a civil servant who was interdicted would normally have not more than 50% of his salary withheld upon being charged with a criminal offence. The civil servant concerned would have his salary withheld in full when he was convicted of a serious criminal offence. If the officer being interdicted was eventually imposed with removal punishment upon conclusion of disciplinary proceedings, the withheld salary would be forfeited. In case a punishment other than removal punishment was imposed, the Government might forfeit such proportion of the withheld salary during interdiction as it thought fit. SCS also remarked that the arrested civil servants included some who were appointed on probationary terms, and a number of them had their service terminated by the Government under CSR 186.

Non-civil service contract staff

2.19 Mr LUK Chung-hung raised concern that Hongkong Post ("HKP") and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") had respectively employed a large number of non-civil service contract ("NCSC") staff. While around 70% of the NCSC staff at HKP had five years or more of continuous service, many seasonal lifeguards were employed by LCSD to address the prolonged shortage of lifeguards at public swimming pools and gazetted beaches. He enquired whether the Administration would consider replacing such NCSC positions with established long-term operational and service needs by civil service posts. Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB068, Mr POON Siu-ping also enquired whether the Administration would consider employing full-time NCSC staff with continuous service of five years or more in the same position as civil

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servants.

2.20 SCS advised that as at 30 June 2020, the Government had employed 11 027 fulltime NCSC staff members. Compared with the historical peak in 2006, there was a reduction of almost 40%. He pointed out that HKP employed NCSC staff members to meet operational and service needs that required staff to work less than the conditioned hours required of civil servants and that were subject to market fluctuations, while LCSD employed NCSC lifeguards to meet seasonal operational and service needs. PSCS supplemented that the Government reviewed the employment situation of NCSC staff from time to time and would replace those NCSC positions with established long-term operational and service needs by civil service posts when necessary. Appointments to the civil service were based on the principle of open and fair competition. NCSC staff should generally enjoy a competitive edge over other applicants when applying for civil service posts because of their working experience.

Job Creation Scheme

2.21 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr Holden CHOW raised concerns that whilst the Administration had yet to complete the recruitment exercises for the jobs created under the Job Creation Scheme ("the Scheme") in 2020-2021, around 30 000 time-limited jobs would be created in 2021-2022 with an allocation of \$6.6 billion. They urged the Administration to expeditiously complete the recruitment exercises of the Scheme to alleviate Hong Kong's unemployment situation. Referring to Reply Serial No. CSB058, Ir Dr LO enquired whether the Administration would increase the number of posts created in the construction and relevant engineering professional grades under the Scheme in 2020-2021.

2.22 SCS remarked that the posts created in the construction and relevant engineering professional grades under the Scheme in 2020-2021 were mainly filled through a subsidy scheme launched by the Development Bureau for private companies to employ graduates and assistant professionals. Approval had been given to most of the subsidized places, and it was estimated that the remaining places would gain approval in April 2021. As at end-March 2021, the number of filled jobs under the Scheme in 2020-2021 was around 20 000, while the recruitment of some remaining 11 000 posts was in progress or would commence shortly.

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2.23 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok enquired when the Administration would announce the details of the jobs created under the Scheme in 2021-2022. Mr Holden CHOW noted from Reply Serial No. CSB057 that the Administration would provide Arts Administration/Museum/Stage Management Trainee positions under the Scheme for fresh graduates. He suggested the Administration consider splitting some relevant full-time posts into a number of part-time posts to benefit more young people. SCS noted Mr CHOW's views and remarked that various B/Ds were liaising with the non-governmental organizations or relevant associations under their purview to formulate details of the time-limited jobs to be created in 2020-2021. Announcement would be made in a few months after the details had been finalized.

2.24 Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the jobs created at community vaccination centres for practitioners of the tourism industry were part of the Scheme, and sought information about the number of working hours and salary for the frontline posts so created. SCS remarked that among the some additional 30 000 time-limited positions created under the Scheme in 2020-2021, about 2 000 full-time or part-time posts were created for practitioners of the tourism industry. Holders of such posts would be responsible for providing managerial and administrative support for community vaccination centres, with a view to alleviating the employment issue faced by the tourism industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Holders of the frontline positions concerned (e.g. registrars) earned an hourly wage of \$100 and worked for over 10 days a month.

2.25 Mr Martin LIAO enquired whether the Administration would roll out similar employment support measures under the Scheme for other industries ravaged by the pandemic. Given that some retired civil servants had been employed to support the anti-epidemic work, he suggested the Administration employ persons who lost their jobs due to the pandemic instead. SCS advised that various B/Ds had been engaging stakeholders, such as quasi-government bodies, professional bodies and trade associations, with a view to formulating the plan of creating temporary jobs in the non-governmental sector. The jobs concerned covered various industries such as the logistic and the financial services sectors. Regarding the employment of retired civil servants to support the anti-epidemic work, SCS stressed that some anti-epidemic tasks, such as the coordination work and monitoring of the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme, had to be

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undertaken by persons who possessed knowledge/experience of the civil service.

Other issues of concern

2.26 Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned about how the Administration monitored the efficiency of civil servants during the implementation of the special work arrangements. SCS remarked that during the implementation of the special work arrangements, over 70% of the personnel were required to work at their regular workplaces, while those who worked from home were provided with information technology facilities to meet their job needs. Various B/Ds had also monitored the management and operation of services under their purview. In response to the further question raised by Mr LEUNG, SCS advised that the civil servants carrying out enforcement actions for compulsory testing at the "restricted areas" were mobilized after various B/Ds had taken into account their actual manpower needs. The Government had only kept a record of the person-times of the manpower mobilized by various B/Ds to participate in these actions; there was no breakdown as to whether such manpower included civil servants who were originally arranged to work from home.

2.27 Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the progress of the study on the enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers and urged the Administration to set up a timetable for this matter. SCS remarked that the Security Bureau was conducting relevant studies and hence, a timetable was not available at this stage. In addition, as the Chief Executive had pointed out earlier on that relevant work had not yet reached a mature stage, this coupled with the fact that quite a number of imminent issues were pending handling by the Government, the subject matter was not a legislative proposal to which the Government would accord higher priority at the moment.

Chapter III: Administration of Justice and Legal Services

3.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms Esther LEUNG, Judiciary Administrator ("JA"), and Ms Teresa CHENG, Secretary for Justice ("SJ"), highlighted the major financial provisions and key programmes related to the policy portfolios of administration of justice and legal services (Appendices IV-2-a and IV-2-b).

Cases related to the social events in 2019

3.2 Dr Junius HO considered that the public order events in 2019 arisen from the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 ("Fugitive Offenders Bill") were de facto riots. He urged the Administration to adopt the term "riots" instead of "cases related to the social events in 2019" ("SE cases") when making reference to those incidents.

3.3 SJ said that the social events in 2019 involved street violences and such offences as riots, unauthorized/unlawful assemblies, possession of offensive weapons, etc. How the events were referred to would not affect the work of the Department of Justice ("DoJ"). Each case was considered individually and independently by DoJ. Most importantly, a number of related cases were heard and decided by the Court.

Case backlog

3.4 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted from Reply Serial Number SJ017 that 10 242 persons had been arrested between 9 June 2019 and 28 February 2021 in relation to the "anti-extradition law amendments" (i.e. amendments under the Fugitive Offenders Bill), among whom only 2 521 arrestees had undergone or were undergoing the judicial proceedings. She expressed concern about the slow progress in making prosecutorial decisions as "justice delayed is justice denied". Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Dr Junius HO expressed similar views. Dr HO urged DoJ to provide a target timeframe for clearing the backlog.

3.5 SJ emphasized that before DoJ gave legal advice or made prosecutorial decisions, the law enforcement agency concerned would be required to submit relevant documents and evidence for its consideration. The cases had to be investigated and the investigation time varied in each case depending on its complexity and it could not be said that all 7 000 odd

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cases had not been processed. It was inaccurate to say that cases involving arrests but no prosecutions as of date were "backlogs". Upon receipt of law enforcement agencies' requests, DoJ would strive to provide legal advice as promptly as practicable within the pledged timeframe.

3.6 SJ pointed out that the thresholds for the Hong Kong Police ("the Police")'s arrests and DoJ's prosecutions were different. While the Police's arrest was based on whether there was reasonable suspicion that an offence had been committed, DoJ would decide to commence prosecutions only if there was sufficient admissible evidence to support a reasonable prospect of conviction and it would be in the public interest to do so.

3.7 Dr Junius HO noted from Reply Serial Number JA010 that many cases relating to the Occupy Movement in 2014 or so had not yet been disposed of, and expressed concern that it would likewise take unduly long time to institute prosecution for cases related to the "anti-extradition law amendments" incidents. He requested DoJ to let the public know as soon as possible if it had decided not to institute prosecution in certain cases. In response, SJ stressed that DoJ dealt with every case seriously and would not make a hasty decision to close a case with insufficient prima facie evidence. To ensure justice was done, DoJ would sometimes request the law enforcement agency concerned for more information.

3.8 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan referred to Reply Serial Number SJ043 and enquired whether the quick advisory system known as "FAST" in DoJ system could help deal with SE cases expeditiously and clear the backlog. SJ explained that "FAST" could assist in handling relevant cases with simplified procedures. For the cases involving social unrest, DoJ had a team specializing in handling these cases to ensure consistency.

3.9 Mr Holden CHOW referred to Reply Serial Number SJ008 and suggested that DoJ should maintain, by areas of criminal offences, statistics on the average number of days required for DoJ to provide legal advice upon the receipt of a request. SJ noted the suggestion.

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3.10 Dr Junius HO noted from Reply Serial Number JA010 that, out of the 1 752 cases in relation to the "anti-extradition law amendments" incidents which had been or were being dealt with at various levels of courts, more than 1 100 cases (or about 65%) had been concluded. He asked about the progress of the remaining cases and whether the Judiciary Administration ("Jud Adm") had any plan to increase the number of District Judges ("DJs") to expedite the hearing of these cases. Dr HO also asked whether extending DJs' retirement age would be considered as a measure to retain judicial manpower. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan and Mr Holden CHOW enquired about the measures to expedite clearing of the backlog. Mr CHOW, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Dr HO maintained the view that setting up a special court operating round-the-clock for hearing SE cases could expedite the process.

3.11 JA said that while about 65% of SE cases brought before various levels of court had been concluded, the cases concluded at the Magistrates' Courts had exceeded 70% by end of February 2021. Jud Adm had been closely monitoring the judicial manpower situation at various levels of courts. Additional judicial manpower resources had been engaged through recruitment of judges and judicial officers ("JJOs") to fill substantive vacancies, internal deployment of extant JJOs and appointment of deputy JJOs. Other measures included the conversion of District Court courtrooms for hearing cases with more defendants, and discretionary extension of the term of office for DJs had been provided with passage of the Judicial Officers (Extension of Retirement Age) (Amendment) Bill 2019 in 2019.

Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme

3.12 Dr CHENG Chung-tai referred to a reply from the Security Bureau that among the 1 752 arrestees in SE cases who were under the age of 18, only 22 received cautions under the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme ("PSDS"). In his understanding, the Chief Executive ("CE") had mentioned that for arrestees under the age of 18 in SE cases who were not involved in serious offences and had expressed contrition, the Police was prepared to consider cautioning them under PSDS. Dr CHENG enquired why DoJ had not advised the Police to resort to PSDS in more SE cases. He also expressed concern that the legal representatives of arrestees under the age of 18 might not be familiar with the PSDS procedure.

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3.13 SJ pointed out that in deciding whether it was suitable to deal with a case by way of PSDS, the Police would consider a host of factors (including the offender's age, the seriousness of the offence, whether the offender had voluntarily and unequivocally admitted the offence committed and whether he/she expressed contrition). SJ stressed that the accused's legal representatives also had professional obligation to advise arrestees under the age of 18 their rights to opt for PSDS and the relevant procedures.

Prosecutions

3.14 Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted from Reply Serial Number SJ017 that, of the 2 521 arrestees having undergone or undergoing judicial proceedings, the charges against 50 had been withdrawn and another 186 had been acquitted after trial. He considered this to be a reflection of the poor performance of the prosecutors, and queried whether some prosecutions had been politically motivated.

3.15 SJ said that DoJ took a serious view on every case. It conducted post-trial reviews to consider the relevant court judgments and JJOs' comments, and took follow-up actions as appropriate. DoJ would explain to the public if necessary and appropriate. She took exception to the unfounded allegation of so-called "political prosecution" and reiterated that DoJ would only institute prosecution only if there was sufficient admissible evidence to support a reasonable prospect of conviction, and that it would be in the public interest to do so. She pointed out the Court adopted a different threshold in deciding whether to convict a defendant after trial, and that judges would only deliver a guilty verdict if the offence was proved beyond reasonable doubt. Whether a case was convicted, withdrawn or acquitted after trial did not necessarily mean that the defendant should not have been charged in the first place.

3.16 Mr Holden CHOW noted from SJ's opening remarks at the meeting that DoJ had made 17 applications for reviewing the courts' judgments on sentencing of convicted persons in SE cases in 2020, and that all these applications had been allowed by the Court of Appeal ("CA"). He expressed support for DoJ's actions and urged that it should continue to make applications for reviewing the courts' judgments if the sentences were too lenient. SJ said that DoJ would conduct post-trial reviews for every prosecution case and determine whether a review or appeal was justified.

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Judicial review relating to non-refoulement claims

3.17 Referring to Reply Serial Number JA024, Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the average handling time of non-refoulement claim-related judicial review ("JR") cases and the measures to be taken by the Judiciary to clear the backlog.

3.18 JA said that as new non-refoulement cases continued to be submitted to the Judiciary, it was expected that the number of backlog cases would remain high for some time. Additional judicial manpower resources would continue to be engaged through various means to address the surge in workload brought about by JR cases involving non-refoulement claims. With the passage of the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 in October 2020, the High Court Ordinance (Cap. 4) had been amended to streamline court procedures and facilitate processing of cases in CA. The amendments also provided greater flexibility in the use of 2-Judge bench of CA, which would increase the flexibility in deployment of judicial manpower for JR appeal cases including those involving non-refoulement claims.

Court Prosecutors

3.19 Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan noted from Reply Serial Number SJ022 that legally qualified Court Prosecutors ("CPs") of DoJ only accounted for a small percentage of the total strength of CP Grade staff, and the percentages were declining in the past three years. He enquired about DoJ's policy regarding CP's legal qualifications. SJ said that under DoJ's current policy, CPs meeting the relevant legal qualifications could apply to work as Government Counsel ("GCs") on a temporary basis to gain exposure and opportunities for internal promotion, which should provide an incentive for CPs to pursue legal studies.

3.20 Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions (II) of DoJ ("DDPP/DoJ") supplemented that CPs were encouraged to pursue legal studies after office hours to become legally qualified. Subject to CPs' successful completion of the relevant courses, reimbursement of the tuition fees could be reimbursed. Appointment of legally qualified CPs as temporary GCs would not only provide them with first-hand experience of working as GCs, they would also be evaluated on their performance and aptitude as GCs,

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which would serve as useful reference if they were to apply for appointment as substantive GCs subsequently. In fact, some existing GCs (including directorate officers) had started their career as CPs in DoJ.

3.21 Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted from Reply Serial Number SJ001 that DoJ would submit to the Finance Committee each year an information paper on "Legal Expenses for Briefing Out Cases Not Covered by Approved Fee Schedules" providing details of cases involving relatively high briefing-out costs in the preceding financial year. He enquired whether the expenses for briefing out of prosecution or civil cases in relation to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("National Security Law") had been included in the Estimates. In reply, SJ said that the expenses relating to the implementation of the National Security Law were not reflected in the Estimates.

Promotion and training of Judges and Judicial Officers

3.22 Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted with concern the promotion of some magistrates who had been criticized by higher-level courts for mishandling of cases, and pointed out that the seemingly lack of transparency and performance-based assessment in the promotion policy might tarnish public confidence in the Judiciary.

3.23 JA said that recruitment and promotion of JJOs were handled in accordance with the Basic Law and the established mechanism. For instance, judges were appointed by CE on the recommendation of the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission, and judges and other members of the Judiciary were chosen on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities.

3.24 Ms Elizabeth QUAT referred to the statistics provided by the Judiciary in Reply Serial Number JA025 on local judicial training activities organized by the Hong Kong Judicial Institute ("HKJI") and considered JJOs' attendance in most of these training activities relatively low. She also asked whether training on National Security Law and handling of the offence "riot" would be organized by HKJI. JA said that since its establishment in 2013, HKJI had been providing trainings for JJOs at different levels of court on various topics and skills.

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Legal services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

3.25 In light of the development of Hong Kong's legal services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA"), Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan enquired about how the differences in the legal systems of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao would be reconciled, and whether and how Hong Kong and the Mainland enterprises could choose Hong Kong law as the applicable law in arbitration.

3.26 SJ said that the GBA had the unique strength of "One Country, Two Systems and Three Jurisdictions". Wholly owned Hong Kong enterprises established in Qianhai had been allowed to choose Hong Kong law to be the applicable law of their contracts, even in the absence of foreign-related elements. DoJ would continue to explore the possibility of extending this initiative to Shenzhen and subsequently GBA and region beyond.

3.27 SJ further said that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference mechanism had endorsed the establishment of a mediation platform in GBA. As arbitration would involve a more complex legal framework than mediation, it was expected that more time would be required to implement the initiative of allowing "Hong Kong-owned enterprises to adopt Hong Kong laws and arbitration to be seated in Hong Kong".

3.28 Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan asked about the job opportunities under the GBA Youth Employment Scheme, and learning of the Mainland law by the Scheme participants. SJ advised that DoJ was awaiting the legal sector to provide suggestions on how the Scheme could be put into practice. For instance, hiring Hong Kong lawyers directly to work in partnership associations set up between Hong Kong and Mainland law firms. Knowledge and understanding of the Mainland law would surely enhance the standard and professionalism of the legal services provided by the Scheme participants and DoJ would encourage the participants to pursue continuous learning in this respect.

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Online dispute resolution services

3.29 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted from Reply Serial Number SJ041 that the eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre Limited ("eBRAM Centre") was commissioned as the service provider of the COVID-19 ODR Scheme launched on 29 June 2020. She enquired how many cases had been handled by eBRAM Centre since then. SJ said that, according to a recent report submitted by eBRAM Centre, the number of cases was not high given that the Centre was still at its early stage of development. The Government would closely monitor the short to long-term strategic plans and development of eBRAM Centre.

Promotion of the Constitution, Basic Law and National Security Law

3.30 Referring to Reply Serial Number SJ042, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted that the majority of DoJ's promotional activities mentioned therein were about the promotion of the Basic Law, and not much on the Constitution of the People's Republic of China ("the Constitution") and the National Security Law. SJ explained that the promotion of the Basic Law must in fact be premised upon the promotion of the Constitution as the latter was the constitutional basis of the Basic Law. It was one of the initiatives under the "Vision 2030 for Rule of Law" that DoJ supported the production of a series of teaching materials covering topics on the Constitution, the Basic Law and the rule of law for use in schools by teachers. In the series of promotional and educational activities to be rolled out for the National Security Education Day, DoJ would focus on the legal aspects of the National Security Law. DoJ was planning to host a legal summit on National Security Law on 30 June 2021 which would also help enhance the public's understanding about the National Security Law. Details of the summit would be announced in due course.

(Post-meeting note: the legal summit is rescheduled to 5 July 2021)

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Sharing of information among government bureaux/departments and the Judiciary

3.31 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan referred to Reply Serial Number JA017 and expressed disappointment that Jud Adm had failed to provide various figures relating to divorce/separation cases in Hong Kong. She took the view that the figures would be useful for in-depth analysis of related social problems.

3.32 JA explained that the Judiciary did not compile statistics on the details of divorce cases handled by the Family Court, given the complexity of cases and that the majority of divorce cases heard in the Family Court were not open to the public. As regards statistics concerning legal-aided divorce applications, they might be available from the Legal Aid Department ("LAD"). Ms YUNG Hoi-yan called upon government bureaux/departments and the Judiciary to enhance communication and cooperation in data management and analysis through big-data application. JA explained that as the Judiciary was independent to the Government, it was not appropriate for it to seek the said information from LAD for the Legislative Council.

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4.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Erick TSANG, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs ("SCMA"), briefed members on the main points of the estimates of expenditure of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau ("CMAB") in 2021-2022 (Appendix IV-3).

Improving the electoral system

2021 Legislative Council General Election

4.2 Regarding Reply Serial No. CMAB107, Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that the provision earmarked by the Administration for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 Legislative Council ("LegCo") General Election was \$1,728 million, representing a 2.5 fold increase as compared with the overall expenditure of \$695 million for the 2016 LegCo General Election. He enquired why there was such a significant increase and whether the expenditure would include those arising from the changes to be made to the electoral arrangements for the LegCo general elections pursuant to the Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("the NPC's Decision"), and whether the Administration would seek supplementary funding if there were additional expenditure in this regard.

4.3 Chief Electoral Officer explained that compared with the 2016 LegCo General Election, the 2021 LegCo General Election was of a larger scale overall in terms of the numbers of voters, polling stations and working staff. Besides, in view of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") epidemic, the Registration and Electoral Office ("REO") would provide additional anti-epidemic supplies/facilities, such as masks and body temperature screening systems, for the upcoming election activities. On the other hand, the Administration would introduce an electronic poll register and install recording facilities in polling stations for the 2021 LegCo General Election, so as to prevent irregularities in the vote counting process. SCMA stressed that CMAB would render full policy and resource support to REO. If necessary, the Bureau would seek additional funding to ensure the smooth conduct of the election.

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4.4 Mr Martin LIAO further enquired whether the 14 net additional posts in REO in 2021-2022 were to support the work of the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee ("CERC") to be set up. Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs ("PSCMA") advised that the Administration had worked out the 2021-2022 Budget before the passage of the NPC's Decision in March 2021, so the expenses on the work of CERC were not included in CMAB's estimated expenditure for 2021-2022.

4.5 Mr Martin LIAO sought clarification from the Administration as to whether the additional election expenses that might arise from the NPC's Decision, other than those relating to the work of CERC, had been included in CMAB's estimated expenditure for 2021-2022. PSCMA explained that election expenses were mainly spent on the facilities and staff in polling stations. While changes had to be made to the electoral system pursuant to the NPC's Decision, the overall election expenses were estimated to be more or less the same. On the contrary, as the District Council (Second) Functional Constituency would be abolished under the new electoral system, election expenses in this respect would be saved. The legislative work arising from the NPC's Decision would not incur additional expenses.

4.6 Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that according to the guidelines on election-related activities released by REO in June 2020, upon arrival at the polling stations of their respective constituencies, polling staff might simply present their staff identification for priority admission into the stations to collect ballot papers and cast their votes. He enquired whether the guidelines would apply to the 2021 LegCo General Election. PSCMA confirmed that the guidelines would be implemented in the 2021 LegCo General Election. Presiding Officers would allow polling staff (including disciplined service officers on duty at polling stations) to be released temporarily from duty and go back to their respective constituencies for voting.

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Mainland affairs

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

4.7 Mr LUK Chung-hung said that according to Reply Serial No. CMAB090, the numbers of requests for assistance received by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Guangdong ("GDETO") of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") relating to property transactions in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") were 33, 42 and 32 in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. However, every year, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions ("HKFTU") received many complaints from Hong Kong people about their purchase of properties in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, and there were many related cases referred by HKFTU to the Administration for follow-up. He wondered why the numbers of requests for assistance received by GDETO were so low. Mr LUK also asked whether the various offices on the Mainland played a coordinating role in the complaint cases received to explore specific solutions for parties involved in the cases and safeguard the rights and interests of small property owners in Hong Kong.

4.8 In response, SCMA explained that as the property transactions concerned had been conducted on the Mainland, they had to be handled in accordance with Mainland laws. GDETO would provide Free Legal Advisory Service to the Hong Kong people in need, offering them preliminary legal advice on Mainland laws. GDETO would also refer the requests of the assistance seekers to the Mainland Government. Mr LUK Chung-hung urged the Administration to strengthen liaison with the Mainland in handling these requests for assistance.

4.9 Ms Alice MAK opined that the above-mentioned Free Legal Advisory Service could not provide assistance seekers with substantive assistance and suggested that the Administration should offer assistance on a case-by-case basis. SCMA hoped members would understand that it would be difficult for the Government to intervene directly in the handling of requests for assistance relating to properties in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The Government would continue to explore further measures to help Hong Kong people in need. The Deputy Chairman urged GDETO to play a more active role in handling related matters.

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4.10 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. CMAB006, 012, 059 and 088, Mr Tony TSE said that Members asked the Administration from time to time for statistics on Hong Kong people studying, working and living in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, but the information provided by the Administration was often not comprehensive and accurate enough. He enquired whether the Administration would put in resources for collating data in these aspects regularly to facilitate the effective formulation of related policies and support measures and to enable Hong Kong people to have a better understanding of the latest development in the Greater Bay Area.

4.11 SCMA advised that in June 2020, the Census and Statistics Department had published a statistical survey report on Hong Kong population's willingness to live in the Greater Bay Area. The results of the survey showed that the majority of the respondents aged 15 or over had heard of the Greater Bay Area. The survey also estimated the numbers of Hong Kong people aged 15 or over who were interested in living, studying, taking further studies, working or operating businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area in the future. SCMA said that the Government would, as necessary, strengthen its statistical survey work in this regard to facilitate the formulation of related policies.

4.12 Regarding Reply Serial Nos. CMAB022 and 096, Mr Tony TSE pointed out that many Mainland cities had introduced different measures to attract Hong Kong's youth to the Mainland for development, but the information provided by the Administration on its website was not sufficient and only generally advised the public to check the relevant websites of the Mainland authorities directly for details. Mr TSE proposed that the Administration should collate relevant information and upload such information to its website for easy access by the public. SCMA said that he would explore with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office ("the Office") how to implement this proposal. Mr TSE said that the Administration should urge the Office to step up its work on promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area.

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4.13 Referring to Reply Serial No. CMAB069, Mr LO Wai-kwok pointed out that in March 2021, the National People's Congress ("NPC") had passed the "Outline of the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" ("the Outline") which mentioned a number of issues relating to the development of the Greater Bay Area, including innovation and technology development, the scope of mutual recognition of professional qualifications among the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, the opportunities for young people in Hong Kong and Macao to study, work and start businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, etc. He enquired how the Office would implement the development directions and objectives of the Greater Bay Area as set out in the Outline. Mr Holden CHOW suggested that the Administration should consider how to attract technological talents from the Mainland (including the Greater Bay Area) to join the innovation and technology industries in Hong Kong.

4.14 The Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area said that the Outline set out a number of key development areas and projects in the Greater Bay Area, which undoubtedly provided a clear framework for the Office to explore with the relevant Mainland ministries or professional bodies how to promote the development of the Greater Bay Area, and admission of Mainland professionals was one of the objectives of the Greater Bay Area development policy. Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (2) added that the Government would continue to strive for further expansion of the scope of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the Mainland and Hong Kong under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (i.e. CEPA), so as to create more favourable conditions for service providers and professionals of different sectors in Hong Kong to enter the Mainland market. Moreover, the Government would make good use of the new positioning in the four areas of innovation and technology, shipping, intellectual property rights, and arts and culture. It would also press ahead with the development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Loop, actively nurture and attract technological talents, take forward the network development and wider application of 5G, and promote the development of financial technologies. Besides, the Government would work with the Airport Authority Hong Kong to further improve the aviation and intermodal transport network. It would also enhance the intellectual

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property protection regime, support intellectual property creation and exploitation, etc., and continue to promote cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the international community and the Mainland (including the Greater Bay Area).

4.15 Mr Holden CHOW noted from Reply Serial No. CMAB069 that with an establishment of 33 staff members, the Office was responsible for a broad range of duties that involved different policy bureaux. He enquired how the Office coordinated with the relevant policy bureaux in supporting the development of the Greater Bay Area, and whether it had drawn up timetables with various policy bureaux to properly manage the progress of work in different aspects. The Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area explained that the staff in the Office were mainly responsible for four areas of work, including liaison with the Mainland and Macao, coordination with policy bureaux, communication with relevant stakeholders, and publicity and promotion. In fact, the Steering Committee for the Development of the Greater Bay Area, which was chaired by the Chief Executive and comprised all Secretaries of Department and Directors of Bureaux, set priorities for matters relating to Hong Kong's participation in the development of the Greater Bay Area and followed up the implementation of the relevant work, while the Office assisted in coordinating the efforts of various policy bureaux to take forward the relevant work and reported on the progress made.

4.16 Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted from Reply Serial No. CMAB038 that the Administration currently had five offices on the Mainland. With many Hong Kong people going to a number of Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area for development and living, she enquired whether the Administration would consider setting up offices in the nine Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (i.e. Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing) to provide multi-faceted support for the Hong Kong people there. SCMA said that the Shenzhen Liaison Unit had been set up under GDETO. The Government would consider setting up more offices in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area subject to the availability of resources and in the light of the development of the Greater Bay Area.

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Resumption of cross-boundary flow of people

4.17 Regarding the Return2hk Scheme in Reply Serial No. CMAB080, Mr Wilson OR noted that the Administration was considering extending the scope of the Scheme to areas outside the Guangdong Province and allowing certain Mainland residents to come to Hong Kong without being subject to compulsory quarantine. He enquired about the implementation timetable for the arrangements concerned. Moreover, Mr OR asked whether the Administration had implemented other measures to facilitate early reopening of the border between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

4.18 SCMA said that the Return2hk Scheme had been implemented since November 2020, and over 123 000 return journeys had been made by Hong Kong residents under the Scheme as at the day before (i.e. 11 April 2021). With the gradual stabilization of the epidemic on the Mainland and in Hong Kong, the Government considered that it was the opportune time to extend the scope of the Return2hk Scheme to other Mainland cities, and details were expected to be announced within this month. Later on, it would also consider allowing Mainland residents who had registered online and provided valid proof of negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test results to come to Hong Kong without being subject to compulsory quarantine. SCMA stressed that the HKSAR Government had been discussing closely with the Mainland Government and the Macao Special Administrative Region Government the arrangements for the resumption of normal flow of people among the three places. Given the fluctuating epidemic situation in Hong Kong, the arrangements had yet to be implemented. The Government encouraged the public to get vaccinated, and believed that getting vaccinated would help control the epidemic and in turn get Hong Kong all set sooner for the early reopening of the border.

4.19 Mr LO Wai-kwok opined that if the percentage of the vaccinated population in Hong Kong could attain a considerably high level to achieve herd immunity, the epidemic would be brought under control. He also believed that vaccination would become a prerequisite for border reopening and travelling in different places. Therefore, he suggested that the Administration should immediately introduce the Hong Kong Health Code to facilitate mutual recognition of health codes with the Mainland in the future, which was conducive to the early reopening of the border between the two places and could also indirectly encourage the public to get

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vaccinated. Mr Holden CHOW also expressed support for the early reopening of the border between the two places.

4.20 Ms Alice MAK said that many Hong Kong residents on the Mainland had reflected to HKFTU's Mainland Consultation Services Centres that the application procedures and the clearance formalities under the Return2hk Scheme were complicated and difficult to understand. She urged the Administration to step up publicity and education in this regard by, for example, providing clear guidelines. SCMA said that the Government would, by learning from experience, further enhance the operation of the Return2hk Scheme and strengthen related publicity.

Rights of the individual

Anti-discrimination Ordinances

4.21 Referring to Reply Serial No. CMAB041, Mr Steven HO noted with concern that in the past three years, the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") had received complaints involving the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602), and the number of investigation cases had increased from 69 in 2018 to 96 in 2019, and then more than tripled to 327 in 2020. He asked for the reasons for the upsurge in the number of such cases in the previous year. In addition, Mr HO expressed concern about the refusal of some local restaurants to serve people from the Mainland and the insulting remarks and acts of some Hong Kong people against China. He asked whether the Administration would deploy resources to study whether the scope of the Race Discrimination Ordinance could be extended to cover such discriminatory and insulting acts against China.

4.22 In response, SCMA said that the Government had all along maintained close communication with EOC on the issue of racial discrimination. EOC was actively exploring specific measures, including introducing legislative amendments to ensure that people from the Mainland would not be discriminated against and vilified in Hong Kong. The Government would continue to discuss related issues with EOC. Regarding the enquiry cases involving the Race Discrimination Ordinance, Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (1) explained that there were two main reasons for the significant increase in the number of

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such cases in 2020. The first reason was that in April 2020, EOC received more than 14 000 emails with similar content about the allegedly discriminatory remarks made by a practising barrister on a social media platform. The second reason was that there were more than 1 400 emails expressing dissatisfaction with the comments on the Internet about some local restaurants and shops refusing to serve certain people (such as South Asians) on the grounds of the epidemic.

4.23 Referring to Reply Serial No. CMAB082, Ms Elizabeth QUAT was pleased to note that EOC had set up the Anti-Sexual Harassment Unit, which was dedicated to handling matters relating to sexual harassment. She urged the Administration to amend the legislation on sexual harassment as soon as possible and increase the penalties, so as to effectively prevent sexual harassment incidents. Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (1) responded that the Government had invited EOC to review whether the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480) had provided adequate protection from sexual harassment. After EOC completed the review and submitted the report, the Government would carefully study the recommendations therein. Ms QUAT requested the Administration to provide a timetable for the above-mentioned review in due course.

Protection of personal data

4.24 Referring to Reply Serial No. CMAB076, Ms Alice MAK pointed out that various public registers were currently maintained and managed by their respective departments. She asked how CMAB would promote the formulation of measures by relevant departments to prevent personal data obtained through services for searching such registers from being used for improper purposes, such as "doxxing", so as to protect the personal privacy of the persons concerned. SCMA responded that as "doxxing" acts posed a serious problem in recent years, the Chief Executive had instructed relevant bureaux and departments ("B/Ds") to review matters relating to the handling of public registers, with the objective of serving the purpose of establishing the public registers while protecting personal privacy. The relevant B/Ds had taken appropriate follow-up actions, including introducing administrative measures or legislative amendments. CMAB would continue to coordinate the Government's efforts in this regard, and provide timely assistance to the relevant B/Ds in seeking legal advice or the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data's recommendations.

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4.25 Ms Elizabeth QUAT pointed out that as there had been a number of incidents of business organizations leaking the personal data of their customers recently, she urged the Administration to expeditiously conduct a comprehensive review of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) ("PDPO"), with a view to affording adequate protection to the public in respect of the time limit of storing customers' personal data, the security measures adopted and the deletion of such data by business organizations. She urged the Government to give an account of the details and the timetable of an overall review of PDPO within the current legislative session and submit proposed legislative amendments to LegCo in the next legislative session. SCMA said that the Government planned to submit to LegCo in the current legislative session proposed legislative amendments to combat "doxxing" acts, and would commence other legislative amendment work relating to PDPO after completing the legislative amendment work relating to "doxxing".

Chapter V : Financial Services

5.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Christopher HUI, Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury ("SFST"), briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure relating to the policy area of financial services in 2021-2022 (Appendix IV-4).

Developing the financial market and strengthening financial cooperation with the Mainland

5.2 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok enquired how the Administration would capitalize on the advantages of Hong Kong's financial professional services to expedite the promotion of cooperation in financial technology ("Fintech") with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area"), and how Hong Kong would complement the implementation of the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

5.3 Pointing out that the 14th Five-Year Plan supported enhancing Hong Kong's status as international financial, transportation and trade centres as well as an international aviation hub, Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that Hong Kong should complement the country's development in the relevant areas and take the lead in the relevant work in a timely manner.

5.4 SFST replied that the 14th Five-Year Plan proposed to strengthen Hong Kong's functions as a global offshore Renminbi business hub, an international asset management centre and a risk management centre. In relation to promoting the development of asset management, the Administration sought to consolidate Hong Kong's status as an international asset and wealth management centre through the implementation of a three-step plan, i.e. diversifying fund structures, providing tax concessions for carried interest issued by private equity funds operating in Hong Kong, and enticing more non-Hong Kong funds to re-domicile in Hong Kong. In respect of promoting Hong Kong's financial cooperation with the Greater Bay Area, SFST said that with about 20% of the Mainland's high-net-worth families currently residing in the Greater Bay Area, the Greater Bay Area was an important market for Hong Kong enterprises. Hong Kong and the Mainland were going to implement a number of mutual market access measures, including the two-way cross-boundary wealth management connect pilot scheme in the Greater Bay Area. The Administration would also assist local financial institutions in developing their businesses in the Greater Bay Area, such as by launching the Fintech Proof-of-Concept

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Subsidy Scheme.

5.5 Mr Holden CHOW was concerned about Hong Kong's measures to strengthen financial cooperation with the Mainland. He pointed out that China would play an important role in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership ("RCEP") Agreement, and took the view that Hong Kong should seek to join RCEP as soon as possible.

5.6 SFST advised that Hong Kong was actively seeking to join RCEP as soon as possible, so as to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with the RCEP participating economies. For instance, as there was huge room for the development of Fintech in the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ("ASEAN"), the Administration would continue to promote Hong Kong's Fintech services in ASEAN.

5.7 Mr Tony TSE expressed support for the Administration to encourage the listing of more real estate investment trusts ("REITs") in Hong Kong, so as to provide the public with one more investment option. Mr TSE noted that a subsidy scheme for REITs would be implemented to provide subsidies for qualifying REITs authorized by the Securities and Futures Commission ("SFC") and listed in Hong Kong in the coming three years to cover 70% of the expenses paid to local professional service providers for the listing of REITs, subject to a cap of \$8 million per REIT. He enquired about the expected effectiveness of this scheme, the definition of "local professional service providers", and whether the Administration would assess if the relevant professional service charges were reasonable.

5.8 SFST said that the Administration introduced the subsidy scheme in consideration of the opportunity for Hong Kong to further develop the REIT business. Apart from providing subsidies, the authorities would also continue to improve the local investment environment to attract REITs to Hong Kong, and enhance the regulation and promotion strategies of REITs. Regarding the definition of "local professional service providers", SFST stated that "local professional service providers" mainly included service providers assisting in the listing of REITs in Hong Kong, such as listing agents, underwriters, lawyers, auditors, tax advisors, property valuers and marketing consultants. It was expected that market competition would keep the fees charged by professional service providers at a reasonable level. Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial

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Services) ("PS(FS)") added that the subsidized fees would be calculated on a reimbursement basis, and SFC would announce the details of the scheme in due course.

Support for the securities industry

5.9 Mr Christopher CHEUNG expressed concern that the room for development of local small and medium securities firms had been gradually shrinking in recent years. He enquired about the Administration's criteria for raising the rate of Stamp Duty on Stock Transfers ("SDST") to 0.13%, whether it had assessed the impact of the increase in the SDST rate on small and medium securities firms, and whether it would consider adding a sunset clause to the Revenue (Stamp Duty) Bill 2021 currently under scrutiny by the Legislative Council to stipulate a timetable for cancelling the upward adjustment of the SDST rate.

5.10 SFST stressed that to support and assist local small and medium securities firms in developing their businesses, the Administration had rolled out various measures, such as the Subsidy Scheme for the Securities Industry and the Financial Industry Recruitment Scheme for Tomorrow under the Anti-epidemic Fund, as well as seminars on facilitating the application of Fintech in the securities industry. Regarding the proposal to raise the SDST rate, the Administration was aware that there were different opinions on the proposal in the community. He reiterated that the purpose of the proposal was to increase government revenue. Having considered various factors including the capacity of the financial market, the number of companies listed and amount of funds raised in recent years, as well as the volumes of trading on the securities market, the Administration was of the view that the proposal would not undermine the overall competitiveness of Hong Kong's securities market. The Administration would not add a sunset clause to the Revenue (Stamp Duty) Bill 2021, but would continue to review the SDST rate in a timely manner, and consider all relevant factors holistically.

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Consumption Voucher Scheme and development of financial technology

5.11 Mrs Regina IP enquired about the details of the Administration's selection of operators of the Consumption Voucher Scheme ("the Scheme"), including whether an open tender exercise had been conducted, and whether consideration had been given to using platforms other than stored value facilities ("SVFs"). Mrs IP was concerned that some merchants (particularly market stall operators and small shop operators) might not be able to provide SVF payment means, and asked how the Administration would address this issue. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok agreed that small shop operators might not be able to benefit from the Scheme, and urged the Administration to further promote the use of electronic payment tools by the public in their daily lives.

5.12 SFST responded that in selecting operators of the Scheme, the Administration had considered various factors, including the popularity, ease of use, and coverage of merchants of the relevant SVFs. He stressed that the policy objective of the Scheme was to encourage consumption, so as to stimulate economic recovery. Given that non-SVF payment systems (e.g. credit cards with lending functions) might not be suitable for the operation of the Scheme, whilst the Administration wished to launch the Scheme as soon as possible, only SVF companies were chosen as operators. SFST said that the Scheme was expected to further promote the use of SVFs by the public and merchants. The four selected operators had also undertaken to fully assist in the implementation of the Scheme, and to waive, as far as practicable, relevant fees for the installation and usage of payment devices by local merchants (in particular small and medium enterprises) and the administrative fees for processing payments made with the consumption vouchers. SFST also pointed out that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department had already launched the Subsidy Scheme for Promotion of Contactless Payment in Public Markets, with a view to promoting the use of electronic payment tools in markets.

5.13 Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired how Hong Kong could support and assist in the development of the Mainland's Digital Currency Electronic Payment system (commonly known as "e-CNY"), especially the promotion of the internationalization of e-CNY.

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5.14 Executive Director (Financial Infrastructure), Hong Kong Monetary Authority advised that whilst e-CNY had been launched in a number of Mainland cities on a pilot basis, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") had also conducted tests on the cross-boundary use of e-CNY with the Mainland and was discussing ways to deepen such tests with the relevant Mainland authorities, so as to enable the cross-boundary use of e-CNY to facilitate consumption by Hong Kong people on the Mainland. He stressed that e-CNY was mainly used at the retail level on the Mainland, and it was up to the People's Bank of China to determine its implementation timetable.

Investment strategies of the Future Fund

5.15 Regarding the Administration's plan to use 10% of the Future Fund (i.e. about \$22 billion) to set up the Hong Kong Growth Portfolio ("HKGP") for making strategic investments in projects with a "Hong Kong nexus", Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the details of the relevant arrangements, including how to select general partners and suitable investment projects, as well as whether the Administration would allow overseas sovereign wealth funds to collaborate with the Future Fund on investments in projects with a "Hong Kong nexus". Mr LAU Kwok-fan raised a similar question. Noting that some of the Future Fund's assets were placed with the Long-Term Growth Portfolio ("LTGP") of the Exchange Fund, he enquired about the regions/countries in which the investment projects of LTGP were mainly located.

5.16 SFST and Executive Director (External), Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("ED(E)/HKMA") replied that in preparing for the establishment of HKGP, the Administration had set up a two-tier committee framework, including a Governance Committee and an Investment Committee, to take forward this initiative; the Investment Committee was responsible for, inter alia, deciding on the appointment of general partners. HKMA was conducting a market survey to better understand the profile of private equity firms with interest to become general partners, with a view to appointing the first batch of general partners and launching HKGP as early as possible. The current idea was that general partners would look for suitable investment opportunities for HKGP through identifying projects with a "Hong Kong nexus" (such as projects conducive to local employment and economic development).

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5.17 As regards the investments of LTGP of the Exchange Fund, ED(E)/HKMA advised that there was no geographical restriction on such investments, and the fund managers mainly focused on the risks and returns of individual investment projects. He undertook to provide the details of the investment projects of LTGP as far as practicable after the meeting.

Promoting bond market development

5.18 Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the Administration's measures to develop Hong Kong's retail bond market. SFST remarked that while the investors in the local bond market were mainly institutional investors, the Government had been committed to developing the retail bond market and had introduced a number of batches of inflation-linked bonds and Silver Bonds targeted at retail investors. In particular, the eligible age for subscribing for Silver Bonds would be lowered from 65 to 60 this year. Besides, the Government also planned to issue retail green bonds for the participation of the general public.

100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme

5.19 Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the implementation timetable for the 100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme ("PLGS"). He pointed out that the scheme involved about \$1,095 million for covering the associated expenses of the HKMC Insurance Limited and the participating lending institutions, and asked whether the relevant expenditure would be reduced if the total amount of loans under the scheme was less than expected. In addition, Mr POON also enquired whether the default loss of the scheme would ultimately be higher than the estimated \$3.75 billion.

5.20 PS(FS) responded that the Administration was doing preparatory work with the Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited and the banking sector, and the scheme was expected to be launched in late April or early May 2021. Senior Vice President (Operations), Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited ("SVP (Operations)/HKMC") added that major retail banks were expected to participate in the scheme. The actual amount of the expenditure item mentioned by Mr POON Siu-ping would be linked to the total amount of loans under the scheme, with \$1,095 million being the maximum expenditure of the item, whereas the expected default loss of \$3.75 billion was based on an overall assumed default rate of 25%; if the

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total amount of loans was less than expected, the default loss would be reduced correspondingly.

5.21 Mr Holden CHOW asked whether PLGS would provide an online application channel to facilitate application by Hong Kong people who were on the Mainland. SVP(Operations)/HKMC said that applicants could lodge their applications online with some major retail banks and, after preliminary approval was granted, submit the documents required for the vetting and approval of the applications to the relevant institutions.

Expenditure on developing the eMPF Platform

5.22 Mr WONG Ting-kwong noted that the revised estimate for the Financial Services Branch of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau for 2020-2021 was over 30% higher than the original estimate mainly because the revised estimate of the provision for the eMPF Platform was some \$381 million higher than the original estimate. He enquired about the reason for the substantial increase in the expenditure on that project, and urged the Administration to exercise prudent control over the expenditure of the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority.

5.23 PS(FS) responded that when formulating the original estimate of the provision for the eMPF Platform, the authorities did not have the tender results and contract details yet, and the revised estimate also included a risk allowance. The Administration adopted relatively conservative assumptions in estimating this allowance. According to the latest assessment by the authorities, this allowance would not be used eventually and would thus be brought back to the Government's accounts. As a result, the actual expenditure for 2020-2021 would be lower than the revised estimate. As the eMPF Platform Project had entered a specific stage of development where it was necessary to recruit staff for the new eMPF Platform Company in addition to building hardware and software systems, the authorities anticipated that the annual expenditure of the project in the future would be higher than the current level. SFST advised that the Administration would closely monitor the expenditure on the eMPF Platform Project to ensure the proper use of public funds.

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Deposit payable to the Official Receiver's Office

5.24 Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern that any person filing for bankruptcy was required to pay a fee of over \$9,000 to the Official Receiver's Office ("ORO"). Considering that the fee was on the high side, he urged ORO to review whether there was room for lowering the fee.

5.25 Official Receiver responded that upon the presentation of a bankruptcy petition against himself/herself, a debtor was required to make payments which included paying a court fee of \$1,045 and depositing a sum of \$8,000 with ORO under the law. The charging of such a deposit was consistent with the practices adopted in those overseas jurisdictions which were usually on a par with Hong Kong in respect of bankruptcy/insolvency matters, and could serve to avoid passing on bankruptcy-related fees and expenses to the general taxpayers. In 2013, ORO reviewed its fee levels in detail and lowered the amount of the deposit; in the future, it would also continuously review and consider whether there was room for lowering the amount of the deposit.

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6.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Christopher HUI, Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury ("SFST"), gave a brief account on the main initiatives and expenditure relating to the policy area of public finance under his portfolio in 2021-2022 (Appendix IV-5).

Consumption Voucher Scheme

6.2 Mrs Regina IP and Mr WONG Ting-kwong both considered the administrative expenses of over \$600 million budgeted for the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme excessive, and enquired about the details of how the administrative expenses were estimated and whether there was room for reduction by ways of, for example, employing less additional manpower for assisting in the implementation of the Scheme. Mrs Regina IP also enquired about the measures put in place to offer support for the consumers and small merchants who had yet to adopt stored value facilities ("SVFs"), so that they too could be benefited from the Consumption Voucher Scheme.

6.3 Mr YIU Si-wing suggested that the Government should utilize the provision for administrative expenses under the Consumption Voucher Scheme to engage non-profit-making organizations or employ practitioners of those industries hard hit by the epidemic to be responsible for part of the work (such as handling enquiries) under the Scheme. He also enquired whether business operators of the local tourism industry would be covered by the Consumption Voucher Scheme.

6.4 Pointing out that currently, most of the merchants operating in public markets had yet to install SVF payment systems, Dr Priscilla LEUNG suggested that the Administration should, by drawing reference from the subsidy scheme for promotion of contactless payment in public markets rolled out in 2020, install SVF payment systems for tenants of market stalls under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, with a view to expanding the coverage of merchants under the Consumption Voucher Scheme and facilitating the promotion of the mode of electronic consumption in the long-term.

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6.5 Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the details on the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme, including the mode of disbursement of the consumption vouchers and ways to reduce administrative expenses. In particular, she was concerned about the measures put in place by the Administration and the four SVF operators selected for the Scheme's implementation ("the four operators") to provide support for small merchants in installing SVF payment systems with a view to lowering their costs of participating in the Scheme. Ms QUAT also enquired about the measures put in place to prevent participating merchants from jacking up the prices of their goods and the public from "cashing in" on the Scheme instead of actually spending the money.

6.6 Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern that with Octopus card being the only SVF widely adopted by the elderly among those offered by the four operators, the scope of the elderly's use of the electronic consumption vouchers might be quite limited. He also enquired about the measures put in place to avert a possible reduction in the overall number of merchants that could be benefited from the Scheme due to the tactics (such as encouraging high-value consumption in a one-off manner/payment by instalments) employed by some participating merchants.

6.7 Noting that most of the ticketing platforms catering for performing arts and cultural performance programmes did not accept transactions made via SVFs, Mr MA Fung-kwok was thus worried that the performing arts and culture sectors would be left out from the Consumption Voucher Scheme. He enquired whether the Administration would consider introducing SVF payments to the relevant ticketing platforms.

6.8 Head, Budget and Tax Policy Unit, Financial Secretary's Office ("H/BTPU") responded that the Government was currently examining the implementation details of the Scheme, such as the number of instalments to be made in disbursing the electronic consumption vouchers, the amount in each instalment, the validity period, and was carefully considering the different views previously expressed by the public so as to strike the best balance among various needs while ensuring that the implementation of the Scheme would achieve its original intention. The details would be announced as soon as they were finalized. She pointed out that the Government selected the four operators based on criteria including the popularity of their SVFs, business nature of the merchants covered and

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coverage of the SVFs. Taking the Octopus card as an example, most of the people eligible for the electronic consumption vouchers believably had an octopus card; those who purchased one for the sake of using the electronic consumption vouchers could, upon exhaustion of the vouchers, apply for refund by returning the card and recover the deposit. The four operators had agreed to waive as much as possible the installation and usage fees for local merchants. The Government was given to understand that if small merchants applied directly to the operators for payment-receiving code or simple devices, no installation fee would be charged. The operators, taking into account their respective operational model and commercial arrangements, would also rebate the additional income generated from the electronic consumption vouchers to merchants or consumers, the details of which had yet to be announced. In addition, the Government was studying the possibility of relaunching the subsidy scheme for contactless payment to support merchants operating in public markets in using contactless payment facilities, and to promote the mode of electronic consumption. Given the prevailing economic environment and level of market competition, the Government considered it unlikely that merchants would take the opportunity to jack up the prices of their goods during the implementation of the Scheme. The Administration was also studying ways to protect consumer rights while preventing the public from cashing in through the Scheme.

6.9 H/BTPU stressed that the administrative expenses of \$600 million which was an initial estimate only, included the expenditure to be incurred by the Government departments assisting in implementing the Scheme (e.g. the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer was developing a central registration system for electronic registration by the public), service fees to be paid to assisting agencies (e.g. the operators responsible for handling the physical registration forms), as well as expenditure on publicity. The rough estimate was initially made by drawing references from the Cash Payout Scheme ("CPS") implemented in 2020 and other relevant schemes. The actual amount might be lower than the estimate. The Government would, as far as practicable, deploy the existing manpower of policy bureaux/departments to assist in the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme with a view to minimizing the administrative expenses. The Government would also continue to proactively discuss with the four operators on the feasibility of reducing the administration and transaction fees.

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6.10 H/BTPU further advised that the Government had created in 2020 a number of time-limited posts responsible for assisting in the CPS implementation. In an effort to minimize manpower expenses, the Government had deployed those staff to be concurrently responsible for the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme. In anticipation of a higher level of enquiries given the nature and extensive coverage of the Scheme, the outsourcing of the enquiry hotline service was also under consideration. In selecting a contractor, the Government would consider factors such as the bidding price and a contractor's capability to train up its staff within a short time.

6.11 H/BTPU further remarked that the coverage of the Consumption Voucher Scheme would be as extensive as possible to cover local consumption in, among others, the retail, food and beverage, and services sectors. Local travel companies would be included as merchants under the services sectors. The Administration had discussed with the four operators on organizing promotion events in collaboration with individual sectors during the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme, with a view to driving overall consumption and thus rendering the effect of the Scheme more significant. She advised that she would check with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to see if the selected SVFs were applicable to the ticketing platforms catering for performing arts and cultural performance programmes.

Utilization of the Future Fund

6.12 Pointing out that the year-end balance of the Future Fund ("FF") had grown from about \$234.6 billion in the year of its establishment in 2016 to about \$298.1 billion in 2019, Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired about the policy direction regarding the use of the balance, and whether the resources of FF could be deployed to provide support for members of the public with financial difficulties due to the impacts arising from the epidemic (particularly the unemployed and bankrupts).

6.13 SFST pointed out in response that the Government established FF with a view to securing higher returns for the fiscal reserves through placement in longer-term investments, in a bid to cope with the long-term fiscal challenges arising from an ageing population and slackened economic growth. It was arranged at the time that the assets of FF would be placed

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with the Exchange Fund ("EF") for a period of 10 years for placement in investments with EF. To provide support for individuals and industries with financial difficulties due to the impacts arising from the epidemic, the Government had rolled out various relief measures in the short, medium and long-term, including the recently-launched 100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme ("PLGS"), which aimed to offer assistance to the unemployed with a total loan guarantee commitment of \$15 billion, and adjustments in various Government fees. The Government would implement measures in the medium and long-term to promote the overall economic development of Hong Kong.

100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme

6.14 Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed support for the implementation of PLGS by the Administration to support those who had lost their job due to the impacts arising from the epidemic. Regarding PLGS's overall default rate of up to 25% as estimated by the Administration, she queried with concern whether the eligibility of PLGS was too lax.

6.15 SFST responded that the Government assumed an overall default rate of 25% upon taking into account the fact that PLGS applicants were not in employment and not subject to any credit assessment. For eligibility vetting purpose, applicants were required to provide a declaration of unemployment, and produce documentary proofs of, among others, loss of main recurrent incomes and having maintained valid bank accounts. An effective fixed interest rate of 1% per annum would be charged on the loan to ensure repayment by borrowers. In the event of defaults on repayment by borrowers, the participating lending institutions might initiate recovery actions having regard to their own policies and usual commercial practices.

Staff establishment of the Rating and Valuation Department

6.16 Noting that the number of non-directorate posts in the Rating and Valuation Department ("RVD") would be substantially reduced by 93 posts (i.e. from 997 budgeted in 2021 to 904 in 2022), Mr Tony TSE enquired about the impacts of such an arrangement on RVD's operation and the staff concerned. Mr TSE pointed out that he had requested for information relating to the review of the rating system, including the types and purposes of the properties concerned, and yet no response in this respect was made by

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the Administration in its written replies.

6.17 Commissioner of Rating and Valuation responded that the deletion of 93 non-directorate posts was mainly due to the Government's decision to withdraw the Bill on introducing Special Rates on vacant first-hand private residential units, and the successive return of the staff seconded from other Government departments to their original departments. As for the RVD staff in the Departmental Grades, apart from certain new vacancies yet to be filled, RVD had deployed the relevant staff to handle other work of the Department and fill the existing vacancies. Regarding the information requested by Mr Tony TSE, RVD did not compile the relevant statistics. In reviewing the rating system, RVD would also consider the need for gathering the relevant information or data for reference purpose in the future.

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7.1 The Deputy Chairman welcomed the representatives of the Administration Wing, Audit Commission, Chief Executive's Office ("CEO"), Independent Commission Against Corruption, Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat and the Office of The Ombudsman to attend the session.

Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office

Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office

7.2 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSO013, Mrs Regina IP expressed concern about the high attrition rate of non-civil service contract ("NCSC") positions of the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office ("PICO") (which was revamped from the former Central Policy Unit ("CPU") in 2018). Mrs IP also asked about whether and how PICO could continue CPU's good practice of fostering a close network with local and external academia and think tanks, etc. to advise the Chief Executive ("CE") and CE's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development; and PICO's notable achievements on innovation and strategic development.

7.3 Head, Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office ("H/PICO") advised that PICO was responsible for carrying out policy research and coordinating major cross-bureau policies selected by CE and the senior echelon, in addition to co-ordinating the Policy Addresses. She highlighted PICO's efforts in, among others, taking forward policy research work with a view to proposing amendments to the legislation and regulations that impeded the development and application of innovation and technology, such as the development of autonomous vehicles, in Hong Kong. While performing functions different from CPU's, PICO likewise strived to enhance public participation in policy formulation and foster a close network with local and external academia and think tanks. Although related activities had been deferred due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic, PICO was resuming exchanges with these parties as the pandemic stabilized. Regarding NCSC appointments, PICO recruited 18 Policy and Project Co-ordination Officers ("PPCOs")/Senior PPCOs in April 2018, 10 of whom had left the service to date. The reasons for departure varied, which might include personal career preferences.

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7.4 Mr Tony TSE referred to Reply Serial No. CSO023 and enquired about the progress of the following two projects in relation to PICO's provision of "first-stop and one-stop" project consultation and coordination services for innovative projects: (a) The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU") – Study of the Green Deck ("Green Deck Study") and (b) the project to assist the Shaw Foundation in setting up the first school in Hong Kong with science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics ("STEAM") as its main direction of curriculum planning ("STEAM School Project"). Mr TSE suggested PICO provide suggestions as appropriate to the relevant bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") with a view to streamlining relevant statutory processes to make way for innovative developments.

7.5 H/PICO advised that the proponent of the Green Deck Study, PolyU had commissioned in 2020 a consultancy study on the construction of a green deck over the Toll Plaza at the entrance of the Hung Hom Cross Harbour Tunnel ("CHT") to connect Mass Transit Railway Hung Hom Station podium and the PolyU main campus. In view of the complicated issues involved, it was expected to take two years to complete the consultancy study. Meanwhile, the Government's proposed implementation of free-flow tolling, which would entail demolition of existing toll booths at toll plazas (including those of CHT), might render the Green Deck proposal technically more feasible. The Government would provide updates on the project to LegCo when appropriate. As regards the STEAM School Project, the Shaw Foundation was currently seeking approval from the Town Planning Board ("TPB") to amend the relevant Outline Zoning Plan for development of the school. It was expected that TPB would consider the case in a month or two. Concurrently, the Shaw Foundation had filed an application with the Lands Department to modify the lease terms of the land plot concerned.

Legal aid

7.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSO012, Dr Junius HO commented that the number of cases (5 605) handled by the Free Legal Advice Scheme ("FLAS") in 2020 was too low, given a total of 1 374 volunteer lawyers currently registered under the scheme and a network of nine District Offices of the Home Affairs Department operating as the scheme's Legal Advice Centres. Dr HO urged the Administration to enhance the publicity of FLAS with a view to better utilizing resources and enhancing the scheme's

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handling capacity.

7.7 Ms Starry LEE and Mr Wilson OR referred to Reply Serial No. CSO004 and enquired about:

- (a) the components of the expenditure of \$1.4 million on FLAS in 2020 and whether publicity expenses were included;
- (b) the reasons for operating FLAS at only nine District Offices; and
- (c) why the average waiting time between submission of an application and arrangement for an advice session ("average waiting time") at some District Offices was relatively longer.

Mr OR also suggested that the Administration should enhance the scope of legal advice under the Duty Lawyer Service ("DLS") to cover legal issues arising from the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

7.8 Director of Administration ("D of Admin") advised that FLAS was one of the schemes implemented under DLS subvented by the Government and managed by the Hong Kong Bar Association ("Bar Association") and the Law Society of Hong Kong ("Law Society") to provide legal assistance to the public. Members of the public might also make use of other DLS services including the Tel-Law Scheme which provided legal information to members of the public through telephone. In 2020, 5 605 cases of FLAS were handled by 875 volunteer lawyers and compared to 2019, the average waiting time had improved. The Tel-Law Scheme had recorded a total of 19 678 calls while the Tel-Law website had recorded 454 211 hits in 2020. The Government would continue to keep in view the service situation, identify room for improvement and discuss with the Bar Association and the Law Society as appropriate. The Government would also explore how to enhance publicity through the District Offices and other channels.

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7.9 D of Admin explained that as the lawyers served FLAS on a voluntary basis, arrangements for advice session had to match both the availability of the volunteer lawyers outside their work schedule and the Legal Advice Centres chosen by the persons seeking free legal advice. As regards the nine District Offices, they were selected after consultation with the Bar Association and Law Society, taking into account factors such as the distribution of services demand and efficient access by members of the public and volunteer lawyers. As observed, the network had been enhanced in recent years with the addition of the District Offices in Shatin and Tsuen Wan.

7.10 D of Admin further clarified that the expenditure of \$1.4 million in 2020 was mainly the administrative expenditure on FLAS, whereas the cost of taking out professional indemnity insurance for the volunteer lawyers was covered by the trade.

7.11 Arising from the discussion on FLAS, Dr CHENG Chung-tai and Ms Starry LEE suggested that the Administration should comprehensively review and align the different administrative delineations of districts/areas serviced by government offices and community facilities (e.g. the Legal Advice Centres of FLAS) with the proposed delineation of the 10 geographical constituencies of the Seventh Term of LegCo, with a view to enhancing administrative efficiency while minimizing confusion to the public. D of Admin advised that the issues involved were outside the purview of the Administration Wing. The Chairman suggested that members might discuss with the Home Affairs Bureau on other occasions regarding the allocation of District Offices for FLAS.

7.12 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSO027, Dr Junius HO expressed concern that the Legal Aid Department ("LAD") assessed criminal legal aid applications merely on the basis of the merits test and the means test, without giving regard to the source or nature of the applicants' financial resources, in particular whether financial aid obtained from a third party (e.g. 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund) involved champerty and maintenance.

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7.13 Director of Legal Aid ("DLA") stressed that legal aid applications were handled in accordance with the statutory mechanism and criteria. For instance, if an applicant failed the means test (i.e. financial resources (including financial aid if any from a third party) exceeding the prevailing limit of \$420,400), the Director of LAD would refuse/discharge legal aid. Besides, criminal legal aid applicants did not have a right to nominate solicitors/barristers on the Legal Aid Panel to act for them in legally aided proceedings.

7.14 Following up on Reply Serial No. CSO029, Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired about the reasons for the declining number of legal aid certificates granted in recent years, and whether this was attributable to any tightening of legal aid policy after the transfer of the legal aid portfolio from the Home Affairs Bureau to the Administration Wing ("the transfer").

7.15 D of Admin and DLA advised that the criteria for granting legal aid certificates had not changed after the transfer. DLA advised that the number of legal aid certificates granted had decreased in recent years mainly because of the drop in civil legal aid applications from individuals seeking non-refoulement protection.

Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund

7.16 Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted from Reply Serial No. CSO010 that some 69 000 out of nearly 93 000 applications were approved under the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme ("RSSS") and enquired about the reasons for the great number of unsuccessful applications. He expressed concern about the administrative cost of handling/vetting these applications.

7.17 Head, Human Resources Planning and Poverty Co-ordination Unit ("H/HRPPCU") advised that RSSS targeted retail outlets selling tangible goods to the public for personal or household consumption or utilization (with no processing or transformation of the goods involved in the resale process). Applications were turned down on the grounds that they failed to meet the eligibility criteria or could not produce sufficient supporting documentary proof as required under the Scheme. Applicants might, within 14 days after notification of the outcome of their applications, appeal to the Secretariat of Anti-Epidemic Fund if they were not satisfied with the

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decision in respect of their applications. Over 12 000 applications had subsequently been approved after review.

Justices of the Peace system

7.18 Dr Junius HO commented that the role of Justices of the Peace ("JPs") had diminished over the years to merely conducting statutory or non-statutory visits to designated institutions and handling complaints from inmates and detainees. He also noted from Reply Serial No. CSO016 that the number of statutory JP visits to the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") was declining in the past three years and stood at 391 in 2020, with 143 CSD-related complaints received in 2019. He considered that the figures were on the low side taking into account that there were currently some 1 390 JPs. Dr HO suggested that the scope of JPs' powers and functions under the Justices of the Peace Ordinance (Cap. 510) be expanded to restore certain judicial duties, with a view to galvanizing JPs' role while providing additional manpower resources to address for instance the heavy backlog of court cases.

7.19 D of Admin advised that the role of JPs had evolved over time, with visiting designated institutions and handling complaints from persons in custody, inmates and detainees as their main functions now. JPs also made suggestions on ways to improve the management of the institutions. Any suggestion to expand the powers and functions of JPs, which involved policy changes, would warrant careful consideration. While the number of non-statutory visits made by JPs to hospitals and other institutions had dropped in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was noteworthy that the number of statutory visits in the year could be maintained at roughly the same level as that of 2018 and 2019.

Supporting measures for ethnic minorities

7.20 Ms Starry LEE referred to Reply Serial No. CSO017 and enquired about the effectiveness of the measures coordinated and formulated by the Steering Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs ("the Steering Committee"), and any particular support measures to help ethnic minorities during the pandemic.

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7.21 H/HRPPCU advised that the Steering Committee was chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration ("CS") to enhance cross-bureau collaboration to strengthen support for ethnic minorities. The measures/schemes set out in Reply Serial No. CSO017, which were announced in CE's 2018 and 2019 Policy Addresses, had all been put to implementation. The B/Ds concerned would report the progress for the Steering Committee to regularly review the effectiveness of the measures/schemes and consider refinements or enhancement as appropriate. Since most of the measures had been implemented for only one year or so, it would be premature to conclude their effectiveness at this stage. In addition, a number of the measures in place concerned launching of pilot support programmes for ethnic minorities. The Steering Committee would consider the way forward after reviewing the review reports from the concerned B/Ds upon the completion of these pilot programmes.

7.22 H/HRPPCU added that CS had attended a town hall meeting in mid-March 2021 hosted by a non-government organization with the participation of around 100 ethnic minority representatives to discuss COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Ethnic minority representatives raised diverse comments and suggestions on a range of issues that they were concerned about during the epidemic. Issues raised included the difficulty of ethnic minorities in accessing or understanding information on anti-epidemic measures (e.g. COVID-19 Vaccination Programme and restriction-testing declaration), general perception of ethnic minorities in the local community, challenges faced by ethnic minorities in Chinese language learning and access to gadgets in home-based learning, etc. At the town hall meeting, CS also drew participants' attention to a pilot programme under the Labour Department to provide employment services for ethnic minority job seekers through a case management approach which should be helpful to many ethnic minority job seekers during the epidemic. Ethnic minority job seekers were encouraged to make use of this pilot programme. Views and comments raised by the ethnic minority representatives at the town hall meeting were summarized and consolidated for circulation to the relevant B/Ds for consideration and follow-up where appropriate. The Steering Committee would then consider how such views should be followed up upon inputs from B/Ds.

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Expenses on official entertainment

7.23 Referring to Reply Serial No. CSO003, Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked about the number of occasions and the average expenditure in respect of expenses on official entertainment incurred by CSO and the Office of the Financial Secretary. D of Admin advised that there were internal guidelines stipulating the ceilings of expenses on official entertainment, and the guidelines were applicable to the said offices. He undertook to provide the requested information after the meeting.

Government Records Service

7.24 Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted from Reply Serial No. CSO019 that the Government Records Service ("GRS") procured 559 archival records from overseas in 2020-2021, which covered a range of subjects relating to the history of Hong Kong and would be made available for public inspection gradually starting from the second quarter of 2021. He enquired whether the said records would be subject to screening/assessment (such as whether the contents complied with The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administration Region) and selection before making them available for public inspection.

7.25 D of Admin pointed out that GRS followed its acquisition procedures in identifying archival records for procurement. The procured archival records would be handled in accordance with the established principles and would be made available for public inspection at the Hong Kong Public Records Building in Kwun Tong.

Chief Executive's Office

7.26 Dr Junius HO referred to Reply Serial No. CEO008 and suggested the Administration disclose to the public more details about CE's official trips. Permanent Secretary, CEO responded that relevant information had been made available on CE's official webpage.

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Legislative Council Commission

7.27 Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted with concern from Reply Serial No. LC006 that the Legislative Council Commission ("LCC") had not provided any subsidy to the operator of the Cafeteria in the LegCo Complex ("the Cafeteria") to compensate for its operating losses due to LegCo's special meeting and working arrangements amid the pandemic. Dr CHENG considered this unfair to the operator and was worried about the potential knock-on effects on the arrangements for operators/employees of outsourced services in the private sector.

7.28 Secretary General, LegCo Secretariat advised that when considering issues related to the Cafeteria's operation (which was on a rent-free basis), LCC would take into account a host of factors including loss of business income arising from the suspension of its operation and conditions of its sustainability. He would convey members' views on the Cafeteria's operation to LCC.

Chapter VIII: Environment

8.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr WONG Kam-sing, Secretary for the Environment ("SEN"), briefed members on the financial provisions and the main initiatives of the policy area of environment for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-6).

Management of country parks and green tourism

8.2 Mr YIU Si-wing thanked the Administration for introducing the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme, which had helped the tourism sector to maintain some business during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic. Noting that the Scheme was well received with more than 400 travel agents having applied so far, Mr YIU expressed concern whether the \$100 million earmarked for the Scheme would be sufficient.

8.3 SEN advised that the Environment Bureau ("ENB") had been collaborating with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau to promote green tourism while creating green employment opportunities and supporting a green recovery of the economy. The Administration would ensure effective use of resources to support the tourism sector.

8.4 Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation ("DAFC") added that the Administration had set aside \$500 million to carry out enhancement works on facilities in country parks, including refurbishing hiking trails, providing additional viewing platforms, enhancing and upgrading camping sites and public toilets, setting up open museums as well as providing tree top adventure facilities. The Administration would introduce more green tour products and strengthen the relevant training for related tourism practitioners, with a view to promoting the development of green tourism.

8.5 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. ENB041 that the Administration would revitalize some wartime relics by converting them into open museums. He called on the Administration to finalize the specific locations and other details of such projects as soon as possible. SEN took note of Mr TSE's views.

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8.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. ENB009, Dr Junius HO expressed support for taking forward enhancement works on country parks with an earmarked expenditure of \$500 million. He requested the Administration to provide information on the number of new hiking trails constructed, if any, since the reunification in 1997 and suggested the Administration consider building a "Chief Executive Trail".

8.7 SEN shared the view that new attractions should be provided to divert visitors and further promote low-carbon local tourism. DAFC advised that with a total length of about 500 km currently, hiking trails in Hong Kong included family walks, nature walks and long-distance trails, etc. that catered for the needs of different age groups.

8.8 Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern about the damage brought by the influx of visitors to country parks after the outbreak of the epidemic. Ms QUAT asked about the monitoring of the wear and tear situation, and the Administration's plan, if any, to enhance public awareness of hiking etiquette and environmental conservation. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung requested the Administration to strengthen cooperation with community organizations in taking forward publicity and education on nature conservation. For instance, the Administration might consider hiring retired persons to assist in related work.

8.9 SEN and DAFC advised that:

- (a) the Administration had stepped up patrol at places with high visitation in country parks, such as popular picnic sites and hiking spots, to monitor and assess the impact of the increased visitor flow;
- (b) where severe soil erosion or damaged vegetation were found, suitable follow-up actions would be taken to arrange for repair/restoration; and
- (c) the Administration had, through publicity at various different channels and collaboration with green groups and hiking groups, appealed to the public to protect the environment and maintain environmental hygiene while

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visiting the countryside. Green ambassadors were employed to conduct guided tours and promote the messages of "Leave No Trace" and "Take Your Litter Home", etc. to the general public at popular hiking spots. The Administration adopted an open attitude towards collaboration with different organizations to reach out to a wider community.

8.10 Referring to Reply Serial No. ENB004, Mr YIU Si-wing commented that the number of visitors to the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark ("HKUGG") was far from satisfactory and urged the Administration to step up publicity. He also noted that to mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of HKUGG, the Administration would open new visitor facilities such as the Kat O Heritage Trail. Mr YIU enquired whether the Administration would consider opening up the Sha Tau Kok public pier to facilitate public access to peripheral islands including Kat O so as to enhance the accessibility of HKUGG and associated facilities.

8.11 SEN responded that HKUGG covered vast areas and the East Dam of High Island Reservoir was among the most popular natural attractions. To facilitate visitors commuting to geosites in the remote outer islands, the Administration had been increasing relevant transport ancillary facilities, including supporting an application for rolling out a pilot scheme under the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme to improve the waterborne transport in question. As regards the suggested use of the Sha Tau Kok public pier, it would warrant cross-departmental deliberation. Meanwhile, visitors could use the kaito ferry service between Ma Liu Shui and Lai Chi Wo/Ap Chau/Kat O on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") supplemented that the aforesaid pilot scheme included testing whether the provision of ferry services between Ma Liu Shui and Lai Chi Wo during weekdays would be feasible and commercially viable.

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Waste management

Disposable plastic tableware

8.12 Referring to Reply Serial No. ENB124, Mr KWOK Wai-keung pointed out that the increase in consumption of takeaway meals by the public during the epidemic had resulted in a surge in the use of disposable plastic tableware. Making reference to the Mainland, Macao and the European Union, Mr KWOK expressed dissatisfaction about the Administration's slow progress in regulating the distribution and use of disposable plastic tableware, i.e. implementing the first phase of regulation by 2025.

8.13 DDEP(2) advised that the Administration had provided guidelines to the catering sector and takeaway food delivery platforms encouraging them to phase in green measures including reducing the use of disposable plastic tableware as far as practicable. It was expected that 90% of the restaurant operators in government venues would have ceased using disposable plastic tableware by the end of 2021. DDEP(2) said that the Administration would consult the trades, the public and relevant stakeholders later in 2021 to map out the way forward for regulating the distribution of disposable plastic tableware, bearing in mind the need to minimize the regulatory impact and compliance costs on the trade. The Administration would strive to implement the first phase of regulation in 2025 or earlier.

Waste recycling

8.14 Following up on Reply Serial No. ENB117, Dr Junius HO enquired about the manpower and expenditure allocated for the "Reduce and Recycle 2.0" Campaign and the key performance indicators, if any, for assessment of the effectiveness of Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores in recovering waste.

8.15 SEN and Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Special Projects) ("DDEP(SP)") responded that the community recycling network had been expanded/enhanced progressively over the past decade, which comprised nine Recycling Stations (previously called Community Green Stations), 22 Recycling Stores and over 100 Recycling Spots at present.

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The effectiveness of the network was demonstrated by, among other things, a considerable increase in the quantity of recyclables recovered. For instance, the quantity collected by the Recycling Stores since they commenced operation progressively in the fourth quarter of 2020 had already reached 1 200 tonnes, with the monthly average doubled that of their predecessors, the community recycling centres. Regarding the manpower and expenditure of the community recycling network, DDEP(SP) advised that the operators of the Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores had hired a total of about 200 and 300 staff respectively. The respective operating expenditures in the financial year 2021-2022 were estimated to be \$48 million and \$229 million.

8.16 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. ENB086 and ENB087, Mr Vincent CHENG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT considered that the Government should be more proactive in taking the lead to promote environmental protection and waste recycling. Mr CHENG and Ms QUAT suggested according greater weightings to aspects of environmental protection when the Administration procured products/services. Mr CHENG also enquired about the sustainability of the existing recycling programmes implemented by the Administration.

8.17 In response, SEN, DDEP(2) and DDEP(SP) advised that:

- (a) the Administration had all along attached great importance to green procurement and promoted carbon and waste reduction to develop a circular economy. The expenditures of government departments on green procurement had increased from around \$1 billion in 2015 to more than \$2 billion in 2019, with a total procurement amount of more than \$7 billion in the period;
- (b) to complement the objectives set out in the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035, the Administration would inject an additional funding of \$1 billion to the Recycling Fund so as to render continuous support to the recycling industry in transforming and enhancing their operation;

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- (c) the central collection services on various recyclables including food waste, waste paper and waste plastics, together with the producer responsibility schemes on waste electrical and electronic equipment and glass beverage containers served to encourage waste reduction by the general public while creating business opportunities for the recycling trade; and
- (d) the by-products produced during the recycling of food waste such as compost were mostly for local use. Most of the waste glass containers collected were also recycled and reused locally.

8.18 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. ENB178 that two tenants of EcoPark made an arrangement in early 2021 to surrender their tenancies due to deterioration of operating conditions of the recyclable market and financial considerations, notwithstanding rental concessions offered by EcoPark. He expressed grave concerns about the viability of the recycling trade and development of a waste-to-resources strategy. SEN explained that the said surrender of tenancies might not be attributable to the rental levels of EcoPark. As observed, some tenants of EcoPark surrendered tenancies because of changing market demands which had rendered their business no longer viable.

Promoting the use of electric vehicles

Charging infrastructure and network

8.19 Mr Frankie YICK noticed that according to the Hong Kong Roadmap on the Popularisation of Electric Vehicles ("the Roadmap"), the Administration proposed to cease new registration of fuel-propelled private cars ("PCs"), including different hybrids, in 2035 or earlier. Mr YICK questioned whether the number of electric vehicle ("EV") charging facilities proposed to be installed under the EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme ("EHSS") and through extension of public EV charging networks at government car parks would be sufficient to meet the increasing demand for EVs. He suggested setting a target on the provision of EV charging facilities while expanding the charging network expeditiously.

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8.20 SEN stressed that the proposal laid down in the Roadmap to replace all PCs by EVs or new energy vehicles was in line with the international development. SEN and Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3) pointed out that the following measures had been adopted to further increase EV charging facilities in Hong Kong:

- (a) tightening the requirements of Gross Floor Area ("GFA") concessions since April 2011 so that only underground car parks in new private buildings provided with EV charging-enabling infrastructure at each parking space could be fully exempted from the GFA calculations. After implementation of the arrangement, about 68 000 parking spaces in more than 500 housing estates had been approved and would be equipped with charging infrastructure, of which some 20 000 parking spaces had completed the relevant installation work;
- (b) exploring with the Development Bureau ("DEVB") to adjust the requirements for EV charging infrastructure in car parks of new private buildings with a view to providing charging infrastructure for all parking spaces thereat;
- (c) introducing EHSS in October 2020 to subsidize installation of charging infrastructure for more than 60 000 parking spaces in existing private residential buildings in three years. More than 300 applications had been received since launch of the scheme, covering more than 70 000 parking spaces; and
- (d) apart from expanding the public EV charging networks, the Administration planned to marketize the EV charging services with a view to giving impetus to the provision of additional public charging facilities by the private sector.

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Adoption of electric buses and public light buses

8.21 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. ENB177 that the preliminary results of the trial of single-deck electric buses indicated that the driving range of an electric bus after a full charge (approximately three to four hours) could not meet the normal daily requirement of most of the single-deck buses in Hong Kong. He expressed disappointment that Hong Kong had lagged far behind other places such as the Mainland in adopting electric buses. Notwithstanding the problems encountered, he urged the Administration to continue taking forward electrification of public transport, in particular adoption of electric buses.

8.22 SEN remarked that wider adoption of electric buses would be tried out in Kowloon East (including the Kai Tak Development Area). ENB/ the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") would work in collaboration with DEVB to deploy electric buses to run new routes in the area. In addition, the Kowloon Motors Bus Company (1933) Limited planned to acquire more electric buses in the near future. He stressed the importance to take into account the demanding local operating environment when considering electrification of buses.

8.23 Referring to the pilot scheme for electric public light buses ("e-PLBs") in Reply Serial No. ENB101, Mr Frankie YICK enquired about the potential cost impact on the transport trade concerned, and whether subsidies would be provided by the Administration to minimize the impact. In view of the difficulty to provide charging facilities at all PLB termini/stops, Mr YICK enquired whether co-existence of e-PLBs and hybrid PLBs, instead of full electrification of PLBs, would be considered. SEN emphasized that the Administration was fully aware of the financial impact in terms of capital costs of e-PLBs on the trade. On the other hand, it was envisaged that the recurrent operating costs could be lower for PLBs running on electricity instead of fossil fuels.

Management of waste electric vehicle batteries

8.24 Pointing out the expected rise in the number of waste EV batteries with wider adoption of EVs, Mr Tony TSE called on the Administration to expeditiously formulate mandatory measures to ensure proper handling of waste EV batteries early. SEN advised that the

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Administration aimed to legislate a Producer Responsibility Scheme for retired EV batteries in the next few years.

Energy efficiency

8.25 Referring to Reply Serial No. ENB053, Mr Wilson OR enquired about the reasons for the reduction in the number of improvement notices issued by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department ("EMSD") in relation to failure to cause an energy audit (i.e. from 43 notices in 2016-2017 to only one notice in 2020-2021) following inspection of buildings under the mandatory implementation of the Building Energy Codes. Mr OR also asked about the follow-up actions taken by EMSD and the compliance situation.

8.26 Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services explained the statutory requirements under the Buildings Energy Efficiency Ordinance (Cap. 610) for commercial buildings and commercial portions of composite buildings to conduct energy audits once every 10 years. Energy audits for about 2 600 buildings had been completed so far. The gradual decrease in the number of improvement notices issued was attributed to strengthened publicity as well as the high compliance rate of new private buildings. He pointed out that up to the end of February 2021, there were nine prosecution cases for failure to conduct energy audit.

Light nuisance

8.27 Mr KWOK Wai-keung commented that combating nuisance from external lighting installation by voluntary means through the Charter on External Lighting ("the Charter") was ineffective, given that only some 5 000 participants had signed up. He requested the Administration to draw up a legislative timetable for regulating light nuisance early with a view to minimizing the adverse impact of light nuisance on the public while saving electricity and reducing carbon emission.

8.28 Deputy Secretary for the Environment ("DSEN") advised that ENB launched the Charter in April 2016 to invite owners and responsible persons of external lighting installations to switch off lighting installations of decorative, promotional or advertising purposes which affected the outdoor environment after certain time at night. The Working Group on

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External Lighting ("the Working Group") was appointed in 2018 to review the effectiveness of the Charter and to advise the Administration on further measures to better manage external lighting. The assessment included conducting surveys to gauge the public's views on the existing measures and the future regulatory measures; engaging consultancies to look into regulatory arrangements adopted by other cities for external lighting installations for Hong Kong's reference as appropriate; and measuring the changes of illumination level in different districts in Hong Kong to assess the effectiveness of the Charter.

8.29 DSEN supplemented that owing to social incidents and associated temporary transport arrangements in the territory, some measurement work had been deferred. The Administration would continue to work with the Working Group closely, with a view to completing the assessment within 2021. Based on the assessment results, the Working Group would put forward recommendations in due course.

Noise control

8.30 Mr Wilson OR noted from Reply Serial No. ENB158 that enforcement against noise emanated from domestic premises and public places was carried out by the Police while EPD was the enforcement authority in relation to annoying noise from peddling by shops in nearby public places. In the light of the rising number of complaints against noise from domestic premises and general public places, Mr OR enquired whether EPD would consider taking up the enforcement work on this part as well.

8.31 Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1) explained the division of work between EPD and the Police in handling noise complaints, as set out in Reply Serial No. ENB158. Taking into account the transient nature of noise from domestic premises and general public places, the current arrangement whereby EPD would approach the complainants and explain the regulatory arrangements, and refer the cases to the Police for follow-up enforcement was considered appropriate. As regards annoying noise from peddling by shops in nearby public places, EPD could conduct regular inspection in a targeted manner and take follow-up enforcement actions as necessary.

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9.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr CHAN Fan, Secretary for Transport and Housing ("STH"), briefed members on the main initiatives for the policy area of housing for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-7).

Supply of land and public housing

9.2 Mr Wilson OR asked whether the average waiting time for public rental housing ("PRH") would be restored to about three years, given that the Government had identified land for the provision of 316 000 public housing units to meet the demand for about 301 000 public housing units in the coming 10 years from 2021-2022 to 2030-2031. In view that about one-third of these units were scheduled for completion in the first five-year period (i.e. 2021-2022 to 2025-2026) whereas the other two-third fell in the second five-year period (i.e. 2026-2027 to 2030-2031), he enquired about the factors that might cause delays to the public housing projects which were scheduled for completion in the second five-year period. Ms Alice MAK was concerned whether the provision of public housing units in the second five-year period would be affected by the Administration's progress in making the relevant sites ready for housing construction. She enquired about the Administration's confidence in achieving the 10-year public housing supply target, and whether the Administration would foster collaboration among the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA"), Hong Kong Housing Society ("HS") and Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") on public housing production.

9.3 STH replied that it was a challenging task to supply about 301 000 public housing units in the coming 10 years, given that about two-third of such units would be completed in the second five-year period. The Administration had been exploring means to increase and expedite public housing production, and had been communicating with organizations such as HS and URA on possible room for collaboration in public housing development.

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9.4 Dr Junius HO opined that to help address the problem of housing shortage in Hong Kong, the Administration should make good use of the land resources in Ta Kwu Ling given its proximity to Shenzhen and the transport facilities therein. He criticized the Administration's proposal about providing columbarium facilities in Sandy Ridge and North District. STH replied that the provision of columbarium facilities was under the purview of the Food and Health Bureau which had explained its stance towards the proposal mentioned by Dr HO. Relevant bureaux/departments would continue their efforts in identifying land and providing necessary supporting infrastructure and community facilities for supporting housing development projects.

Provision of transport facilities to support public housing development

9.5 Ms Alice MAK opined that to minimize local communities' opposition to public housing development projects, the Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB") should ensure that there was an adequate provision of transport facilities/services to tie in with the development of public housing. STH replied that HA and relevant government departments would continue to co-ordinate on public works projects for new public housing developments as well as the provision of formed sites, suitable transport infrastructure and community facilities for future residents and the local community. In response to Ms MAK's concern that the proposed infrastructure works project for the public housing site at Long Bin, Yuen Long was limited in scale and could not help enhance the transport network/public transport services of the district as a whole as well as between the district and the urban area, STH advised that the transport infrastructure/community facilities at district level were strategically planned and developed with the concerted efforts of relevant government bureaux/departments.

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Private and subsidized housing

9.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)040, Mr LAU Kwok-fan said that the number of private residential units under construction in 2020 was 11 800, which was 6 700 fewer than that in 2019. He asked whether apart from public housing, the Administration should also increase the private housing supply target on the basis of the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS"). STH replied that the housing supply target under LTHS was set based on quantitative projections of housing demand in the 10-year period. In terms of housing supply, delivery of housing development projects could be affected by unforeseen factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To meet the housing and other development needs, the Administration would increase the supply of land and HA would expedite and compress the public housing construction process where practicable. While it would take certain time to meet the LTHS supply target, the Administration would continue to examine measures to alleviate the pressure on livelihood faced by inadequately housed households, including development of transitional housing, introduction of tenancy control of subdivided units ("SDUs") and implementation of the Cash Allowance Trial Scheme.

9.7 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)063, Mr Tony TSE asked about the experience gained by the Administration/HA from the sale exercises of Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme ("GSH") having regard to the number of flats that had remained unsold under the GSH projects at Chai Wan and Tsing Yi.

9.8 Mrs Regina IP suggested that the Administration should explore with the MTR Corporation Limited to use about half of the housing units in the property developments above the newly completed railway stations in future for providing Home Ownership Scheme flats to meet the demand of middle-class families. STH replied that the Administration was studying ways to foster collaboration among relevant organizations to expedite housing production, including subsidized housing, and would consider Mrs IP's suggestion.

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Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents

9.9 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok opined that Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents ("SH") projects might be well received by members of the public including young people if they were provided at convenient locations. He asked whether after implementing the SH project at Anderson Road, the Administration/URA would not launch new SH projects for sale until 2024. STH replied that URA had reached agreement with the Hong Kong Settlers Housing Corporation Limited on the co-operation framework in taking forward the redevelopment of Tai Hang Sai Estate, and the project would provide over 3 300 units, of which more than half would be SH units.

9.10 In response to Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok's enquiry about the arrangement for randomly selecting SH units from the residential units in the project at Anderson Road, as mentioned in paragraph 8 of the STH's opening remarks, Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) ("DS(H)") advised that as stipulated in the land sale conditions of the Anderson Road site, among all residential units to be built by the developer on the site, 20% should be studio units, 25% should be one-bedroom units and 55% should be two-bedroom units. After the developer had obtained occupation permit of the project, the Administration would randomly select from all residential units no less than 1 000 SH units provided that the total gross floor area of all SH units should meet the minimum requirement as stipulated in the land sale conditions.

Supply and sale of first-hand private residential units

9.11 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)053, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung opined that the number of unsold first-hand private residential units ("unsold units") in completed projects as at 31 December 2020 was comparable to the completions of private domestic flats in the relevant period. He asked whether the Administration would re-consider the introduction of vacancy tax (i.e. Special Rates) to expedite the supply of such unsold flats to meet the home ownership need of the public. STH replied that the Administration would continue to keep in view closely the

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number of unsold units and did not rule out the possibility of reintroducing the legislative proposal of Special Rates, where the situation warranted, in order to encourage more timely supply of such units. DS(H) further supplemented that the Administration had been keeping track of the status of these unsold units in order to have a better grasp of their vacancy situation. Of the 12 300 unsold units as at 31 December 2020, it was estimated that about 3 400 units (28%) were for self-use or were let out (e.g. as serviced apartments) by the developers and relevant figure had been uploaded onto THB's website in January 2021.

9.12 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired about the Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority ("SRPA")'s follow-up actions regarding the eight recommendations in a report released by the Consumer Council in 2014 of its study on sales of first-hand residential properties, including an extension of the defects liability warranty for such properties from half year to 12 months or more. Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)037, Ms YUNG opined that the penalties, such as fines, that had been imposed on the vendors who were convicted for offences under the Residential Properties (First-hand Sales) Ordinance (Cap. 621) in 2020 were on the low side and failed to pose sufficient deterrent effect. She asked whether the Administration would conduct a review in this regard.

9.13 Director (Special Duties), Transport and Housing Bureau/Director of Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority replied that SRPA would continue to discharge its responsibility of enforcing the Ordinance and would appropriately consider relevant recommendations made by the Consumer Council. The penalty imposed on a convicted case was decided by the Court in accordance with the penalty for the relevant offence as stipulated under the Ordinance. For each convicted case, SRPA and the Department of Justice would study whether the penalty was too lenient and would apply for a court review where appropriate. He advised that since the implementation of the Ordinance in 2013, vendors had in general made good efforts to comply with the Ordinance and SRPA had taken effective measures to promote vendors' understanding of the requirements under the Ordinance. STH said that the Ordinance had set out detailed requirements

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in relation to the sales brochures and other relevant documents for sales of first-hand residential properties, and SRPA would continue to take enforcement actions against contraventions of the Ordinance.

Cash Allowance Trial Scheme

9.14 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. THB(H)003 and THB(H)051, Mr LAU Kwok-fan enquired about the basis for the Administration's estimate that about 90 000 General Applicant households were eligible for the Cash Allowance Trial Scheme. Mr CHAN Chun-ying sought clarification on whether the 86 time-limited non-directorate civil service posts in the Housing Department ("HD") as mentioned in Reply Serial No. THB(H)003 had been filled and questioned whether the number of applications for the trial Scheme that needed to be handled by each of these 86 posts before the launch of the scheme in mid-2021 would be small. STH and Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing ("PS(H)) replied that HD had been redeploying its existing staff to carry out the preparatory work for implementation of the trial scheme while filling the 86 time-limited posts. HD would as far as practicable save the applicants' efforts in applying for the scheme and streamline the procedures for processing the applications. PS(H) advised that HD would issue application forms to the households with certain basic information pre-printed, and require the households to confirm if the information was still valid and to make self-declaration on meeting the eligibility criteria. HD would also conduct random checks to ensure that the applicants were eligible for the trial scheme.

9.15 Mr LAU Kwok-fan expressed concern whether upon the end of the three-year trial period of the Cash Allowance Trial Scheme, the PRH supply would still be inadequate for meeting the demand of the waiting list applicants and hence the Administration would, after the trial, need to continue providing such cash allowance to eligible applicants who had not yet received a PRH flat offer. He called on the Administration to set a clear target on the timeframe for the average PRH waiting time to restore to three years. STH replied that the Administration would review the trial

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scheme at an appropriate juncture, taking into account relevant factors such as public housing supply.

Transitional housing

9.16 Noting from Reply Serial No. THB(H)022 that some transitional housing projects provided one or two units only, Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired about the reason and the average amount of subsidy granted to these projects. Under Secretary for Transport and Housing ("USTH") replied that these projects were put into implementation because owners were willing to provide their residential units for transitional housing use to assist needy households.

9.17 Mr YIU Si-wing asked whether some landlords of transitional housing projects would not continue to lease their land/premises to the project operators upon expiry of the existing tenancy agreements, and whether the Administration would identify other sites/premises suitable for the continued operation of such projects. STH replied that landlords of transitional housing projects in general had leased their vacant land to the project operators for about seven years or more and were willing to continue leasing them for transitional housing use after the existing agreements expired if they had no other development plans for the sites. The Administration believed that many transitional housing projects, including some large transitional housing estates, would continue their operation for quite a long time. In response to Mr YIU's enquiry on whether the Administration was confident that there would be 15 000 transitional housing units by 2023, STH replied in the affirmative.

9.18 Mr Tony TSE referred to the Administration's advice in Reply Serial No. THB(H)059 that transitional housing projects should operate on a cost-recovery basis, and enquired whether such cost included the government subsidy granted to the projects. He further enquired about the use of surplus earned from the project operation. STH replied that under the cost-recovery principle, the Administration expected that the rent level of transitional housing should be lower than the relevant market rent with a

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ceiling of no more than 40% of the prevailing PRH income limit, and the operating organization should cover the cost of tenancy management, building management and maintenance, and provision of necessary supporting services for its tenants with the rental income. If a transitional housing project ceased operation in future, the operating organization might redeploy the surplus resources to its other transitional housing projects or other social services as approved by the Government.

9.19 Noting from Reply Serial No. THB(H)060 that the Administration was processing an application in relation to the first project for conversion of industrial building into transitional housing, Mr Tony TSE asked about the criteria for determining the amount of government subsidy to be granted to the project. STH replied that wholesale conversion of an industrial building for transitional housing involved substantial addition and alteration works and might not be economically attractive to owners of such buildings. The Administration would provide support and assistance as far as practicable to facilitate the implementation of such projects.

Pilot scheme on using hotels and guesthouses as transitional housing

9.20 Mr YIU Si-wing asked about the number of non-government organizations ("NGOs") which had participated in the pilot scheme on using suitable rooms in hotels and guesthouses with relatively low occupancy rates as transitional housing ("the pilot scheme") mentioned in Reply Serial No. THB(H)004, and the number of hotel/guesthouse rooms that had been rented by them for providing transitional housing. He further enquired whether it would be more cost-effective to provide transitional housing in existing hotels/guesthouses than constructing new transitional housing units. Mr Holden CHOW raised a similar enquiry and asked whether apart from the 800 units to be provided under the pilot scheme, the Administration would facilitate the provision of more transitional housing units in hotels/guesthouses.

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9.21 STH replied that under the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by NGOs, the subsidy ceiling for a transitional unit provided in an existing flat was \$0.2 million, and \$0.55 million in school/non-domestic premises. For a newly constructed transitional housing unit, the amount of subsidy was \$0.55 million. The Administration would continue to support the development of different types of transitional housing with a view to providing 15 000 units or more by 2023. He advised that the Administration introduced the pilot scheme having regard to not only the strong demand for transitional housing but also the fact that many hotels and guesthouses were operating under a difficult business environment amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission on Poverty had approved a grant of \$95 million from the Community Care Fund for implementing the pilot scheme, whereas the Funding Scheme would provide financial support for the NGOs participating in the pilot scheme to appropriately add/improve facilities for their tenants in the hotels/guesthouses concerned. If, apart from providing 800 units for implementing the pilot scheme, the industry was willing to offer more suitable hotel/guesthouse rooms for transitional housing use in future, the Administration would actively consider their proposals and seek relevant funding approval where appropriate. USTH advised that the pilot scheme would provide subsidy to NGOs to use suitable hotel/guesthouse rooms with low occupancy rates as transitional housing, and the amount of subsidy per room for two years was subject to a ceiling of \$133,500. The Task Force on Transitional Housing had organized online briefing sessions to provide details of the pilot scheme to prospective NGOs and representatives from the industry. The response to the pilot scheme was generally positive.

9.22 Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired about the subsidy granted to NGOs for carrying out minor improvement works or procurement of related facilities in the hotels/guesthouses concerned, such as providing communal cooking/laundry facilities for transitional housing residents' use. USTH replied that under the pilot scheme, the proportion of subsidy that the Administration would allow for a NGO to procure facilities such as cooking and laundry equipment as mentioned by Mr CHAN might be different

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among projects. Whether such facilities/equipment could be installed would also be subject to regulation under relevant legislation.

Tenancy control of subdivided units

9.23 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)066, Mr Vincent CHENG urged the Administration to enact legislation for implementing tenancy control of SDUs as early as possible. In view that the Task Force for the Study on Tenancy of Subdivided Units had recommended in its study that the rate of rent increase on tenancy renewal of SDUs should be capped at 15%, he and Mrs Regina IP expressed concern that such a cap was too high to be affordable to SDU tenants. Mrs IP criticized that the Task Force had taken a long time to complete the study and this might allow sufficient time for SDU landlords to increase rent before the introduction of tenancy control of SDUs. Mr CHENG enquired how the Administration would prevent landlords' charging of high initial rent of new tenancies of SDUs in future.

9.24 Director (Special Duties), Transport and Housing Bureau/Director of Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority replied that the Task Force had recommended that the rate of rent increase between the original regulated tenancy and the renewed regulated tenancy should not be more than the percentage change of the private domestic rental index (all classes) of the Rating and Valuation Department in the relevant period. If the relevant percentage change for the two-year period was more than 15%, the rate of rent increase would be capped at 15%. Noting that the percentage increase in rent of private properties in some previous years was over 20% or even 30% for a two-year period, the Task Force considered that the proposed cap of 15% would help prevent excessive rent hikes of SDUs without unduly compromising the property rights of SDU landlords. He explained that under the tenancy arrangement proposed by the Task Force (i.e. the tenant of a two-year fixed-term regulated tenancy should have the right to renew the tenancy once, thus enjoying four years of security tenure), a landlord who had increased the rent of a SDU in the first year would be allowed to increase the SDU rent once only (i.e. upon renewal of the regulated tenancy) before the end of the four-year period. STH advised

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that the Administration would implement tenancy control of SDUs to protect the interest of tenants whilst taking into account the private property rights. The legislative amendments for taking forward the measure would be introduced as early as possible. The Administration would discuss the measure and related matters, such as the maximum rate of rent increase upon tenancy renewal, with members of the relevant subcommittee under the Panel on Housing at a meeting in April 2021.

Clearance of Shek Lei Interim Housing

9.25 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(H)012, Dr CHENG Chung-tai opined that some of the households to be affected by HA's clearance plan for Shek Lei Interim Housing might be dissatisfied with the rehousing arrangements in future, and HA should address their concerns as early as possible. He asked about the number of families who would be rehoused to Po Tin Interim Housing due to the clearance, and whether relevant government departments would assist them, including arranging change of schools for their children. STH replied that HA would look into the situation of individual households in Shek Lei Interim Housing affected by the clearance and provide the most appropriate arrangements for them with due regard to the "people-oriented" principle. PS(H) advised that about 310 households resided in Shek Lei Interim Housing as at end-February 2021 and most of them would be eligible for rehousing directly to PRH or advance rehousing to PRH under the HA's Anticipatory Housing Scheme. The remaining about 70 households who were not eligible for PRH were mainly singletons and most of them were ex-PRH tenants who had been rendered homeless due to divorce or PRH tenancy enforcement actions (e.g. rent arrears cases), etc. HA considered it appropriate to arrange rehousing these households to Po Tin Interim Housing to ensure fairness to other PRH applicants who were waiting to be housed.

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Inspection of drainage pipes in public rental housing estates

9.26 Mr Wilson OR expressed concern about the COVID-19 cases in Yau Oi Estate, Tuen Mun and the Administration/HA's follow-up measures to deal with the risk of viral transmission in the estate. He asked about the progress of implementing the 18-month drainage inspection programme for PRH, and whether the Administration/HA would make available more manpower to speed up the programme. Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management) replied that HA would inspect the communal drainage pipes of its 1 575 PRH blocks under the drainage inspection programme which was expected to be completed by April 2022. Of the about 800 000 units in these PRH blocks, about 390 000 units had external drainage pipes and HA had inspected 320 000 units. It was expected that HA would complete inspection of all external drainage pipes in PRH blocks by the third quarter of 2021. As regards drainage pipes inside flats, HA had inspected about 210 000 PRH units, and targeted to complete the inspection of all drainage pipes inside flats in the first quarter of 2022, which was earlier than the original target completion date.

Monitoring of the Hong Kong Housing Authority

9.27 Mr Tony TSE referred to Reply Serial No. THB(H)062 which mentioned that HA was a financially autonomous public body, and asked about the monitoring of HA's performance, including the use of its public resources. STH replied that HA had various standing committees responsible for formulating, administering and overseeing policies in specified areas. At its open meetings, HA reported its annual performance, including the progress of public housing projects.

Chapter X : Transport

10.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Frank CHAN, Secretary for Transport and Housing ("STH") briefed members on the financial provisions and main initiatives related to the policy area of transport (Appendix IV-8).

Measures to support transport trades amidst COVID-19 epidemic

10.2 Mr YIU Si-wing noted that the relief measures provided by the Airport Authority Hong Kong ("AAHK") to the airport community, including airlines, airport retail tenants and restaurants and airport staff, would be ended by May 2021. As the aviation industry was still suffering from the pandemic at present, he asked whether the Administration and AAHK would launch further measures to assist the industry.

10.3 STH replied that apart from the relief provided by the Government through the Anti-Epidemic Fund, AAHK had launched four rounds of relief measures supporting the airport community. The total amount of relief provided for the aviation sector and the airport community amounted to \$8.8 billion. The Administration and AAHK would keep in view the market situation and maintain close contacts with relevant stakeholders when considering post epidemic recovery measures.

10.4 On Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry on the provision of anti-epidemic subsidies, STH said that as the epidemic impacted various industries and sectors of Hong Kong, the Administration would review holistically when considering the provision of relevant subsidies.

Provision of parking spaces in Hong Kong

10.5 Quoting from Annex 1 to Reply Serial No. THB(T)210 regarding the total number of parking spaces available in Hong Kong, which now stood at around 770 000, Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the shortfall of parking spaces given that the total number of registered cars in Hong Kong had already exceeded 800 000. He enquired about the implementation progress of the measures taken by the Transport Department ("TD") to increase the provision of parking spaces in Hong Kong, especially for commercial vehicles ("CVs"). Mr YIU Si-wing raised a similar concern and enquired about measures to address the acute shortage of parking space for coaches. Mr POON Siu-ping also asked about the timetable in completing the revision on the parking standards under the

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Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG") and incorporation of new public car parks at suitable "Government, Institution or Community" ("GIC") facilities to increase the provision of parking spaces.

10.6 STH replied that it was neither possible nor practical to substantially increase the provision of parking space in the short run given the limited land supply in Hong Kong. That said, the Administration was adopting a multi-pronged approach to address the shortage of parking spaces in Hong Kong, and would also explore the use of technology and other measures. On the implementation progress of various measures, Commissioner for Transport ("C for T") gave a brief account of the measures as follows:

- (a) TD had been working closely with relevant bureaux and departments ("B/Ds") to ascertain the feasibility of providing more public car parking spaces, and around 5 100 parking spaces would be provided by batches starting from 2024-2025 from 20 works projects at suitable GIC facilities and public open space projects following the principle of "single site, multiple uses";
- (b) TD had consulted relevant stakeholders on the revised parking standards under HKPSG with a view to increasing the parking provisions. Upon receiving comments from relevant B/Ds including the Planning Department and the Development Bureau, TD would seek convergence of views and promulgate the revised standards accordingly;
- (c) in the 2020-2021 school year, a cumulative total of 28 schools had provided about 80 parking spaces for student service vehicles;
- (d) TD had been requesting the owners of new developments to open up part of the ancillary parking spaces and loading/unloading bays for night-time public parking of CVs, and such new lease conditions would be incorporated in the Conditions of Sale for suitable new Government land sale sites. An example would be the redevelopment of some industrial buildings in Kwun Tong recently in which certain

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ancillary areas of these buildings had been designated as night-time parking for CVs; and

- (e) the number of parking spaces available for use and the completion timeline for the eight sites identified for public CV parks as outlined in (4) of Annex 3 to Reply Serial No. THB(T)210 would be provided in writing after the meeting.

(post-meeting note: the Administration's supplementary information on (e) above was provided to members on 26 April 2021 vide THB(T)-2S-e1/THB (T)-2S-c1).

10.7 Mr Vincent CHENG noted that TD was planning the construction of the Automated Parking Systems ("APS") at short-term tenancy ("STT") sites, yet the implementation progress was too slow. He enquired about the latest progress in constructing APS in Sham Shui Po ("SSP") and ways to expedite the construction. STH advised that TD had been proactively exploring the feasibility of constructing APS at more STT sites. At present, six pilot project sites had been identified for implementation, and the Administration was actively encouraging other institutions like the AAHK and the Urban Renewal Authority to provide similar facilities. On implementation progress, C for T advised that the APS at Tsuen Wan site was expected to commence service in the fourth quarter of 2021. TD was conducting feasibility assessment at the pilot project sites in Sheung Wan and Chai Wan, and would consult relevant District Councils upon completion of the assessments. As regards the planned APS at SSP site, C for T said that TD was presently seeking planning permission from the Town Planning Board. Once planning permission was received, TD would invite tender for the construction works. As the construction of APS at SSP site would involve complex underground works, it was expected that more time would be needed for assessment. That said, TD would expedite the construction as far as practicable so that more parking spaces could be provided sooner.

10.8 Noting from the Reply Serial Number THB(T)196 that TD did not compile statistics on the shortfall of parking spaces and could not ascertain the utilization of parking spaces in private premises, Mr Tony TSE expressed concern that without such essential statistics, it would be difficult for the Administration to gauge the shortage problem and devise effective

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plans to solve the problem. C for T clarified that for better planning and management of public parking spaces in Hong Kong, TD had been compiling relevant statistics regularly, including the total number of private and government parking spaces and the ratio of the number of parking spaces to the number of vehicles, among other relevant statistics. However, information relating to the actual usage and occupancy of car parking spaces in private premises was not available. To better ascertain the utilization of public and private parking spaces in different districts, Transport Officers of TD would conduct periodic survey and on-site inspections during peak and non-peak hours to gauge relevant information.

Smart Mobility Initiatives

10.9 With reference to Reply Serial No. THB(T)194, Mr Tony TSE noted that 1 200 traffic detectors had been installed along strategic routes and major roads. Mr TSE enquired whether these traffic detectors could enhance the accuracy of real-time information displayed on major trunks and "HKeMobility" to facilitate road users. He also noted that TD had been encouraging public transport operators to introduce new electronic payment systems, and enquired about the implementation progress of such payment systems on taxis.

10.10 C for T responded that the 1 200 traffic detectors would collect real-time traffic information on roads for better incident management and dissemination of information to the public. As more real-time data could be collected, information disseminated via "HKeMobility" and real-time display on major trunks would be more accurate to facilitate route planning by road users. As regards the acceptance of electronic payment, TD had issued relevant guidelines to public transport trades to facilitate operators to introduce new electronic payment systems for fare collection. TD had been in close liaison with the taxi trade to encourage their participation, having noted their concerns about, among other things, the administrative fee involved in the installation of related systems. To date, at least 6 000 taxi drivers had opened an Octopus account and around 10 000 taxi drivers had installed Alipay (one of the electronic payment platforms) for handling electronic payment transactions. TD would continue to encourage more taxi owners/drivers to provide electronic payment means and offer assistance to the trade as and when necessary.

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10.11 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan commented that share-riding was one of the most notable global trends in the development of smart mobility, but relevant development in Hong Kong was lagging behind as compared to other cities in the world. She enquired whether the Administration had formulated long-term strategy to facilitate share-riding in Hong Kong, and ways to reconcile with other public transport sector such as taxis, which might be the most directly and adversely affected trades if share-riding was to be introduced in Hong Kong.

10.12 STH said that the Administration welcomed the use of innovation and technology to enhance commuting convenience and improve efficiency. The Administration maintained an open mind on the emergence of new transportation modes like share-riding, and was willing to keep in view its further development. In considering whether it was suitable to introduce share-riding in Hong Kong, the Administration would be mindful of its impact on existing transport trade. That said, the Administration would keep in view the development of share-riding and conduct in-depth review and study if situation warranted.

Safety and service of franchised buses

10.13 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. THB(T)184 and 121, Mr POON Siu-ping and Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked about the progress of installing safety devices on franchised buses ("FBs"), such as Electronic Stability Control ("ESC") and speed limiting retarder for improving vehicle stability and reducing the risk of FB rollover, as well as retrofitting passenger seat belts. C for T replied that the Government had set aside \$500 million to subsidize 80% of the relevant installation costs for FB operators to retrofit ESC, speed limiting retarder and seat belts on existing FBs. Retrofitting works had commenced from the third quarter of 2020 for target completion in four years for installation of ESC and speed limiting retarder, and three years for installation of passenger seat belts. Upon completion of the retrofitting works and taking into account the newly procured buses, there would be some 5 000 buses equipped with ESC and speed limiting retarder, and about 3 000 buses fitted with seat belts.

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10.14 To ensure FB safety and encourage passengers to wear seat belt on the bus, Mr Michael TIEN suggested installing a beeping device so that alarm would be given when passengers did not wear seat belt properly. C for T said that TD was following up this suggestion with FB operators and would review whether it was technically feasible to do so.

10.15 Mr Frankie YICK asked if the Administration would consider subsidising other transport trades, such as taxis and public light buses in installing safety devices. He commented that these public transport modes had been facing upsurge of insurance fee recently, and enhancement on the operational safety and reduction in accident rate could alleviate the pressure of increasing insurance fee. STH responded that TD had maintained close dialogue with the public transport trades to explore suitable measures that could enhance driving safety, especially on the feasibility of using technology. In this regard, the Government encouraged the transport trades to apply for the Smart Traffic Fund to explore the application of innovation and technology to enhance commuting convenience and driving safety.

10.16 Having noted that TD planned to seek approval from the Legislative Council ("LegCo") for the creation of three time-limited directorate posts tasked with overseeing the implementation of FB safety-related work within the 2020-2021 legislative session, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the process of seeking approval from LegCo for the creation of the three posts would affect the progress of TD in taking forward the recommendations of the Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service ("IRC").

10.17 C for T replied that with regard to IRC's recommendation of establishing a dedicated FB safety team entrusted with the overall responsibility for all aspects of FB safety, three time-limited directorate posts were proposed whose major responsibilities were to set up relevant protocols and guidelines on the working conditions of FB captains, especially on fatigue management. Upon approval from LegCo on the creation of the three posts, relevant FB safety-related work could be carried out more progressively.

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10.18 Pointing out that the lost trip rates of FB surged tremendously in 2020 as compared to the previous two years, Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired whether the high lost trip rates were attributable to the reduction in bus service frequency due to decreased passenger demand during the early outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong.

10.19 C for T responded that the lost trip rates of all FB companies were higher in the first half of 2020 in face of a significant drop in the patronage of FB service during the early stage of COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong. Complaints on FB lost trip had been received and TD had taken immediate actions to rectify the situation. Having regard to adjustments in social distancing measures and better utilization of public transport resources in meeting passenger demand, TD had developed a mechanism for FB operators to apply for temporary adjustments in service frequency. With the mechanism in place, the overall FB lost trip rates had gradually fallen to an average of 2.3% in the second half of 2020, which was lower than the level in 2018 and first half of 2019. TD would continue to closely monitor FB service frequency to ensure service standard.

Railway Development

10.20 Mr Wilson OR and Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed disappointment that despite the Administration had already mapped out the development of East Kowloon Line ("EKL") in the Railway Development Strategy announced in 2014, there was still no definite plan and timetable for the commencement of EKL up till now. Mr OR and Mr LUK urged the Administration to expedite the progress on EKL and release more information on the project, such as design and alignment, train models to be deployed and completion timeline to ease the public's concern. Noting that the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") was undertaking a consultancy study on EKL but the progress was by far not satisfactory, Mr LUK enquired about the possibility of commissioning the study to another consultant at this stage.

10.21 STH replied that as the proposed EKL would run across hilly areas of different altitude between Diamond Hill and Tseung Kwan O, a number of technical obstacles would need to be tackled. MTRCL had submitted a proposal on the EKL project and the Administration had offered comments and requested MTRCL to improve the technical design of the proposal.

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MTRCL was presently exploring feasible options for improvement. The Administration would continue to follow up with MTRCL and announce the way forward of the project in due course. Mr Wilson OR requested the Administration to provide written information on the timeline in taking forward EKL project after the meeting.

(post-meeting note: the Administration's supplementary information was provided to members on 26 April 2021 vide THB(T)-2S-e1/THB(T)-2S-c1).

10.22 On the Administration's proposal of establishing a Railways Department ("RD") under the Transport and Housing Bureau to strengthen the supervision of railway planning and project delivery as well as regulation of railway safety, Mr Wilson OR asked whether the new establishment could expedite the implementation progress of railway projects, many of which were lagging behind the proposed schedule by far.

10.23 Mr Michael TIEN commented that railway projects were now undertaken jointly by TD, the Highways Department and Electrical and Mechanical Services Department under their respective responsibilities. It was therefore difficult to clearly delineate the scope of responsibilities in the event of project mismanagement like those related to the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL") project. In this regard, Mr TIEN asked if the new RD would be solely responsible and be held accountable for any railway project mismanagement issues like delay and cost overrun.

10.24 STH responded that RD would be established with a view to further enhancing management and monitoring of railway projects, strengthening regulation on railway safety and improving efficiency. For problems relating to SCL project, they were mainly caused by inadequacies in project control and records management. Enhanced mechanisms would be in place to prevent the occurrence of similar problems in future.

10.25 On Mr Holden CHOW's enquiry on whether RD would expedite the railway study between Tuen Mun and Northern Lantau in order to alleviate the traffic congestion problem in the New Territories West regions, STH replied that proposals relating to transport infrastructure between Northern Lantau and the New Territories West regions would be covered in the "Studies related to artificial islands in the Central Waters" under the

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Lantau Tomorrow Vision initiative, as well as Hong Kong 2030+ Study. Both studies would examine, inter alia, the demand and provision of transport infrastructure, including railway and major roads, in the Northwest New Territories as well as the Lantau in the coming decade.

Enhancing Hong Kong's role as international aviation hub

10.26 Quoting from STH's opening remark that AAHK was discussing with relevant authorities equity injection in the Zhuhai Airport for achieving synergy between the two airports, Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan asked about the progress of the negotiation and the details, inter alia, ratio of equity bought, terms of agreement and timeline in concluding the deal. He also asked in what ways the two airports could synergize and bring benefits to Hong Kong.

10.27 STH responded that the discussion with the Zhuhai Airport was based on commercial principles. As the discussion was underway, it was inappropriate to disclose any details at this stage.

10.28 Noting that the Hong Kong International Aviation Academy ("HKIAA") had been providing a wide range of training courses on aviation, Mr Holden CHOW asked about the number of trainees per year and the coverage of the courses. STH replied that by 2021, HKIAA had already offered training covering areas like airport management, security, air traffic management, aviation services, etc. to about 150 000 persons. Its new campus and dormitory on the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge could, upon completion, provide 1 200 dormitory places for its students.

Regulation of unmanned aircraft systems in Hong Kong

10.29 Pointing out that the Administration had been reviewing the regulatory regime on the use and safety of unmanned aircraft systems ("UAS") in Hong Kong, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired about the progress of the review, and timetable for introducing legislative amendment to relevant regulations for enhancing prevailing regulatory regime.

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10.30 Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 4 responded that the Civil Aviation Department had conducted a consultancy study and public consultation previously to explore ways to refine the prevailing regulatory regime, and was now following up on the comments received. In tandem, relevant departments were working on the draft legislation of the enhanced regulatory regime for UAS, covering issues on operation safety, insurance coverage and requisite training for operating UAS. It was expected that the legislative proposal would be submitted to LegCo for scrutiny within the current legislative session.

Sea transport and related trade

10.31 Referring to the reduction in economic activities and the imposition of stricter quarantine requirements on cross-boundary activities, Mr Frankie YICK expressed concern that there had been a reduction of 8% in the number of river trade vessels arriving Hong Kong in 2020. The 14-day quarantine policy also led to a shortage of crew members, forcing some of the river trade vessels to be left idle. As the above problem had pushed up the relevant fee of river trade by 30%, Mr YICK asked about measures that could assist the sector to tackle the problem, in particular whether the 14-day quarantine restriction could be relaxed or not.

10.32 STH replied that the Administration had been closely monitoring the impact brought about by the quarantine requirement imposed by the Mainland authorities on the sea crew onboard river trade vessels, including those running Guangdong-Hong Kong routes. He added that the Administration and relevant authorities had recently reached an agreement on relaxing the quarantine restriction on land-based transport between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Relevant discussion on air transport was also ongoing, and it was expected that similar arrangement could be applied to sea and river transport in due course. The Administration would continue to explore practical mitigating measures to ensure smooth operation of the river trade sector as far as possible.

10.33 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(T)111, Mr Frankie YICK noted that the Task Force on Commercial Principals ("the Taskforce") was set up under the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board to study and devise details of introducing tax measures to attract more shipping principals to choose Hong Kong as their base of operation. He asked about the progress

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of the study and timetable for submitting relevant legislative proposal for scrutiny by LegCo.

10.34 STH replied that the Taskforce was set up to study and advise on details of the tax concession proposals and the economic impact that could be brought forth, with a view to bolstering the maritime cluster and further promoting the development of high value-added maritime services in Hong Kong. The study was expected to be completed within 2021. Upon completion of the study, the Administration would consult industry stakeholders and introduce relevant legislative amendments to LegCo for scrutiny. The Administration would expedite relevant work as far as practicable.

Development of waterborne transport in Hong Kong

10.35 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok noted from Reply Serial No. THB(T)079 that the Government would continue to provide Special Helping Measures ("SHM") to the six major outlying island ferry routes. He asked if the Administration would consider devising new strategy to revitalize ferry services in Hong Kong for their long-term sustainable development.

10.36 STH responded that the Government welcomed interested ferry service operators to apply to TD for the operation of ferry routes in Hong Kong. In order to maintain the financial viability of the outlying island ferry services, it was essential to provide SHM to these ferry operators so as to alleviate fare increase burden on passengers. Nevertheless, the Administration would keep in view the development of ferry services in Hong Kong and consider measures conducive to their development, such as upgrading pier facilities for ferry services.

Other transport-related issues

10.37 Referring to Reply Serial No. THB(T)218, Mr Frankie YICK commented that the number of vehicles detained and licence being suspended by TD after conviction by the court for illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward in the past three years, i.e. 39, 78 and 44 respectively in 2018, 2019 and 2020, was too minimal. He asked about the measures to strengthen enforcement actions against such illicit acts.

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10.38 In reply, STH said that the number of vehicles detained and licence suspended by TD on illegal hire car would depend on the number of conviction cases handed down by the court. Nevertheless, TD had put in place a number of measures to combat the illicit acts, such as stepping up publicity efforts to enhance public awareness of illegal hire car service. Also, TD would step up cooperation with the Police on information exchange to combat illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward.

10.39 Mr Micheal TIEN called for the construction of Park and Ride facilities at the boundary of busy districts to solve the congestion problem at busy districts, so that commuters could park their cars at these facilities and take public transport services from there. STH took note of Mr TIEN's suggestion and replied that the Administration was actively exploring the suggestion, including seeking suitable sites for the construction of such facilities. The Administration would update members on the latest progress and development as and when appropriate.

10.40 Mr LUK Chung-hung noted that the Administration had plans to implement free-flow tolling system at government tolled tunnels and roads to gradually replace manual toll booths. He enquired whether the toll collectors would be re-deployed to other posts to prevent them from losing their jobs after the implementation. STH replied that TD would liaise with tunnel operators about relevant arrangements. For instance, TD would follow up with tunnel operators on arranging re-training for toll collectors, with a view to enabling them to take up other posts, such as Traffic Officers. Other appropriate arrangements would be made as far as practicable to assist redeployment of toll collectors.

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11.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Caspar TSUI, Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA"), briefed members on the key areas of work of the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") in 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-9).

Youth development

Youth internship and exchange

11.2 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB015, Mr Kenneth LAU said that the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") could provide more employment opportunities for Hong Kong young people, and such employment could also broaden their horizon. Mr LAU enquired whether the Administration would increase the number of places of and the amount of funding for the Greater Bay Area Hong Kong Youth Internship Scheme ("Internship Scheme") upon resumption of cross-border travel. While expressing support for encouraging young people to pursue development in the Greater Bay Area, Dr Priscilla LEUNG relayed the worry of quite a number of members of the public that the flow of information, such as that on the social media and of news, in the Greater Bay Area would not be as good as in Hong Kong. She hoped that the Government would explore ways to follow up issues in this regard.

11.3 SHA replied that HAB had been working closely with the Labour and Welfare Bureau to encourage young people to live, work or start their own business in the Greater Bay Area by providing them with exchange and internship opportunities as well as employment schemes therein. In view of the satisfactory progress made in the Internship Scheme, HAB would explore whether more places of internship could be provided, and relay Dr LEUNG's aforesaid views to the relevant departments.

Sports and recreation

Sports development

11.4 Mr Vincent CHENG was concerned that some Hong Kong athletes were unable to participate in international sports events held overseas due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic, such that they

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could not attain the rankings that meet the eligibility requirements for the relevant events of the Olympic Games. He urged the Administration to make every effort to help the local athletes get admitted to the Olympic Games.

11.5 SHA replied that although the requirements of or arrangements for international sports events were out of the Government's control, HAB would endeavour to provide support for Hong Kong athletes as far as practicable. Currently through the efforts of the Hong Kong Sports Institute and its overseas counterparts, athletes could still receive training or take part in competitions (such as swimming events) in places outside Hong Kong amid the pandemic under bubble arrangements. In light of the reopening of some of the sports venues in Hong Kong, HAB would examine with the sports sector how training and competitions could be conducted in those venues subject to compliance with anti-epidemic measures and public health protocols. To his understanding, Hong Kong athletes had already been admitted to 25 events of the Olympic Games and hopefully such figure would eventually rise to 35 to 40.

11.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB038, Mr Vincent CHENG said that it was a pity that eight events which had been recognized by the Major Sports Events Committee as "M" Mark events were cancelled due to social incidents or the pandemic. In view of the fact that some other places had resumed holding international major events, he asked whether the Government would re-start the major sports events and competitions in Hong Kong when the pandemic in the territory was now relatively under control.

11.7 SHA responded that the relevant government departments had been providing assistance for various national sports associations ("NSAs") to organize different major sports events, and some of which were currently in the pipeline. Recently, an international horse racing event was successfully held by the Hong Kong Jockey Club under bubble arrangements. Some NSAs were studying the adoption of similar bubble arrangements for hosting international events. The Commissioner for Sports ("C for S") added that while the Hong Kong Football Association and the Cycling Association of Hong Kong, China were preparing to host the group stage matches of the Asian Football Confederation Cup and the Track Cycling Nations Cup in Hong Kong respectively, other NSAs were also

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actively exploring progressive resumption of various events (including Hong Kong Marathon and the Hong Kong Sevens) within this year.

Sports and recreation facilities

11.8 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB120, Dr Pierre CHAN pointed out that among the proposed projects of construction or reconstruction of 12 football pitches under the "Five-year Plan for Sports and Recreational Facilities" announced in the 2017 Policy Address, the ones located respectively in Hoi Fan Road, Tai Kok Tsui and Area 6, Tuen Mun were 7-a-side football pitches. Taking into consideration issues such as management/maintenance, booking arrangements and special requirements on shoes worn by users of turf pitches, Dr CHAN suggested that in future planning and design of football pitches, 11-a-side turf pitches and 5-a-side/7-a-side hard-surface football pitches should be taken as the standards. He further enquired whether artificial turf pitches would also be provided under the project in Area 6, Tuen Mun.

11.9 SHA replied that generally speaking, turf pitches could provide a better experience for users. As regards the booking arrangements, the Government would coordinate with schools near the football pitches to facilitate students' use of such pitches. C for S added that as 11-a-side and 5-a-side football were two forms of competition recognized by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, the Government would, in principle, mainly provide 11-a-side turf pitches and 5-a-side hard-surface pitches in constructing new football pitches. For the open space at Hoi Fan Road, instead of constructing an 11-a-side turf pitch, only a 7-a-side football pitch could be provided due to the size limit of the site. As there were already quite a number of 7-a-side hard-surface football pitches in the district concerned and the adjoining Sham Shui Po district, it was anticipated that a considerable number of people would use the 7-a-side artificial turf pitch to be constructed in the open space at Hoi Fan Road. Regarding the project in Area 6, Tuen Mun, upon consultation with schools in the vicinity and other stakeholders, the Government planned to construct on the site 7-a-side hard-surface football pitches, on which line-markings for 5-a-side football pitches would be added so that those pitches could be used for both 5-a-side and 7-a-side football competitions.

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Public play spaces

11.10 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB182, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the funding of about \$700 million as announced in the 2019 Policy Address would be sufficient for the transformation works for more than 170 public play spaces in Hong Kong in five years between 2020 and 2026 ("the five-year plan"). Noting that the Administration had only launched 17 and 26 projects respectively in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, Mr Tony TSE was concerned about the slow progress of the plan, and suggested that the Administration work out implementation timetables for individual projects, so as to manage their progress and expedite the taking forward of the projects.

11.11 SHA replied that the Government would study ways to speed up the progress, so that those public play facilities could be available for public use as soon as possible. Four projects were expected to be completed in the first half of 2022. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services ("DLCS") advised that a provision of over \$600 million for the five-year plan had been approved by the Finance Committee earlier on, the Government would make good use of such provision to implement the plan. Although it took time for manpower arrangement, resulting in the completion of only 17 projects in the first year of the five-year plan, it was anticipated that the progress could be sped up from the second year onwards and all transformation projects could be taken forward in 2025-2026.

Intelligent sports and recreation services booking and information system

11.12 Mr POON Siu-ping referred to Reply Serial No. HAB180 and enquired whether the implementation of Phase 1 of the new intelligent sports and recreation services booking and information system ("the booking system") was delayed to 2023 due to the pandemic. Mr Tony TSE expressed dissatisfaction with the delay in the implementation of the booking system, and urged the Administration to expedite the progress. DLCS replied that the core functions originally to be introduced in 2021 under Phase 1 of the booking system had been delayed to the first half of 2023. This was mainly attributable to the fact that quite a number of staff members of the contractors were on the Mainland and unable to come to Hong Kong amid the pandemic, thereby affecting the progress of system development. Furthermore, as complex issues were involved in the

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booking system, more time was needed for the Administration to study and seek legal advice in the preparation for the tender exercise and assessment of bids.

Online programmes and courses

11.13 Referring respectively to Reply Serial Nos. HAB192 and HAB138, Mr MA Fung-kwok and Mr LAU Kwok-fan enquired how the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") could make it more convenient for audience on the Mainland to watch the videos/programmes available on the "LCSD Edutainment Channel", including whether consideration would be given to broadcasting such videos/programmes in collaboration with the Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK"). Mr Lau also enquired about the number of views of the "LCSD Edutainment Channel". DLCS advised that a majority of the audience watched videos/programmes on the "LCSD Edutainment Channel" via the websites of LCSD and its partnering institutions (such as museums and performing arts groups) or the social media. In collaboration with the Office of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in Beijing, LCSD also uploaded some of the programmes onto online platforms of the Mainland. The collaboration between LCSD and RTHK was mainly focused on conventional programmes of longer duration (lasting for about half an hour), which were quite different from those videos with shorter broadcasting time (lasting for 5 to 10 minutes) such as the "101 Academy". LCSD noted the Members' views and would explore ways to strengthen its collaboration with RTHK. SHA added that the "LCSD Edutainment Channel" had provided members of the public with access to various types of arts, cultural, sports and recreation programmes from home amid the pandemic. The Government would draw reference from similar overseas platforms to provide a greater variety of online programmes. It was hoped that when the pandemic subsided, members of the public could resume joining arts, cultural, sports and recreation programmes in person.

11.14 Mr LAU Kwok-fan noted from Reply Serial No. HAB137 that a large amount of estimated expenditure had been provided for free online programmes including "WeWeWebWeb Carnival" and "ReNew Vision". He enquired if such estimated expenditure was provided for one-off activities or those to be held several times, and whether the Government would provide more online programmes. DLCS replied that while the

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"International Arts Carnival" used to be held annually was very popular, it could not be held in 2020 due to the pandemic, and instead programmes produced by various arts groups were delivered online, and the "New Vision Arts Festival" held every October would also be delivered online. DLCS advised that the number of views of the online programme "WeWeWebWeb Carnival" was over 1 million, while that of the free online programme "ReNew Vision" was about 700 000.

11.15 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB139, Mr LAU Kwok-fan enquired how sports programmes such as mini-tennis and table tennis could be conducted interactively on the Internet. In response, DLCS advised that it was a new attempt to conduct online interactive training of ball games. Upon completion of the said online courses, one or two practical sessions would be arranged for teaching the participants skills such as the basic grip.

Arts and culture

Museums and art centres

11.16 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB067, Mr YIU Si-wing said that according to some news reports, the respective numbers of attendance to the exhibition areas of museums and art centres under LCSD had decreased drastically by over 90% and 50% over the last year. While he understood that the decrease in the numbers of attendance was attributable to a reduction in the number of inbound tourists, he was of the view that the Government should play a more active role in encouraging members of the public to visit the museums and art centres, such as by organizing local tours jointly with the tourism industry.

11.17 SHA replied that the Government would study the feasibility of incorporating visits to museums and art centres into the itineraries of local tours. DLCS explained that the plunge in the number of attendance was mainly due to the closure of museums and art centres for most of the time amid the pandemic. As such, LCSD had launched an online platform, the LCSD Edutainment Channel, for various purposes, such as to provide members of the public with online access to part of the collections of the museums and art centres, and to organize online exhibitions and "guided tours led by museum curators". DLCS remarked that the aforementioned arrangements could not only minimize the gathering of people, but also

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benefit a larger number of target recipients.

Cooperation and exchanges in the field of arts and culture

11.18 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB050, Mr MA Fung-kwok was concerned about the impact of the pandemic on the cooperation and activities to be held in the field of arts and culture between local groups and their counterparts on the Mainland and other places. He urged the Government to render practical support to those groups. As the Central Government indicated in the 14th Five-Year Plan their support for Hong Kong to develop into a hub for arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world, Mr MA enquired about the specific strategies and measures concerned.

11.19 SHA responded that the Bureau recognized the importance of arts and cultural exchanges with the Mainland and overseas counterparts, and a series of relevant work had been conducted in the past, including the 11th Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum and the Museum Summit organized in 2019; while work in the future included "Hong Kong Week 2021@Guangzhou" and the Opera Festival. LCSD would also continue to work with venue operators in the Greater Bay Area, so that repertory groups of Hong Kong would have opportunities to deliver their performances in quality venues in the Greater Bay Area. Upon resumption of cross-border travel, the Government would also continue to enhance arts and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area and overseas counterparts.

11.20 SHA further advised that Hong Kong was equipped with excellent hardware and software that made it capable of meeting the objective of developing itself into a hub for arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world as set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan. Apart from promoting the Chinese and Western cultures, arts performances and collections that were unique to Hong Kong, the Government would capitalize on the edges to complement the development of the Greater Bay Area to provide a platform for promoting the arts and culture of the Greater Bay Area, whilst practitioners from all over the world could also promote their arts and culture in the Greater Bay Area via Hong Kong or other cities. Furthermore, the Government would continue to sign with various countries Memoranda of Understanding on Cultural Co-operation.

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The Hong Kong Arts Development Council

11.21 Following up on Reply Serial No. HAB019, Mrs Regina IP said that she had received complaints alleging that the group Ying E Chi advocated Hong Kong independence in quite a number of films it distributed or showed in the Hong Kong Independent Film Festival funded by the grants provided by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council ("HKADC") which amounted to millions of dollars annually over the years. Mrs IP expressed concern about this situation. She pointed out that even before the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("National Security Law") had come into effect, sedition to incite hatred was also an offence under the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200). She urged the Administration to examine if the content of the relevant films of Ying E Chi was unlawful, and to review the vetting and approval of grants. SHA replied that as HKADC was a statutory body, its chairman and members must abide by the law, including the National Security Law, while groups and projects funded by HKADC had to comply with the relevant legislation and conditions for grants. Law enforcement departments would definitely follow up on any violation of the law seriously. HKADC would review with the relevant bureaux the mechanism for vetting and approving grants.

11.22 Noting that the Chairman of HKADC, Dr Wilfred WONG, had not been back to Hong Kong to attend HKADC's meetings for over a year due to the quarantine measures implemented, Mrs Regina IP enquired whether an acting chairman would be arranged, or Dr WONG would be exempted from the quarantine arrangements required of him. SHA replied that as he himself and colleagues of the relevant departments had conducted online conferences with members of HKADC amid the pandemic, and Dr WONG also continued to perform his duties remotely during the outbreak of COVID-19, the daily operation of HKADC was not halted by the pandemic.

Issues relating to the content of exhibits

11.23 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan referred to Reply Serial No. HAB067 and expressed concern about exhibits showcased in the M+ Museum. She said that a highly controversial photo of Tiananmen currently in the collections of the M+ Museum appeared to have the effect of weakening the affection for the Chinese people and derogating from a sense of national identity.

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She expected that the Administration would address the issues relating to the collections of the M+ Museum and other museums in Hong Kong.

11.24 SHA replied that various groups should comply with the laws of Hong Kong, including the National Security Law, in organizing activities and exhibitions. SHA advised that managements of the museums should be subjected to their code of ethics and perform their work in an objective and impartial manner. It was understood that quite a number of members of the public were concerned about the content of the exhibitions and collections of the M+ Museum. If the National Security Department had clearly identified that content of certain exhibits/collections was in violation of the National Security Law, HAB and the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority would certainly handle such issue in a strict manner.

The West Kowloon Cultural District

11.25 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB033, Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed concern that a marine stop for the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD") was currently arranged at the landing steps of the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter, and urged the Administration to expeditiously resolve the extremely serious odour problem of seawater at the said location. In addition, Dr LEUNG noted that the Transport Department ("TD") had selected Fortune Ferry Company Limited as the operator of the "water taxi" service after conducting an open tender exercise. While the said company was also providing ferry service at Hung Hom at present, it was suffering from poor business under the impact of the pandemic. She hoped that the Government would provide support for ferry service providers. Mr YIU Si-wing referred to Reply Serial No. HAB033 and said that the Administration should plan ahead the arrangements for pavements in the vicinity of the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter and ensure that there was sufficient signage. He was also concerned about the traffic arrangements upon the commissioning of the Hong Kong Palace Museum ("HKPM") in WKCD in the future, in particular, whether or not there were sufficient parking spaces for coaches and private cars, and the completion of the new parking spaces could dovetail with the commissioning of HKPM.

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11.26 SHA replied that the relevant departments would actively follow up on the water quality problem of the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter. Project Manager, Home Affairs Bureau added that upon the commissioning of HKPM in 2022, it was envisaged that the landing steps of the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter would become a very convenient calling point for tourists. HAB would liaise with the Drainage Services Department ("DSD") and the Environmental Protection Department to study ways to alleviate the odour problem at the said location. The Bureau would also relay to TD Members' views on issues relating to the operation of "water taxis" and other ferry services. SHA further advised that currently, quite a number of parking spaces and pick-up/drop-off bays had been provided in WKCD and its adjacent facilities. Members of the public would be encouraged to use public transport to visit WKCD and travel on foot to experience the visiting points in WKCD and its surrounding areas, including the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and the Hong Kong Museum of Art. The Government would also study ways to enhance road signs.

District administration

Building management

11.27 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB097, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok was concerned that a number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recently found in some "three-nil" buildings (i.e. buildings which did not have owners' corporations or any residents' organizations, and did not engage property management companies). He enquired about the specific measures to be taken by the Administration to facilitate upgrading of drains of "three-nil" buildings. Ir Dr LO hoped that by taking the pandemic as an opportunity, the Administration could raise the owners' awareness of the importance of building management quality through the upgrading works of drains.

11.28 SHA replied that the Government acknowledged the public concern and a provision of \$1 billion had been sought earlier on to provide funding for about 3 000 tenement buildings to upgrade their drains. DSD would, together with the Resident Liaison Ambassadors under the Home Affairs Department ("HAD"), communicate with the owners of these buildings to facilitate their understanding of the details of the scheme. SHA further advised that if the environmental hygiene condition of some

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"three-nil" buildings was too bad, the Government would provide one-off cleaning service for them and demonstrate to the residents how to keep good environmental hygiene. From 1 December 2019 to 14 February 2021, HAD and various District Offices had provided around 4 600 times of cleaning service to over 2 200 "three-nil" buildings, involving an expenditure of about \$19.8 million. Through concerted efforts between the relevant departments and the owners, the management and hygiene condition of the buildings would be enhanced.

Dental care services

11.29 Referring to Reply Serial No. HAB095, Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that the Administration should understand the needs of residents living in remote areas and elderly persons with low mobility, and expedite the introduction of mobile dental vehicles in places apart from the Kwai Tsing district. SHA advised that the provision of dental care services for local residents by mobile dental vehicles was under the "Signature Project Scheme" of Kwai Tsing district, and the services concerned were well received by the public upon introduction. As dental care services were under the work programmes of the Food and Health Bureau, matters as to whether such services would be expanded or enhanced would be referred to the said Bureau.

Tree management

11.30 Noting from Reply Serial No. HAB179 that the projected number of horticultural service contracts for 2021-2022 was 133, Mr POON Siu-ping sought explanation from the Government on why the expenditure involved was higher than that of the previous year when the number of workers under those service contracts remained unchanged. He also enquired about the reasons why the projected number of workers participating in training courses in tree work in 2021-2022, which was over 2 400, far exceeded the number of workers responsible for tree management work.

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11.31 DLCS advised that apart from in-house staff, LCSD had also engaged outsourced contractors to perform tree management work. As such, the establishment of LCSD did not fully reflect the number of workers performing tree management work. He also clarified that the "number of participants" in Reply Serial No. HAB179 referred to the "number of enrolments" in the courses, and some of the workers might enrol in more than one course. LCSD attached great importance to providing training for workers to gain horticultural knowledge. Regardless of whether the workers were new to the profession or had been in the profession for years, corresponding training courses would be made available for them. Workers were also encouraged to acquire relevant professional qualifications by examinations.

Publicity campaigns

11.32 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. HAB114 that the Information Services Department ("ISD") had commissioned a public relations ("PR") consultancy at about \$50 million in 2020 to develop the "Relaunch Hong Kong" campaign, a communications strategy, phased plan and messaging, as well as a marketing and advertising plan and collaterals to help rebuild confidence in Hong Kong as a place in which to invest, do business, work and live. Mr TSE criticized the PR consultancy for its slow progress as it was still studying and developing the strategy at this stage. He also commented that the Government's effort in clarifying and curbing false information in the past was unsatisfactory.

11.33 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. HAB107 and HAB108, Mr Christopher CHEUNG said that the engagement of the PR consultancy to carry out the aforementioned work was costly but yielded little results. In addition, in handling the issues relating to the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, anti-epidemic work, the National Security Law and improving the electoral system, the Government failed to respond to fallacious comments in a proactive manner. He suggested that the Administration play a more active role in enhancing its publicity work, with a view to rebuilding international confidence in Hong Kong.

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11.34 Taking the pandemic and social incidents as examples, SHA responded that in case there was circulation of fake news, the Chief Executive, various Secretaries and Directors of Bureaux as well as ISD would take the initiative to expeditiously make clarifications to the public via different channels and media. The Government would continue to enhance the transparency of and its initiative in performing such work. As regards the engagement of the PR consultancy, its work under the PR service contract for the "Relaunch Hong Kong" campaign was not limited to research, overall strategies to rebuild international confidence in Hong Kong was also being formulated currently. Director of Information Services added that there were four parts of work under the one-year contract signed between ISD and the PR consultancy, which would expire in June 2021. Among these parts, the one in relation to carrying out a local and international baseline research to understand current perceptions of Hong Kong's key global stakeholders had been completed, while the rest of the work was also in full swing. The Government would continue to follow up on the progress and outcome of work of the PR consultancy.

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12.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development ("SCED") briefed members on the financial provisions and the major initiatives under the commerce, industry and tourism portfolio for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-10).

Commerce and Industry

Cross-boundary people flow amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao

12.2 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr Jeffrey LAM, and Ms Elizabeth QUAT called on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") Government to strive for the early resumption of cross-boundary flow of people amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to enable Hong Kong to tap into the opportunities brought by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") development, so as to facilitate the revival of the local economy. Ir Dr LO and Mr LAM suggested that the HKSAR Government should make preparation at the current stage, including exploring with the Mainland and Macao authorities the interconnectivity of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") Vaccination Record and COVID-19 Testing Record of Hong Kong and the health codes of the two places. Members of the public should also be briefed on the usage of various related applications such as the "Hong Kong Health Code". In the light of the current slow progress of COVID-19 vaccination in Hong Kong, Mr LAM called on the Government to provide more incentives in a timely manner to encourage Hong Kong residents to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

12.3 Mr Jeffrey LAM noticed that apart from allowing cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers who had received COVID-19 vaccination to continue to be exempted from quarantine, the Guangdong Provincial Government had also agreed recently to relax COVID-19 virus-testing requirement for them, from once every day to once every three days. He asked the HKSAR Government to strive for the extension of the aforesaid facilitation measures to include owners of Hong Kong enterprises which engaged in various commercial and industrial activities on the Mainland as well as their employees and authorized persons, in order to allow them quarantine-free access to the Mainland.

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12.4 SCED said that to resume normal cross-boundary people flow in a gradual and orderly manner, the HKSAR Government had implemented the Return2hk Travel Scheme for Hong Kong residents to return from Guangdong Province and Macao without being subject to quarantine upon fulfillment of the specified conditions under the Scheme. The HKSAR Government planned to launch the Come2hk Scheme later for non-Hong Kong residents in Guangdong and Macao to enter Hong Kong without being subject to quarantine upon fulfillment of specified conditions under the Scheme. On the other hand, the HKSAR Government had all along been maintaining close liaison with the Guangdong Province and Macao authorities to discuss the resumption of the normal cross-boundary activities amongst residents of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in a gradual and orderly manner. As the local epidemic situation began to stabilize with local cases involving unknown sources of infection dropping to a lower level, coupled with the launch of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in Hong Kong, the HKSAR Government would proactively discuss with the authorities of Guangdong and Macao the specific arrangements and implementation timetable for the resumption of the normal cross-boundary activities amongst residents of the three places in a gradual and orderly manner.

12.5 SCED further said that the Government had launched a one-stop personalized digital services platform "iAM Smart" to enable members of the public to download both their COVID-19 testing records and vaccination records. To facilitate the gradual resumption of cross-boundary people flow, the HKSAR Government had already commenced technical discussion on the interconnectivity of vaccination records and technology platform with the Guangdong Provincial Government. The Airport Authority Hong Kong was also studying the digital health pass technology developed by international aviation organizations and other institutions to foster mutual access to related digital health records and technology platforms.

Assisting Hong Kong enterprises in market expansion

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

12.6 Mr WONG Ting-kwong suggested that the HKSAR Government should invite the nine Mainland municipalities and Macao in the Greater

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Bay Area to individually set up permanent galleries in Hong Kong to introduce to Hong Kong residents and enterprises in detail their respective laws and regulations, business environment, and economic conditions, etc. This should help Hong Kong residents and enterprises gain a better understanding of the actual situations and market demands of various Greater Bay Area cities and thus incentivize them to work or invest in those cities.

12.7 SCED said that the HKSAR Government would tap into the business opportunities brought about by the twin engines of the national economic development in the Belt and Road ("B&R") Initiative and the Greater Bay Area development to bolster Hong Kong's competitiveness. Executive Director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council ("ED of HKTDC") responded that in 2021-2022, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council ("HKTDC") would actively promote Hong Kong's strengths in the Greater Bay Area development. It would launch a one-stop support platform called "GoGBA" to provide information and useful tools (including market information, policies and regulations, concessions and subsidies, business network, etc.) about various cities in the Greater Bay Area to help enterprises explore opportunities. Through cooperation with local organizations, HKTDC currently set up six service points in Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area to provide consultation services to Hong Kong enterprises thereat. HKTDC would also set up a "HKTDC GBA Centre" in Shenzhen at the end of April 2021, through which it would organize workshops, focus groups and other networking activities to provide advice and information for enterprises interested in tapping the Greater Bay Area or Mainland market. Looking ahead, HKTDC would organize business missions to lead enterprises to tap into opportunities in the Greater Bay Area market upon resumption of cross-boundary people flow amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

The Belt & Road economies

12.8 Following up on Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)021, Mr Holden CHOW requested HKTDC to provide actual examples of successful expansion of Hong Kong businesses (particularly the medical services industry) into the international market (particularly markets along B&R economies) through participation into activities organized by HKTDC. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the holding of online exhibitions

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by HKTDC during the epidemic with a view to preserving the vitality of the local economy and sustaining the promotion of Hong Kong brands.

12.9 ED of HKTDC said that HKTDC had all along been helping small and medium enterprises ("SMEs") to diversify markets and to grasp opportunities. To create business opportunities for Hong Kong technology enterprises which provided products and services for the prevention and control of the epidemic as well as for companies engaging in biotechnology, HKTDC had, in collaboration with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, launched publicity campaigns in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since mid-2020 for the sharing of anti-epidemic experience and demonstration of relevant technologies. Such promotional activities also covered the areas of online education, e-commerce, e-business, and smart city technology. ED of HKTDC then quoted two cases in which the enterprises concerned had successfully expanded into the international market with the help of HKTDC: (a) a local virtual bank had signed a memorandum of understanding with one of the largest e-commerce companies in Indonesia for the provision of an online finance solution; and (b) a locally developed intelligent sterilization and fever scan robot had successfully opened up markets in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and was used by a number of large-scale shopping malls, housing estates and other development projects.

12.10 Mr Holden CHOW asked if HKTDC would devote more resources to step up worldwide promotion (including in Hong Kong) of those successful cases to showcase the city's technological strength, with a view to further promoting the development of innovation and technology and re-industrialization in Hong Kong. ED of HKTDC said that HKTDC would step up promotion of various successful cases in Hong Kong, the Mainland, Southeast Asia, and around the world once enterprises concerned gave their consent.

Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme

12.11 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)017, Mr Holden CHOW expressed support for the Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme. He enquired about the details of the 18 subsidized exhibitions, including their highest daily attendance, overall attendance and the number

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of local jobs created. Mr CHOW suggested that these statistical figures should be made public to let people understand the economic benefits generated by the Scheme.

12.12 Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry)¹ replied that as at 28 February 2021, the Scheme subsidized 18 exhibitions, which gathered about 2 570 exhibitors as well as attracted participation of over 145 000 buyers. These exhibition activities had also helped boost associated supporting industries (such as booth design, construction and logistics).

The Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement ("CEPA")

12.13 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok noted from Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)235 that Hong Kong construction and engineering professionals in specified professional fields could directly provide services in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area by obtaining equivalent qualifications on the Mainland through a registration system. He proposed that the HKSAR Government should persuade the Mainland Government to extend the arrangement to cover construction and engineering professionals practicing outside the specified professional fields, as well as professionals from other disciplines, so as to assist them in growing their businesses in the Greater Bay Area. The Government noted the above views.

SME Financing Guarantee Scheme

12.14 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)128, Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the number of loan applications for the Special 100% Guarantee Product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme and the approved guaranteed amount, and asked whether the total guarantee commitment should be increased to sustain the operation of the Special 100% Guarantee Product, so as to ease the cash flow problem of Hong Kong enterprises.

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12.15 Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce, Industry and Tourism) replied that the Government had introduced the Special 100% Guarantee Product on 20 April 2020 to provide low-interest loans to small and medium enterprises hard hit by the COVID-19 epidemic. The product had been well received by businesses since its launch. As at end-February 2021, around 30 000 applications had been received and approved by HKMC Insurance Limited, involving about \$46 billion of loans. The total amount of guarantee approved for the Special 100% Guarantee Product almost reached the initial approved guarantee commitment of \$50 billion. Nevertheless, the Finance Committee ("FC") had approved the interchangeable use of loan guarantee commitments approved under the 80%, 90% Guarantee Products and Special 100% Guarantee Product (\$183 billion in total) in April 2020, and the total remaining financial commitment for interchangeable use between the three guarantee products was about \$65.5 billion. As such, it was anticipated that this sum would be adequate to keep the Special 100% Guarantee Product operational at least until the end of 2021.

Consumer protection

12.16 Mr SHIU Ka-fai noticed that the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED") had recently seized thousands of goods from various premises of a chain retailing group. The seized goods lacked Chinese and English bilingual warnings or cautions, suspected to be in contravention of the Consumer Goods Safety Regulation (Cap. 456A). Mr SHIU expressed support for C&ED's enforcement actions to safeguard the safety of consumers. He enquired whether C&ED had recently received complaints of a similar nature; and if so, how C&ED would handle these cases.

12.17 Deputy Commissioner of Customs & Excise thanked Mr SHIU for his encouragement to C&ED. While she would not comment on the investigation progress of individual cases, she stated that in terms of consumer protection, C&ED would generally inspect the shop in question after receiving a complaint and, if necessary, test-purchase goods for further review. Where irregularities were identified during the inspection, C&ED

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would take corresponding enforcement actions. C&ED had recently received a number of complaints involving suspected breaches of the Consumer Goods Safety Regulation. In line with the usual practice, it would take appropriate follow-up actions on each case in accordance with the law.

Trade Single Window

12.18 Mr Frankie YICK enquired about the progress of development and specific implementation timetable of the Trade Single Window ("TSW") and its connection with the Mainland's TSW.

12.19 Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry)² replied that TSW was being implemented in three phases. Phase 1 began in December 2018 covering 14 types of import and export trade documents whose applications could be made on a voluntary basis. Since the launch of TSW, the trade's feedback had been positive. The average monthly usage rate of Phase 1 was close to 70%, and the usage rates of some documents had even reached 100%. In July 2020, FC approved funding for setting up the IT system required for implementation of Phase 2 of TSW and a tender exercise was underway. Phase 2 was expected to be rolled out by batches as early as in 2023, providing e-services for another 28 types of import and export trade documents. The Government was also pressing ahead with the preparation for Phase 3, and would report to the Legislative Council on the implementation plan for Phase 3 in due course.

12.20 Mr Frankie YICK pointed out that the Transshipment Cargo Exemption Scheme of the Trade and Industry Department ("TID") and the Pharmaceuticals Licence Application and Movement Monitoring System ("PLAMMS") of the Department of Health did not cater to the needs of business-to-business-to-consumer ("B2B2C") businesses. As a result, when exporting medicines to Mainland consumers, local exporters frequently had to spend an inordinate amount of time on customs clearance. In this connection, Mr YICK requested that early improvements to the

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current system design should be made prior to the implementation of TSW in order to assist the industry in capitalizing on the enormous opportunities in the Mainland market. Director-General of Trade and Industry said that TID would follow up with the Food and Health Bureau on these matters.

Tourism

Local tour

12.21 Mr YIU Si-wing opined that in view of the improvement in the epidemic situation and the relaxation of the operational restrictions on food premises and other premises, the Government might also relax the cap on the number of local tour participants. He also asked whether the Government had drawn up the relevant timetable. Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)168, Mr YIU welcomed the Travel Agents Incentive Scheme ("TAIS") and the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme ("GLIS") launched by the Government to tide travel agents over the difficulties. He suggested that SCED should explore with Secretary for the Environment ("SEN") timely allocation of additional resources to increase the commitment of GLIS, so as to continue implementing the relevant schemes.

12.22 SCED said that due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, stringent immigration controls had brought global cross-boundary travel to a standstill. The Government had introduced measures such as TAIS and GLIS to support the industry and had also been maintaining close liaison with the industry. The Government would closely monitor the implementation of the schemes and review the financial commitment for the schemes in a timely manner.

12.23 SCED further said that as the epidemic situation in Hong Kong had gradually stabilized since mid-February 2021, the Government had explored with the travel industry the detailed arrangements for relaxing the cap on the number of local tour participants. Due to public health concerns, the Government had put forward to the travel industry a proposal on requiring all working staff of local tours (including tourist guides, tour escorts and coach drivers) to receive COVID-19 vaccines prior to tour departure. Those who could not receive vaccines for health reason should take COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction ("PCR") nucleic acid tests and

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obtain negative results before receiving the group tours. The Government also encouraged local tour participants to receive COVID-19 vaccines. Furthermore, all working staff and participants of local tours were required to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code with mobile phones at places they visited during the trip for necessary contact tracing if a confirmed case was found. If the travel industry could coordinate with the Government on the aforesaid anti-epidemic measures, the Government would be willing to relax the cap concerned shortly, so that the industry could resume local tours as early as possible.

"Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and "Staycation Delights" campaign

12.24 Mr YIU Si-wing, Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Ms Elizabeth QUAT observed that the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and "Staycation Delights" campaign had been well-received by the industry and members of the community. Ms QUAT enquired about the details of the two programmes, including the estimated expenditures, the number of beneficiary companies and the economic benefits that could be brought to Hong Kong.

12.25 Executive Director, Hong Kong Tourism Board ("ED of HKTB") said that the Hong Kong Tourism Board ("HKTB") had launched the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and the "Staycation Delights" campaign. Local residents could redeem a quota for a free local tour with a subsidy of \$500 provided by HKTB, or enjoy a \$500 discount for staycation at a local hotel, upon spending \$800 in physical retail or dining outlets of local merchants (not limited to those certified as accredited merchants of the Quality Tourism Services ("QTS") Scheme). When Government restrictions on local tours were relaxed, HKTB would roll out Phase II of the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" Programme with 20 000 quotas. It was believed that another spending spree would be triggered locally. At the suggestion of Mr SHIU Ka-fai, ED of HKTB undertook to notify Members and local retail industry ahead of the launch of Phase II of the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" Programme so that the industry could get prepared for it.

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12.26 ED of HKTB further said that under the "Staycation Delights" campaign, eligible participants could enjoy a \$500 discount on hotel accommodation. However, they still had to pay for the differences (if any) in the prices of the selected accommodation plans and pay for food and beverages and other consumption at their own expenses during the accommodation period. It was difficult for HKTB to make an accurate assessment of the total additional local spending to be generated from the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and the "Staycation Delights" campaign. However, it was believed that the programmes might drive local ambience and boost consumption. As at noon of the day of the meeting (i.e. 14 April 2021), all the accommodation offers of 135 hotels among the 140 hotels participating in the "Staycation Delights" campaign were redeemed. Some participating hotels took the opportunity to promote other accommodation and catering services to consumers, boosting further consumption.

12.27 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. CEDB(CIT)164 and CEDB(CIT)175, Mr YIU Si-wing pointed out that as the global epidemic situation had not yet been under full control, he believed that HKTB could hardly launch large-scale brand promotional campaigns around the world by utilizing the additional funding of \$765 million for the current year in the coming months. Mr YIU suggested that HKTB should consider allocating additional resources to the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and the "Staycation Delights" campaign with part of the additional funding, so as to provide more quotas for the programmes and stimulate local tourism, catering and retail industries. Ms Elizabeth QUAT requested HKTB to expeditiously launch Phase II of the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" Programme and conduct study on the introduction of more similar programmes to render support to industries hard hit by the epidemic.

12.28 ED of HKTB replied that due to unstable global epidemic situation, no specific timetable for full resumption of cross-boundary travel had been set for Hong Kong. Both the current annual work plan and budget of HKTB were based on the projected gradual resumption of travel with individual markets in the next three to six months. That said, the actual work plan was subject to a number of factors such as the epidemic situation and progress of the resumption of international travel. HKTB would continue to maintain flexibility in discussing with the Government and the committees concerned and adjusting its work plan and budget

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appropriately if necessary. HKTB would also consider introducing programmes covering other industries in the light of the experience gained from the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and the "Staycation Delights" campaign.

Cooperation between the Hong Kong Tourism Board and local catering and retail industries

12.29 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)010, Mr Tommy CHEUNG pointed out that HKTB had earmarked \$47.4 million to promote local catering and retail industries. He asked whether HKTB would, apart from holding its own series of promotion activities, allocate some resources for application by local catering and retail industries (including those not certified as QTS accredited merchants) and subsidize the holding of large-scale promotion and publicity activities.

12.30 ED of HKTB said that HKTB would continue to leverage the "Holiday at Home" platform for local promotions. Through the "Spend-to-Redeem Free Tour" programme and the "Staycation Delights" campaign, HKTB would promote domestic consumption and boost consumption sentiment, deliver a positive message to source markets, prepare for tourism recovery, and increase travellers' confidence in visiting Hong Kong in the future. HKTB would also partner with local catering and retail industries to conduct various promotion activities and welcome cooperation proposals from the industries.

"Travel Bubbles"

12.31 Mr YIU Si-wing and Mr Jeffrey LAM enquired about the latest progress of the discussions between Hong Kong and Singapore on re-launching "Air Travel Bubble" ("ATB") and whether the two governments would impose the same requirements and conditions to travellers entering the two places via the ATB arrangement.

12.32 Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the Government's early establishment of "Travel Bubble" to resume cross-boundary travel. She also pointed out that the local technology sector possessed the relevant technologies for connecting COVID-19 test results and vaccination records with the Travel Pass developed by the International Air Transport

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Association. Mr Jeffrey LAM and Ms QUAT sought further explanation on whether the Government was discussing and exploring the establishment of "Travel Bubbles" with other overseas economies, apart from Singapore, so as to resume cross-boundary travel and promote business and trades with various economies.

12.33 SCED said that as the global epidemic situation remained severe, in considering "Travel Bubble" arrangement, the Government would only discuss or explore the arrangement with places where their epidemic situation was comparable to, or of lower risks than, Hong Kong's. The prevalence of the more transmissible new virus variants in the relevant places was also one of the considerations. On November 2020, the governments of Hong Kong and Singapore had reached an agreement on establishing a bilateral ATB arrangement. However, due to the fourth wave of the epidemic in Hong Kong, the implementation of the arrangement was postponed. As the fourth wave of the epidemic in Hong Kong began to subside in February 2021, the two governments further discussed the re-launch of the ATB. The discussions mainly focused on the following points:

- (a) ATB travellers should take COVID-19 PCR nucleic acid tests prior to departure and upon arrival and obtain negative results in the two tests;
- (b) ATB travellers should take designated flights that would not carry transit passengers or other non-ATB travellers. All air crew serving on designated flights should take a COVID-19 PCR nucleic acid test before serving on the flights and be tested negative;
- (c) for the sake of prudence, the number of travellers should be controlled at a relatively low level on the launch of the ATB (i.e. there would be one flight travelling from Hong Kong to Singapore and one from Singapore to Hong Kong respectively per day, with 200 travellers per flight, in the first two weeks) and would be gradually increased when the epidemic situation permitted;

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- (d) the two governments should establish a mechanism to suspend or resume the ATB taking into account the development of the epidemic situation in both places. The mechanism to suspend the ATB should also allow certain time for arranging return flights for travellers who had already departed as far as possible to avoid them being stranded overseas; and
- (e) Hong Kong residents should have received two COVID-19 vaccine doses at least 14 days before departing from Hong Kong to Singapore via the ATB to ensure that they were better protected during travel.

12.34 SCED also said that since mid-2020, the Government had put forward the proposal of establishing "Travel Bubbles" with 10 other countries (i.e. Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Thailand, and Vietnam), apart from Singapore. The Administration had also been maintaining liaison and exchanging information with them through their consular officers in Hong Kong and the HKSAR Government's economic and trade offices established in the relevant places. The Government would further discuss the arrangement in due course subject to the development of the epidemic in these countries. Upon the implementation of the detailed ATB arrangement between Hong Kong and Singapore, Hong Kong could continue with the discussions on resuming cross-border travel in an orderly manner with places where the epidemic situation was under control through similar arrangements.

Cruise tourism

12.35 Mr YIU Si-wing said that the travel trade had earlier proposed to the Government to resume cruise trips provided that a set of disease prevention measures would be observed. He asked the Government about the outcome of its consideration. Since the cruise lines would still require a lead time of two months after obtaining Government's approval for the resumption of cruise trips, Mr YIU urged the Government to discuss with the cruise lines the relevant arrangements as early as possible.

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12.36 SCED said that as the epidemic situation persisted in many places of the world, it would be difficult to resume cross-boundary cruise travel at this stage. In respect of cruise trips that did not visit other ports-of-call apart from Hong Kong, taking into consideration the significant number of cruise passengers and public health concerns, the Government considered that cruise lines should abide by a series of disease prevention restrictions and social distancing measures, including the management of catering premises on the cruise ship, the requirement for a cap on the maximum number of cruise passengers, the requirement on the air change rate for fresh air on the cruise ship, etc. Cruise passengers and crew members should also receive COVID-19 vaccines before they could take part in the voyage. On this basis, the Government would liaise with major local cruise lines in order to explore possible options.

"Holiday at Home" promotion platform

12.37 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)071 that the content of some proposed themed itineraries on the promotion platform of "Holiday at Home" was provided by service providers like Morning Studio of the South China Morning Post. He asked the Government about the criteria for deciding to post the following content on the promotion platform: (a) the interview with a particular person; and (b) information of merchants, such as a particular scenic spot or restaurant. He also enquired whether it was necessary for HKTB to pay any fees to the editing team concerned.

12.38 ED of HKTB advised that HKTB had commissioned editing teams of various magazines and publications to draft the proposed themed itineraries in both Chinese and English for posting on the promotion platform. Through the introduction of various in-depth local tour itineraries from a different perspective, Hong Kong residents were encouraged to be the tourists of their own city so as to boost local consumption, as well as to discover points of interests and lesser-known experiences, in a bid to reinvigorate the local atmosphere while conveying positive messages to the source markets and increasing visitors' confidence in visiting Hong Kong in the future. In engaging the service of editing teams, HKTB would obtain a certain number of quotations from different service providers according to the procurement procedures, and would consider the Chinese and English writing skills of such editing teams in the

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selection process. HKTB also commissioned those who were experienced in the relevant fields to help select suitable merchants or information for posting on the promotion platform of "Holiday at Home".

Online mega events

12.39 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)094, Dr CHENG Chung-tai advised that the expenditure incurred by HKTB for organizing online mega events in 2020-2021 was unreasonable, e.g. the expenditure for organizing Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival in "Online + Offline" formats was as high as about \$29.6 million. Dr CHENG was also dissatisfied that HKTB had spent \$9.5 million and \$9 million respectively on producing videos for Hong Kong Winterfest and New Year Countdown Celebrations that were organized in online format, and criticized such videos for their poor quality and the overly high production cost involved. He asked about the actual financial returns brought about by such videos to Hong Kong, and whether videos for the aforesaid two events were produced by the same production house.

12.40 ED of HKTB said that due to the COVID-19 epidemic, HKTB had decided to organize some of its mega events in 2020-2021 in "Online" or "Online + Offline" formats, with an aim to drive local ambience and provide the trade with platforms for promoting their business while maintaining Hong Kong's international exposure. He clarified that:

- (a) in respect of Hong Kong Winterfest, HKTB had initially planned to set up a Christmas Town in Central and ordered a Christmas tree at a cost of about \$5 million for such purpose. In view of the pandemic situation in Hong Kong, HKTB finally decided to change to "Online" format with virtual Christmas Town and promote the various festive events organized by attractions and organizations in the city. The Christmas tree had been dismantled and stored in a warehouse, which would be used in the winter of 2021;
- (b) in respect of New Year Countdown Celebrations, HKTB had initially planned to organize fireworks countdown event on both sides of the Victoria Harbour and ordered some fireworks at a cost of over \$4 million. In view of the

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development of the epidemic in Hong Kong at that time, HKTb finally decided to organize the event in online format instead, and broadcast a video of about two minutes on HKTb's website and social platforms.

12.41 ED of HKTb further pointed out that the videos of the above events were not produced by the same production house. Apart from spending on organizing different events, the amount of expenditure mentioned in Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)094 also covered the marketing expenditure spent on local media or even various media in the world. At the request of Dr CHENG Chung-tai, ED of HKTb undertook to provide a breakdown of the relevant expenditure items after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau provided its reply (Reply Serial No. S-CEDB(CIT)01) to the supplementary question raised by Dr CHENG Chung-tai on 27 April 2021.)

12.42 SCED added that many Members had previously requested the Government to step up its publicity of Hong Kong globally when Hong Kong was suffering from an economic downturn, so as to maintain its competitiveness. HKTb had been organizing mega events such as Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival over the past decade or so, and had successfully established Hong Kong brands, which was conducive to promoting tourism. Although the number of visitors to Hong Kong had dropped significantly due to the threat of the pandemic and the stringent travel restrictions, the Government considered that holding mega events or festive rituals in "Online" format not only allowed it to continue to promote Hong Kong characteristics around the world, but also maintained international exposure of Hong Kong. When organizing mega events, HKTb would set aside a certain amount of money for launching publicity and promotion campaigns abroad. The length of individual videos should not be the only consideration in judging whether the total expenditure spent on such activities was reasonable.

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Enhancing local tourism facilities

12.43 Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that since the global pandemic remained volatile, it might not be possible to resume cross-boundary travel in the near future. She asked whether the Government would make use of this period of time to carry out a complete refurbishment of Hong Kong's tourism facilities (e.g. upgrading "A Symphony of Lights" ("SoL") using the latest technology) to prepare for the upcoming visitor arrivals, as well as improve various public piers to facilitate Hong Kong residents and visitors to travel to the marine parks and eco-tourism attractions.

12.44 Commissioner for Tourism ("C for T") said that the Government had been exploring how to enhance various tourism attractions during the epidemic. The Government would continue to allocate funding to HKTB for timely upgrading of SoL, so as to enrich visitors' experience. Besides, the "City in Time" project would be successively launched in the Central, Tsim Sha Tsui, Jordan, Yau Ma Tei, Sham Shui Po and the Peak areas, with a view to bringing back to life the history of individual landmarks of Hong Kong by using augmented reality and creative multimedia technology through mobile application, and to enable visitors to understand the historical landscape and community culture, thereby enriching their experience in Hong Kong.

12.45 C for T further advised that the "Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival" was an arts cum cultural, historical and green tourism project organized by the Tourism Commission ("TC") at Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung since 2019. The activity was well received by participants. TC would, in collaboration with the Civil Engineering and Development Department, carry out minor improvement works at Yim Tin Tsai Pier in the second half of 2021.

Enhancement of Hiking Trails - Phase II

12.46 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CIT)140, Mr Tony TSE expressed support for the implementation of Enhancement of Hiking Trails - Phase II by the Government. He asked whether the Government would divert visitor flows as far as possible through publicity and improvement to ancillary transport facilities.

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12.47 C for T advised that the Government had been striving to improve public transport services for green tourism attractions. For example, the green minibus route between Pak Tam Chung and High Island Reservoir East Dam had extended its service hours and increased its frequency. In addition, the Government was planning to develop country park visitor centres into hiking and green tourism hubs by upgrading the facilities of such visitor centres, strengthening the transport facilities and improving the hiking trail network in the surrounding areas, with a view to attracting hikers to take these visitor centres as their starting point and choose a hiking trail suitable to them based on their own physical fitness and experience.

Ocean Park

12.48 Mr Michael TIEN noted the recent announcement by the Government that Mr Joe WONG Chi-cho, the incumbent Commissioner for Tourism, would be seconded to the Ocean Park Corporation ("OPC") to take up the position of Chief Executive with effect from 1 May 2021 for a period of up to six months, and that Ms Ysanne CHAN, the incumbent Chief Executive, would take up a newly-created position of Managing Director with effect from the same day. He supported the Government's decision to absorb the expenses on the remuneration payment to Mr WONG during his secondment. Mr TIEN remarked that he strongly opposed to the retention of the post of Managing Director after OPC successfully recruited a new Chief Executive in the future. He sought clarification from the Government on whether OPC would delete the post of Managing Director after its successful recruitment of a new Chief Executive; if so, whether the Government would support such an arrangement.

12.49 SCED said that following FC's approval of the financial proposal on 19 March 2021, the Government had started to work jointly with OPC in order to implement the future development strategy for Ocean Park as soon as possible. In particular, during the current transitional period, both the Government and OPC would need to work together to handle issues including the introduction of legislative amendments to the Ocean Park Corporation Ordinance (Cap. 388), etc. As an interim arrangement, the short-term secondment of Mr Joe WONG Chi-cho to the post of Chief Executive of OPC would achieve better synergy.

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12.50 SCED pointed out that according to the paper provided to FC earlier, in implementing the future strategy for Ocean Park, OPC needed a management team with experience and capacity in corporate reform and it was undergoing the necessary re-orientation in this direction. The former Chief Executive of OPC had retired in mid-2020. Since then, the post had been held by another administrative staff temporarily. Some administrative staff of OPC would also retire in the near term. In view of the fact that OPC had not yet successfully recruited a new Chief Executive, and the relevant organizational arrangements were internal affairs of OPC, it was inappropriate for the Government to respond to OPC's long-term organizational arrangement on behalf of OPC at this stage.

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13.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Edward YAU, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development ("SCED"), briefed members on the key work and expenditure relating to the policy area of communications and creative industries in the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-11).

Radio Television Hong Kong

Estimated financial provision for Public Affairs and General Television Programme

13.2 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CCI)045, Mrs Regina IP suggested that the work under Programme (2): Public Affairs and General Television Programme ("Programme (2)") of Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") should be abolished, with a view to saving public resources. She said that RTHK should provide services that were out of the mainstream market, such as producing programmes that could cater to the needs of minority interest groups like ethnic minority groups and classical music lovers, and educational programmes.

13.3 Mrs Regina IP considered that the programmes produced by RTHK were costly, achieving negligible effect and arousing controversy over their contents constantly; the production staff held values that might not necessarily dovetail with the Government's stance and even made use of the contents of the programmes to criticize the Government and thereby tarnishing the Government's image; whilst the Director of Broadcasting had to face criticisms from the community for his decisions on whether certain contentious programmes should be withdrawn. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed similar views and urged the Administration to consider whether the operation of the Television ("TV") Division of RTHK should continue to be funded with public money. Regarding the estimated provision under Programme (2), Dr Junius HO pointed out that instead of producing programmes of a satirical nature, RTHK should produce programmes that were beneficial to society and fitted in with the common values of the community.

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13.4 Director of Broadcasting replied that in response to the recommendation about strengthening editorial governance of RTHK made in the Governance and Management of Radio Television Hong Kong Review Report ("the Review Report") released by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau ("CEDB") in February 2021, RTHK had introduced a new mechanism in March the same year. An editorial committee comprising the Director of Broadcasting and senior management of RTHK had taken up the editorial responsibility to review contentious programmes before their production or broadcast. In addition, RTHK had also introduced a clearer referral mechanism for production staff to submit programme plans to the editorial meetings for review at the early stage of planning, such that the editorial meetings could more proactively participate in and guide the production, thereby ensuring that the programmes complied with the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong ("the Charter") and the Producers' Guidelines. According to the public purposes and mission specified in the Charter, RTHK should provide programming in areas not adequately provided by commercial TV broadcasters; produce programming designed to serve minority audience needs; maintain and develop original programming designed to foster in the community an interest in music, culture and the arts; as well as provide accurate, impartial and objective public affairs programming. By adhering to the editorial principles stipulated in the Charter and acting in accordance with the new editorial management mechanism, RTHK sought to produce programmes that were in compliance with the requirements of being impartial, unbiased and accurate.

13.5 SCED advised that the Review Report covered six areas relating to the operation of RTHK, and the contents regarding the areas such as editorial management and management of RTHK's workforce were relevant to the views raised by Mrs Regina IP. The Government had already briefed the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting of the Legislative Council on the Review Report earlier on, and requested RTHK to follow up on and fully implement the recommendations of the Report.

13.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CCI)058, Ms Elizabeth QUAT pointed out that over the past two years, while the transmission cost per hour of RTHK TV 31 and RTHK TV 32 was about \$20,000, the average prime time ratings only ranged from 12 000 to 32 700, and that was indicative of the fact that TV channels were run at high costs

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but with low viewership ratings. In contrast, online videos were currently produced at low costs with wider exposure, and were even more effective in reaching minority interest groups than TV broadcast. Ms QUAT requested that the Administration should evaluate the performance of the TV Division of RTHK from the value-for-money perspective.

13.7 Director of Broadcasting explained that while ratings were of considerable importance, whether or not RTHK could fulfil its public purposes and mission as specified in the Charter was equally important. For instance, RTHK had a responsibility under the Charter to provide programmes that sought to promote understanding of the concept of "One Country, Two Systems", engender a sense of citizenship and national identity, or cater to the needs of minority interest groups. Director of Broadcasting further remarked that RTHK had introduced the Television Programme Appreciation Index Survey and the Focus Group Study as the means to collect audience feedback, and would develop, in the light of the recommendations of the Review Report, a comprehensive performance measurement and evaluation system to reflect its performance.

13.8 Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries) ("PS(CCI)") added that RTHK programmes were currently available on both conventional channels (i.e. TV and radio) and new media platforms (i.e. websites, mobile applications and social media). The audience reach and market share of some radio channels had achieved rather good results. It was recommended in the Review Report that RTHK should improve its audience research and audience measurement and analysis tools, with a view to analyzing the cross-media audience measurement data of its programmes more effectively. There was also a need for RTHK to set key performance indicators to facilitate evaluation of the extent of its achievement of the public purposes and mission stipulated in the Charter.

13.9 Following up on Reply Serial No. CEDB(CCI)058, Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the average production cost of RTHK's TV programmes, as well as the number of TV programmes withdrawn and the amount of public money involved. Director of Broadcasting responded that it was recommended in the Review Report that RTHK should enhance editorial governance. To this end, RTHK had introduced the aforementioned new mechanism on editorial management since March 2021.

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RTHK had also introduced a clearer referral mechanism for production staff to submit programme plans to the editorial meetings for review at the early stage of planning, thereby ensuring that the programmes complied with the Charter and the Producers' Guidelines.

13.10 Director of Broadcasting advised that since the forming of the editorial meetings, a total of three programmes had been withdrawn. The production cost of each of these programmes varied from about \$20,000 to \$50,000. As the entire or a large part of the production process of these three programmes had been completed before the introduction of the new mechanism, rectification to the programmes prior to production was made impossible. However, he expected that upon the full implementation of the new editorial management mechanism, a waste of public money resulting from the withdrawal of a number of programmes before their broadcast would not happen again.

Collaboration with other government departments

13.11 Dr Junius HO pointed out that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") operated on a trial basis the "WeWeWebWeb Carnival", a one-stop online platform covering informative and learning materials on aspects of culture and leisure, with an annual estimated budget of \$20 million. During the period between December 2020 and the end of February 2021, nearly 500 videos were uploaded to the platform with about 1.5 million page views in total. He considered the results satisfactory. Dr HO suggested that the Administration should strengthen collaboration among departments, so as to facilitate joint production of online programmes between RTHK and other government departments, such as LCSD, under Programme (2), with a view to achieving synergy.

13.12 PS(CCI) replied that the Government was now giving consideration to using the work of government departments as one of the themes to be featured in RTHK programmes, and RTHK was encouraged to review the types of programmes that constituted its schedule. The Government would consider producing more programmes that could bring about positive impact and serve social functions.

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13.13 Dr Junius HO suggested that RTHK and the Information Services Department ("ISD") should be merged for the purpose of structure streamlining. Currently, the major tasks of the two said departments fell respectively into the policy areas of CEDB and the Home Affairs Bureau. The respective estimates of RTHK and ISD for 2021-2022 were about \$1 billion and \$600 million, and there were eight and 12 directorate posts on their respective latest establishments. By merging the two departments, not only could expenditures be saved, but the functions of the departments could also be enhanced.

13.14 SCED replied that RTHK and ISD had distinct functions. ISD was tasked to provide various bureaux and government departments with professional public relations advice and promote government policies and services with a view to projecting an accurate image of the city within and outside Hong Kong. ISD was neither a broadcaster, nor did it have a broadcasting platform. As regards RTHK, it was the public service broadcaster in Hong Kong. Through its broadcasting channels, RTHK fulfilled its multiple missions to inform, educate and entertain its audiences through multi-media programming.

13.15 SCED advised that the two aforementioned departments had all along been performing their respective functions while collaborating with one another from time to time. For instance, ISD would disseminate information to the public through various media, including RTHK; while RTHK would produce programmes for the Government to help promote and publicize government policies and services, etc. If RTHK and ISD were merged together, the uniqueness of their roles or functions would be lost or such roles or functions would become indistinct. As such, the Government had no plan to merge the two said departments.

Review of the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong and the roles of Radio Television Hong Kong

13.16 Dr Junius HO enquired whether the Administration would, in view of the fact that the social incidents and the political turmoil in 2014 and 2019 respectively had come to an end, review the Charter and the role of RTHK in a timely manner. In response, SCED advised that the role and functions of RTHK as well as the role of the RTHK Board of Advisors to give advice to the Director of Broadcasting were clearly stipulated in the

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Charter. Requests had been made in the Review Report that RTHK should, in accordance with the Charter, rectify its editorial principles, enhance the quality of its programming, as well as resolve problems in areas such as the management of workforce and editorial management. As the existing provisions of the Charter and the relevant mechanisms could already serve the purpose of addressing the concern in the society about, among other things, RTHK's editorial principles and reporting approach, and whether or not RTHK could dovetail with the Administration's effort to enhance the public awareness of maintaining national security and abiding by the law, it was not necessary to make amendments in light of any particular new legislation.

Monitoring radio programmes

13.17 Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that over the years, she had received quite a number of complaints against RTHK's radio programmes, and the complaints were mainly about their biased contents. For instance, some members of the public had recently lodged complaints against the radio programme *China On The Dot* on grounds that its content was suspicious of being defamatory and uglifying the Mainland. In view of the fact that the Director of Broadcasting had earlier on indicated that priority would be accorded to implementing the recommendations on editorial management made in the Review Report, Ms QUAT asked the Director of Broadcasting about how editorial governance in terms of radio services could be strengthened, with a view to monitoring the content of radio programmes effectively.

13.18 Director of Broadcasting replied that apart from TV programmes, the new editorial management and referral mechanisms of RTHK were also applicable to radio and new media programmes. The editorial board would review contentious programmes before their production or broadcast. RTHK would also enhance its complaint handling mechanism according to the recommendations of the Review Report.

Implementation progress of the recommendations made in the Governance and Management of Radio Television Hong Kong Review Report

13.19 Dr Junius HO commended the newly-appointed Director of Broadcasting for his recent effort to review contentious programmes

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through the editorial board and subsequently stopping the production or broadcast of individual programmes in a timely manner. Referring to Reply Serial No. CEDB(CCI)044, Dr HO enquired about the progress of RTHK in drawing up priority improvement measures, an action plan and a timetable for implementing the recommendations of the Review Report; and whether RTHK could manage to share its concrete improvement plans and the effectiveness of such at the special meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting to be held on 25 May 2021.

13.20 Director of Broadcasting advised that RTHK would fully implement the recommendations of the Review Report, and accord priority to the enhancement of its mechanisms for editorial management and complaints handling, performance measurement and evaluation, as well as management of its workforce. RTHK had introduced a new editorial management mechanism and a clearer referral mechanism since March 2021, and it would expedite the progressive implementation of other recommendations.

CreateSmart Initiative

13.21 Mr MA Fung-kwok noted from Reply Serial No. CEDB(CCI)011 that for projects approved under the CreateSmart Initiative ("CSI") that could not be held as planned due to the epidemic, Create Hong Kong ("CreateHK") would allow postponement, changes in format and necessary adjustments to the budget to meet additional expenditures incurred. Mr MA enquired about the respective numbers and proportions of projects under CSI that had been affected by the epidemic in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the implementation details of making adjustments to the budgets of such projects, and whether the total amount of funding provided for projects approved had decreased.

13.22 Head of Create Hong Kong ("Head, CreateHK") responded that if postponement, changes in format or necessary adjustments to the budget were required for any projects under CSI that had been affected by the epidemic, the applicants had to submit in advance their specific circumstances as well as the latest details and budgets of the projects to the CSI Secretariat (i.e. CreateHK) for assessment. CreateHK would exercise flexibility in handling individual projects based on the circumstances. So far 22 projects had been affected by the epidemic, most of which to be held

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outside Hong Kong had been postponed or conducted online. As regards projects to be held in Hong Kong physically, most of them had the scales downsized and been supplemented with virtual means, given the limitation on the capacity of venues amid the epidemic. Should applicants of individual projects anticipated that the projects would be ineffective upon changing of format, they might cancel the projects concerned. Having regard to the actual circumstances, CreateHK would decide whether only those expenditures incurred prior to the cancellation of project would be disbursed. Head, CreateHK confirmed that due to cancellation of projects amid the epidemic, the actual grant for projects approved over the last two years was less than the funding approved.

Film Development Fund

13.23 Mr Michael TIEN said that earlier on, some films funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council were allegedly suspicious of advocating violence and illegal acts. He enquired whether mechanisms were in place to monitor if any funded productions, producers or the relevant persons were involved in violence and illegal acts or even in violation of the National Security Law; and whether mechanisms were in place such that the Government could recover the disbursed funding from the relevant applicants.

13.24 SCED stated that the main purpose of the Film Development Fund ("FDF") was to encourage shooting of films to be commercially produced and distributed. Currently, the exhibition and publication of films were regulated under the laws of Hong Kong and the relevant arrangements were under the purview of the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration. Regardless of whether funding had been provided by the Government, the films had to be in compliance with the requirements stipulated under the relevant laws of Hong Kong. In light of the implementation of the National Security Law, the Government would, in accordance with the laws, lay down the relevant enforcement standards of individual fields as and when necessary. PS(CCI) added that the Hong Kong Film Development Council mainly provided funding for commercially-viable films and related projects.

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13.25 Regarding the matter of gate-keeping, PS(CCI) cited the vetting and approval process of the First Feature Film Initiative as an example and pointed out that upon the assessment panel's completion of assessing the screenplay and production proposals submitted by participating teams, PS(CCI), being the controlling officer of FDF, would also act as the ultimate gate-keeper in approving the funding applications. Funding would be released to successful applicants in phases, and the Government was safeguarded by the relevant contract terms such that recovery of funding released could be effected in case the film concerned did not comply with the relevant requirements.

Chapter XIV : Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

14.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure on the policy area of food safety and environmental hygiene for the new financial year (Appendix IV-12).

Food supply and food safety

Food supply from the Mainland

14.2 Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the increase in retail prices of live and chilled chickens following the suspension of the import of live poultry from the Mainland into Hong Kong since mid-February 2016. He suggested that consideration be given to raising the rearing capacity of local chicken farms to increase local supply. SFH advised that in recent years, the supply of chilled chickens in the local market had increased as a substitution for live chickens. The Administration would continue to monitor the supply of local live chickens, facilitate applications by farmers for relocating local chicken farms for more sustainable development and liaise with the Mainland authorities on the supply of live poultry.

14.3 Mr Tommy CHEUNG enquired about the measures to maintain an adequate supply of live pigs in the market to help stabilize the price of fresh pork. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation ("DAFC") responded that at present, local pig farms were rearing about 60 000 heads of pigs in total. In February 2021, a local African Swine Fever case was reported involving a local pig farm having a rearing capacity of about 4 000 heads of pigs. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") was providing support to the farm concerned to help it resume normal operation and supply of live pigs to the local market.

Import control on Japanese food

14.4 Mr Steven HO said that the local agriculture and fisheries sector was strongly opposed to the decision of the Government of Japan to start releasing radioactive water from the devastated Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean in two years ("the disposal plan"). While the Government of the United States of America had openly indicated support for the disposal plan, information circulating on the internet revealed that

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the United States Food and Drug Administration had issued Import Alert 99-33 to prohibit the import of certain food products from Fukushima and 14 other Japanese prefectures due to radionuclide contamination. Mr HO asked how the Hong Kong Government would respond to the disposal plan. Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr Holden CHOW raised similar concerns, adding that the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") should review whether the existing import control on Japanese food should be tightened.

14.5 Controller, Centre for Food Safety ("Controller/CFS") advised that following the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in March 2011, 54 economies had introduced import ban and/or restrictions on Japanese food at varying magnitude. 39 economies had subsequently lifted the import ban in recent years while another nine economies had allowed import of certain types of food from specified Japanese prefectures (including Fukushima) on the condition that the food products were accompanied with radiation certificates. Six economies (including Hong Kong) continued to prohibit the import of certain food products from Fukushima. Since March 2011, CFS had tested more than 740 000 samples of food products imported from Japan. The test results showed that none of the samples had radiation levels exceeding the guideline levels adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

14.6 SFH and Controller/CFS advised that CFS would request the Japanese authorities to provide more information on the disposal plan (e.g. the timetable, amount of radioactive water to be discharged, radioactive elements involved and arrangements for monitoring the impact on food safety and the environment after disposal of waste water). CFS would closely monitor the latest developments in relation to the disposal plan, risk assessments to be made by international expert organizations and local surveillance results; and review the control measures on food imported from Japan.

14.7 Mr Steven HO asked whether CFS would consider conducting a site visit to the Fukushima nuclear power plant to assess the potential risk. He also expressed concern whether CFS would deploy additional manpower and resources for strengthening the import control on Japanese food in the future. He suggested that the Food and Health Bureau should, in collaboration with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, start assessing the impact of a stricter import control on Japanese food on the

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food supply in Hong Kong and how the local market could reduce reliance on Japanese food products if a stricter control had to be imposed.

14.8 Controller/CFS responded that CFS had held a meeting with the Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong to express the Hong Kong Government's concerns over the matter. CFS noted that while some radioactive elements (such as iodine-131, caesium-134 and caesium 137) that were harmful to humans could be removed through water treatment, some radionuclides (such as tritium and strontium) might still remain in the waste water after the dilution process. Controller/CFS assured members that CFS would proactively collect information from the Japanese authorities to assess the risks/impact on food safety and food supply in Hong Kong.

Initiatives on the reduction of salt and sugar in food

14.9 The Deputy Chairman noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)001 that at present, a total of around 1 100 Chinese, Western, vegan and social enterprise restaurants joined the Less-salt-and-sugar Restaurants Scheme. He asked how the Administration would encourage more restaurants to participate in the Scheme. He also enquired about the manpower deployed to conduct the customer survey on the Less Sugar Friday Campaign in late 2020.

14.10 Controller/CFS said that the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food and relevant government departments would continue to promote salt and sugar reduction through various means, which included encouraging restaurants to provide reduced salt and/or sugar options or dishes through the Less-salt-and-sugar Restaurants Scheme, launching the "Salt/Sugar" Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food Products to facilitate consumers to identify prepackaged food products which met the legal definition of "low salt", "no salt", "low sugar" and "no sugar", inviting bread manufacturers of chained bakeries to participate in the voluntary Sodium Reduction Scheme for prepackaged and non-prepackaged white bread and wholemeal bread, and disseminating the message of salt and sugar reduction to the public through social media platforms.

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Requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises

14.11 Mr WONG Ting-kwong noted that SFH had earlier stipulated a requirement on ventilation in the seating areas of dine-in catering premises (such as restaurants and factory canteens) under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). Under the relevant requirement, operators of catering premises were required to register with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") on or before 30 April 2021 that the air change per hour ("ACH") at seating areas of their premises had reached a minimum of six, or air purifiers that met the specified specifications had been installed according to the on-the-ground situation and the manufacturer manual, together with a certificate signed by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category) providing information related to the air change or air purifier(s) installed in the respective premises. Mr WONG said that many operators of catering premises had indicated great difficulties in meeting the ventilation requirement by the specified deadline.

14.12 SFH responded that based on anti-epidemic considerations, the Administration had earlier accepted the expert advisers' recommendation on enhancement of air change in the seating areas of dine-in catering premises to a minimum of six per hour, so as to reduce the infection risk as far as possible through air dilution. In fact, the ventilating systems of some licensed catering premises had already met the above rate. If it had yet to reach that level, the catering premises might, as an alternative, install in the seating areas air purification devices meeting the relevant specifications, so as to reduce the infection risk through air filtration or germicide. It was generally agreed that the above measures could help control infection.

14.13 Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)/FEHD ("DD(EH)/FEHD") advised that FEHD launched on 16 October 2020 a "Voluntary Declaration Scheme on Air Changes in Licensed Catering Premises" for licensed catering premises to declare voluntarily the information on ACH of the ventilating system and/or air purification device installed in their premises. Since 18 March 2021, the voluntary declaration scheme had been replaced by the mandatory registration scheme. The Working Group on Implementing the Requirement on Air Change or Air Purifiers in Dine-in Restaurants ("the Working Group") was appointed to

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advise on the implementation of the new ventilation requirement. So far, the progress made by the Working Group and relevant departments included: (a) launching an online platform for registration by catering premises, with a link to the webpage of the Buildings Department containing the list of 180 registered specialist contractors (ventilation works category) therein; (b) announcing on FEHD's website a list of air purifiers meeting the specified specifications; and (c) promulgating "A Guide on Compliance with the Requirement on Air Change/Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises" to provide guidance to the trade on how the relevant ventilation requirement could be fulfilled. The Working Group would continue to meet with the trade and relevant stakeholders to understand their concerns and render assistance that they needed.

14.14 Mr Holden CHOW pointed out that for catering premises operating in shopping malls, fresh air supply was provided through the central ventilation system of the malls. He asked how the Working Group would assist these catering premises in meeting the ventilation requirement. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that the Working Group would meet with the relevant parties, e.g. the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong and major properties management companies (such as the Link Asset Management Limited), to appeal for their support and assistance as far as practicable to catering premises in terms of providing fresh air supply.

Provision and management of public markets

14.15 Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted with concern that as set out in Reply Serial Nos. FHB(FE)127 and FHB(FE)128, the numbers of stalls in public markets installed with contactless payment devices were relatively low. He and Mr Vincent CHENG asked whether FEHD would consider launching another round of the subsidy scheme for the promotion of contactless payment in public markets ("the subsidy scheme") under the Anti-epidemic Fund and extending the scope of the subsidy scheme to cover licensed hawkers.

14.16 Mr KWOK Wai-keung further enquired about the promotional efforts made by FEHD to encourage market stall tenants to install contactless payment devices and market patrons to make payment by contactless payment means. The Deputy Chairman asked whether the Administration would encourage contactless payment service providers to

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provide free installation service for tenants to be operating in new public markets.

14.17 SFH advised that during the application period of the subsidy scheme, FEHD received a total of 3 555 applications. So far, 3 542 applications (99.6%) had been approved-in-principle and total subsidies of about \$13.62 million had been disbursed for 2 724 applications. FEHD was planning to launch the second round of the subsidy scheme within April 2021. It would also actively consider extending the scope to cover licensed hawkers.

14.18 DD(EH)/FEHD added that all tenants in FEHD Skylight Market in Tin Shui Wai had already installed contactless payment systems. For other public markets, FEHD had conducted a number of promotional activities to promote the use of contactless payment (e.g. setting up promotional booths in FEHD's markets and launching gift redemption programmes at various markets to encourage patrons to make payment by contactless payment means). FEHD would also solicit views from contactless payment service providers and relevant stakeholders on how the promotion of contactless payment in public markets could be further enhanced.

14.19 The Deputy Chairman asked whether the Administration would step up disinfection work and improve the hygiene in public markets by improving their air ventilation systems and installing therein latest sanitizing facilities (e.g. disinfection channels equipped with sanitizing spray for instant disinfection). He also enquired about the anti-epidemic measures adopted in new public markets.

14.20 DD(EH)/FEHD responded that for disease control and prevention, a number of anti-epidemic measures had been adopted in public markets. They included installation of infrared thermal body temperature screening devices and equipment, application of anti-microbial coating to communal areas and facilities, improving air ventilation with the assistance of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and conducting thorough cleansing and disinfection in the markets in the form of deep cleansing services. Suitable anti-epidemic facilities would also be incorporated in the hardware design of new public markets.

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Environmental hygiene and rodent control

14.21 Mr Wilson OR criticized that FEHD's rodent control work in recent years was not effective. He also expressed concerns about the deteriorating environmental hygiene situation in various districts and the failure of FEHD staff to take effective enforcement actions against street obstruction caused by illegal shop front extension. Noting that \$5.9 billion and 260 million were earmarked in 2021-2022 respectively for providing environmental hygiene services and implementing rodent control measures, Mr OR asked how FEHD's performance would be assessed in maintaining environmental hygiene and whether any concrete measures had been devised for enhancing rodent control throughout the territory.

14.22 SFH responded that the Pest Control Steering Committee would continue to synergize the efforts of various bureaux and departments in pest control work. FEHD would explore the application of new rodent traps, rodenticides and baits to improve the efficacy of rodent disinfection work. Where appropriate, FEHD would install thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function for anti-rodent operations in designated target areas to monitor the extent of rodent activities in those areas for formulating appropriate measures. At the same time, publicity and public education would be enhanced to raise awareness of and encourage active participation in keeping the city clean; and enforcement actions against illegal deposit of refuse at rear lanes and hygiene black spots would also be stepped up.

14.23 Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)124 that the numbers of dead rodents collected and the numbers of live rodents caught by FEHD between 2018 and 2020 in Wan Chai District, Kwun Tong District and Mong Kok District were much higher than the figures of other districts. He asked about the reasons for the wide difference. DD(EH)/FEHD explained that FEHD would conduct specific rodent prevention and control operations in response to the actual situation of rodent infestation in individual districts. With the adoption of enhanced rodent control measures, the overall Rodent Infestation Rate ("RIR") for 2020 was expected to be lower than that of 2019.

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14.24 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)075, Mr Holden CHOW expressed concern and sought explanation for a large variation among some districts (e.g. Tai Po and Islands) in the number of rodent control surveys conducted and the number of poison treatments of rodent infestation carried out in building blocks. DD(EH)/FEHD pointed out that when conducting rodent prevention and control operations in individual districts, FEHD made appropriate adjustments to the work from time to time, taking into account the district RIR, the reports from frontline staff and the views of the relevant District Councils and the local community. The data might reflect the actual circumstances of individual districts concerned, e.g. the small number of building blocks of Islands District as compared with other Districts.

14.25 Mr Vincent CHENG expressed concern that the situation of obstruction of pavements and carriageways by shops and vendors remained serious in Sham Shui Po, causing persistent environmental hygiene problems and noise nuisances to local residents. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that FEHD would continue to monitor and tackle shopfront extension at carriageways in Sham Shui Po. FEHD would work with the Police, with a view to launching a pilot scheme in two or three districts to tackle shopfront extension at carriageways through enforcement actions and instituting prosecutions, including removing goods and articles placed illegally in such public places.

Issues relating to hawker policy

14.26 Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted that under the Scheme of Re-allocation of Fixed Hawker Pitches and Issue of New Licences launched in September 2019, an operation validity period of seven years was specified on the fixed-pitch hawker licences for the registered assistant and general public categories. He expressed concern that many stall operators who had applied for and collected the licences before 2020 could not conduct/maintain business in the normal manner due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19"). He asked whether FEHD would consider, on compassionate grounds, extending the licence operation validity period for affected hawkers for at least two years.

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14.27 DD(EH)/FEHD advised that setting an operation validity period for fixed-pitch hawker licences would help promote turnover of hawker licences and hawker pitches, and allow admission of new traders. SFH said that financial assistance/suitable relief had been provided to various sectors and individuals hard-hit by the COVID-19 epidemic through the Anti-epidemic Fund. The Administration would review whether further measures could be implemented in view of the impact of the epidemic on the hawker trade.

14.28 Dr CHENG Chung-tai hoped that the Administration could provide assistance to fixed-pitch hawkers and itinerant hawkers amidst the current difficult economic situation. He noted that to make way for the Central Kowloon Route works of the Highways Department, Yau Ma Tei Jade Hawker Bazaar had been relocated to Yau Ma Tei Temporary Jade Hawker Bazaar at Shanghai Street; and the Tung Yan Street Interim Hawker Bazaar would soon be closed and relocated to Yue Man Hawker Bazaar at Hip Wo Street. He asked whether the Administration had liaised with affected hawkers to understand their business situation after relocation.

14.29 DD(EH)/FEHD said that the Administration had, taking into account the COVID-19 epidemic and the prevailing economic situation, waived the fees for issue or renewal of fixed-pitch hawker licences and itinerant hawker licences for certain financial years. With the provision of enhanced facilities in the two above-mentioned bazaars, it was expected that the business conditions of hawkers operating at Yau Ma Tei Temporary Jade Hawker Bazaar and Yue Man Hawker Bazaar would improve.

14.30 Dr CHENG Chung-tai urged FEHD and the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") to provide assistance to those hawkers who had difficulties in moving to Yue Man Hawker Bazaar and were still operating in Tung Yan Street Interim Hawker Bazaar or Yue Man Square. DD(EH)/FEHD advised that FEHD would maintain close liaison with URA on the relocation arrangements for relevant hawkers. FEHD would also follow up on individual cases requiring assistance for application of hawker licences in relation to the relocation.

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Issues relating to agriculture and fisheries policies

14.31 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)041, Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired about the progress of the Development Bureau ("DevB") in processing applications for agricultural rehabilitation under the Special Agricultural Land Rehabilitation Scheme ("SALRS") and whether more applications for agricultural rehabilitation were expected to be received from farmers who were affected by the development of Kwu Tung North/Fanling North New Development Area.

14.32 DAFC responded that DevB, in collaboration with relevant departments, was processing 10 applications received for agricultural rehabilitation under SALRS and liaising with affected farmers on the selection of government land suitable for agricultural rehabilitation to tie in with the land clearance programme in phases. At the request of Dr CHENG Chung-tai, the Administration undertook to provide supplementary information on the sites (with a breakdown by district, number and area size) available for application for agricultural rehabilitation under SALRS.

14.33 Mr Steven HO noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)046 that the amount of loans granted under some loan funds administered by AFCD had dropped in recent years. He asked whether AFCD would consider reviewing the application criteria and the loan ceilings of the funds with a view to better meeting the needs of farmers and fishermen.

14.34 DAFC advised that currently, the Government provided credit facility to farmers, fish farmers and fishermen through seven loan funds administered by AFCD. Except the World Refugee Year Loan Fund and the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere Loan Fund (with capitals stood at some \$2 million and \$200,000 respectively) which received no application in the past three years, the numbers of applications received under the other five loan funds (i.e. J.E. Joseph Trust Fund, the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund, the Vegetable Marketing Organization Loan Fund, the Fisheries Development Loan Fund and the Fish Marketing Organization Loan Fund) remained quite high. In 2020, AFCD adjusted the maximum amount for each loan under J.E. Joseph Trust Fund, the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund and the Vegetable Marketing Organization Loan Fund from \$130,000 to \$200,000. AFCD would

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continue to review regularly the operation and the loan ceilings of the five loan funds to see how they could better meet the needs of applicants.

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15.1 At the Chairman's invitation, Prof Sophia CHAN, Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH"), briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure on the policy area of health services for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-13).

Measures for the prevention and control of Coronavirus Disease 2019

Immigration control measures and quarantine arrangements

15.2 Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that despite the severe epidemic situation in India, the Administration had maintained India as a Group B specified place rather than a higher-risk group subject to the relevant boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements imposed under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H). She was concerned about the measures put in place by the Administration to prevent imported cases.

15.3 Mr YIU Si-wing pointed out that as stated by the Chief Executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region earlier, the government of Hong Kong and Macao could discuss simplification of their traveller clearance measures as long as Hong Kong could achieve "zero infection" for 14 days. He enquired whether the governments of the two places had reached a consensus on how to take forward this measure. Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)237, he enquired about the progress and the technical feasibility of implementing the "Hong Kong Health Code", and whether the computer system concerned could be commissioned once normal traveller clearance resumed.

15.4 SFH advised that the Government understood the public's expectation for early resumption of normal traveller clearance. Therefore, it was striving to achieve "zero infection" in the prevention and fight against the epidemic, so that it was in a position to explore with the Mainland and Macao the feasibility and details of resumption of normal traveller clearance on the basis of "joint prevention and control". The Government had yet to discuss the aforesaid proposal of resuming normal traveller clearance between Hong Kong and Macao with the Macao Government, but it would follow up the proposal. As for the development of a computer system for the "Hong Kong Health Code", she advised that the basic technical arrangements had been implemented under the "Return2hk - Travel Scheme

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for Hong Kong Residents Returning from the Mainland or Macao without being subject to quarantine under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C)" ("Return2hk Scheme"). The Innovation and Technology Bureau was working on the remaining technical issues, including the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application, as well as the technical support and the application for confirming whether incoming customers had received Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") vaccines ("vaccines") if the social distancing measures were to be relaxed for catering premises in future.

15.5 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)234, Mr YIU Si-wing said that the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme had achieved a certain effect in epidemic prevention, but hoped the Scheme would be reviewed from time to time. As regards the arrangements for the Government to provide the quarantine hotels whose occupancy rates fell short of a certain level with subsidies for such shortfall, he enquired about the related estimate and expenditure, the grades of the hotels which had relatively low occupancy rates and were in need of government subsidies, and whether the Administration would discuss corresponding measures with such hotels in the next cycle of the Scheme. SFH advised that the Administration would review the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme regularly in the light of the latest quarantine requirements to decide whether there was a need to increase or decrease the number of designated hotels, on the premise of providing hotel choices at different prices for those under compulsory quarantine. Currently, the Administration did not have any information on the overall subsidy amount.

Virus testing

15.6 Ms Alice MAK, Mr Vincent CHENG and Mr CHAN Han-pan expressed grave concern about the insufficient number of deep throat saliva specimen collection packs ("specimen collection packs") for distribution. Ms Alice MAK pointed out that for some specimen collection pack distribution points, all the specimen collection packs were distributed within half an hour from the start of distribution every day, and some members of the public even hoarded specimen collection packs, causing the problem to worsen. She requested the Hospital Authority ("HA") to provide information on the number of specimen collection packs distributed daily, and when the distribution was completed every day. She urged the

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Administration to squarely address and expeditiously deal with the problem of insufficient specimen collection packs by, for example, stepping up publicity to make members of the public aware that apart from collecting specimen collection packs for testing, they might also go to the Community Testing Centres directly for testing. In addition, she considered that the Administration should provide members of the public with information on the circumstances under which testing would be charged or free. Mr CHAN was very concerned about the lack of sufficient specimen collection packs on outlying islands, and he urged the Administration to increase the number of specimen collection packs for distribution.

15.7 SFH advised that the Government provided 30 000 to 40 000 specimen collection packs daily for voluntary testing by members of the public, but only half of them were returned. As regards the situation that all specimen collection packs were all distributed quickly and the hoarding of specimen collection packs, the Government would continue to monitor the situation and review if it was necessary to increase the number of specimen collection packs for distribution, especially in remote areas. The Government would also explore ways to step up publicity to encourage members of the public to make good use of different channels for testing. Currently, for the 20 or so Community Testing Centres, the average appointment rate was only about 20%, and there were sufficient quotas to meet the demand for testing. Besides, there were about 20 mobile specimen collection stations throughout the territory and more than half of them were available for members of the public to undergo testing, while a number of mobile specimen collection stations provided testing services for targeted groups. She pointed out that if the public had their specimens taken at Community Testing Centres, they would obtain their testing results faster. As regards the charges, SFH explained that the staff of scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and members of the public subject to compulsory testing could undergo free testing at the Community Testing Centres, and the mobile specimen collection stations where members of the public could have their specimens collected would not charge any fee either.

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15.8 Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted HA's announcement that the special visiting arrangement in eight infirmary hospitals would resume on 21 April 2021, under which visitors who had completed two-dose COVID-19 vaccination for at least 14 days could opt for COVID-19 rapid antigen testing within 24 hours before the visit. The visitors had to purchase the rapid antigen test kits and conduct the test at home beforehand on their own. She was concerned about the reliability of the rapid test kits available on the market, and how the Administration could ensure that the rapid test results belonged to the visitors themselves, so as not to create a loophole in epidemic prevention. In her opinion, the Administration should draw up a recognized list of rapid tests for public reference.

15.9 SFH advised that while no rapid test could replace the nucleic acid test, rapid tests served different purposes. HA had studied carefully before implementing the aforesaid special visiting arrangement. Chief Executive, HA ("CE, HA") advised that the arrangement was implemented after taking into consideration multiple factors and striking a balance between the risks involved and the need for visits. Visitors taking COVID-19 rapid antigen tests were required to have completed two-dose COVID-19 vaccination for more than 14 days and complied with the infection prevention measures implemented by the infirmary hospitals. With multiple safeguards in place, HA considered the aforesaid measures acceptable. Upon resumption of the special visiting arrangement, visitors would still be able to follow the previous practice of presenting a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result obtained within 72 hours prior to the scheduled visits for making the visits.

Social distancing measures

15.10 Mr Michael TIEN thanked the Administration for accepting his suggestions on relaxing social distancing restrictions and testing requirements for targeted groups. He hoped that the Administration would continue its efforts in striving for quarantine free traveller clearance between Hong Kong and the Mainland. He and Roundtable considered that vaccination should be voluntary and the Government should not force the public to get vaccinated. Given the Government's announcement that with the "vaccine bubble" as the basis, the social distancing restrictions would be relaxed for the staff and customers of catering premises (e.g. the number of persons per table to be relaxed from four to six) subject to the conditions on vaccination and other measures being met, he was concerned that some

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catering premises had required their staff to get vaccinated, or else they would be suspended from work. He enquired whether some experts considered that relaxing the number of persons per table from four to six would increase the risk of transmission under the current mechanism (of requiring staff to undergo testing once every 14 days). In his view, if the staff of catering premises were unable to get vaccinated for some reasons, they should be allowed to undergo testing once every 14 days as originally required, and they should not be forced to get vaccinated in order to have the number of persons per table relaxed.

15.11 SFH advised that while the trades and members of the public expected relaxation of the social distancing measures on catering premises, the Government needed to manage risks in view of an outbreak of the epidemic on some catering premises. She emphasized that on the premise of safe relaxation of the social distance, the Government offered different options to catering premises, including the option of maintaining four persons per table and providing dine-in services till 10 pm, with the staff continuing to undergo testing once every 14 days. For further relaxation (i.e. relaxation of the number of persons per table from four to six, and the extension of dine-in hours to midnight), the staff of catering premises were required to get vaccinated for risk management reasons. She emphasized that the vaccines available in Hong Kong had been confirmed by experts to be safe, effective and of good quality.

15.12 Dr CHENG Chung-tai considered that the Administration's proposed launch of the "vaccine bubble" was tantamount to forcing the staff of catering premises to get vaccinated. He enquired about the vaccination rates of the HA staff and frontline government officers who had a high risk of infection. If the vaccination rates of these people were low, it was not reasonable to require the staff of catering premises to get vaccinated.

15.13 SFH advised that about 950 000 doses of vaccines had been administered to members of the public since the launch of the Vaccination Programme, and about 630 000 persons had received their first dose. HA and the Department of Health ("DH") would continue to encourage their staff to get vaccinated. Although catering premises and hospitals were both high-risk places, diners would not wear masks when dining on catering premises, while healthcare personnel were required to follow specific infection control measures and were equipped with personal protective

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equipment at work. She emphasized that for society to resume normal, people from different sectors (including the staff of catering premises) had to take one more step and get vaccinated.

15.14 CE, HA advised that 14 000-odd HA staff members had been vaccinated, representing about 16% of the total number of staff. Director of Health ("DoH") advised that as of the first week of April, about 1 300 DH staff had been vaccinated, accounting for about 13.6% of the total number of its staff.

15.15 Mr Martin LIAO enquired whether the relaxation measures under the "vaccine bubble" were applicable to members of the public who had received vaccines (which were different from those available in Hong Kong) outside Hong Kong; if applicable, what the requirements for producing proof of vaccination were. SFH said that the Government was closely studying the issues in this respect.

Requirement on ventilation in the seating areas of catering premises

15.16 Mr Vincent CHENG was concerned that as required by the Administration, by the end of April 2021, dine-in catering premises had to enhance air ventilation in the seating areas to a minimum of six air changes per hour or, having regard to the actual circumstances, install air purifiers meeting the relevant specifications in the seating areas as the alternative, as well as possess a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). He enquired about the responsibilities of the contractor, whether such work could be carried out by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") instead, and whether the Administration would subsidize catering premises to install the relevant facilities.

15.17 SFH explained that under the licensing regime for catering premises, the requirement for the provision of outside air per hour for each person was stipulated in the legislation and it was not a new measure. As the main risk factors for catering premises providing dine-in environment included long hours of mask-off eating and heavy flow of people, the air change requirement was enhanced on the basis of anti-epidemic considerations. The working group appointed by FEHD had issued relevant guidelines and announced a list of air purifiers meeting specified

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specifications. The working group was prepared to provide more information to the trades for reference. If the trades had any questions, they might make enquiries with FEHD. If any catering premises were unable to comply with the relevant requirements before the deadline, and applied to FEHD for extension, FEHD would consider whether the deadline could be adjusted having regard to the actual circumstances of each case.

Procurement and administration of vaccines

15.18 Dr Priscilla LEUNG was concerned whether the recent cases of miscarriage of two pregnant women who had been vaccinated were related to vaccination. She enquired whether there was a checklist based on which healthcare personnel would remind those who were not suitable for receiving a certain type of vaccine.

15.19 SFH advised that for the two types of vaccines available for administration to members of the public, they had different contraindications. DoH pointed out that members of the public would be informed of the contraindications of their chosen vaccines through the vaccination booking system, and the healthcare personnel at the vaccination centres would also reconfirm whether individual members of the public were suitable for vaccination in accordance with the vaccination fact sheets. Women planning to get pregnant should take a pregnancy test before vaccination. She clarified that pregnancy was not completely a contraindication for receiving the Comirnaty vaccine, but the persons concerned would need to be assessed by doctors to weigh the risks and benefits. As regards the Sinovac vaccine, the vaccination fact sheet had clearly stated that pregnant women should not receive the vaccine.

15.20 The Chairman considered that the aforesaid cases should not have occurred since measures were in place to remind pregnant women whether they should be vaccinated. Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted that in the two miscarriage cases, it was only after the vaccines had been administered did the women concerned learn about their pregnancy. She opined that the Administration should step up publicity and education efforts to let members of the public know clearly under what circumstances they might or might not get vaccinated, especially whether it was suitable for a woman to receive a particular type of vaccine during her planned pregnancy or during pregnancy, and that the staff at the vaccination centres should also

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repeatedly ask about the conditions of such women.

15.21 Mr Martin LIAO enquired whether consideration would be given to procuring a third type of vaccine developed with a different technology and platform in the light of the recommendation of some experts. Pointing out that the unsatisfactory vaccination rate in Hong Kong might be related to the social atmosphere and the politicization of the Vaccination Programme, he asked how the Administration would raise the vaccination rate. SFH advised that the Administration would step up publicity on the vaccines and the contraindications for targeted groups. Through Announcements of Public Interest, the Administration was explaining to members of the public whether chronically ill persons were suitable for vaccination, so as to allay public concern. As for disinformation on the vaccines, the Government would closely monitor such information and make clarifications as well as rebut rumours in a timely manner.

15.22 SFH further advised that as the Sinovac and Comirnaty vaccines (with 7.5 million doses for each type of vaccine, making up a total of 15 million doses) which the Government had procured and authorized for emergency use were sufficient for vaccination by the entire population of Hong Kong, it was not necessary to procure a third type of vaccine at this stage. With the changes in the COVID-19 epidemic and the emergence of mutant variant strains, the Government would review the vaccine procurement strategy, including procuring vaccines which offered greater protection and were effective against the new mutant variant strains. In this connection, the Government was closely seeking information from various pharmaceutical manufacturers and developers, and expected that a suitable vaccine might not be available until 2022 at the earliest.

Manpower situation of the public healthcare sector

15.23 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)138, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired why the additional care-related support staff recruited in Hong Kong West Cluster ("HKWC") in recent years were outnumbered by those in other hospital clusters and the wastage number of such staff in the former was also higher. He also enquired why the total intake number in 2020-2021 had dropped as compared to the two preceding years despite the current high unemployment rate, why the newly recruited staff were paid differently for the same work and whether consideration would be given to

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standardizing their salaries. Mr POON was also concerned that without centrally maintaining the records on overtime hours worked of different posts, how HA could ensure effective use of human resources.

15.24 CE, HA advised that HA had been experiencing difficulties in recruiting care-related support staff in the past and their wastage rate was very high for reasons including the reluctance of some people to work in hospitals under the epidemic situation. However, the situation had improved gradually. He further explained that as most of the care-related support staff, who mainly came from the grass roots, chose to work near home, and there were not many large grass-roots housing estates in Western District of Hong Kong Island, it was relatively difficult to recruit care-related support staff in HKWC.

15.25 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)139, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired why information on the expenditure incurred by HKWC in engaging agency staff had not been provided, why there was a huge difference in the expenditures incurred by different clusters in engaging agency service, and whether such expenditures would increase continuously. He considered that HA should request the agencies to provide information on the salaries of their staff. CE, HA explained that different clusters would engage agency service in the light of different circumstances and operational needs, hence their expenditures in this regard would not be the same. Agency service contracts were required to follow the remuneration requirements for agency staff as stipulated in the guidelines provided by the Government.

15.26 In respect of the Public-Private Partnership ("PPP") programmes, Dr Priscilla LEUNG was concerned that HA did not seem to have made good use of the resources and the labour force of private ophthalmologists. Noting the planned provision of only 650 surgeries under the Cataract Surgeries Programme ("CSP") in 2020-2021, she considered that the number of quotas was increasing too slowly. She urged the Administration to increase the service provisions of CSP and similar programmes. SFH advised that HA had earlier allocated \$10 billion for implementation of PPP programmes and CSP was one of those well received by members of the public. HA would explore the feasibility of implementing PPP programmes for specialties with longer waiting time, and would continue to take forward such work.

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15.27 Expressing concern about the uneven waiting time for specialist outpatient services (e.g. ophthalmology) in the various clusters, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired if it was possible to refer some patients to those clusters with shorter waiting time for consultation. Also, she hoped that HA would recover the progress of performing surgeries delayed by the epidemic (especially orthopaedics surgeries) as soon as possible. She further enquired if the Administration would amend the legislation within this legislative session to the effect that more non-locally trained doctors would be employed under limited registration to practise in Hong Kong.

15.28 CE, HA advised that the attrition rate of ophthalmologists was already very high before the epidemic, making it difficult for individual clusters to meet the demand for related medical services. Under the current mechanism, patients could go to any cluster for consultation and HA could arrange for patients to go to another cluster for treatment. Experience suggested that, in general, members of the public hoped to seek medical treatment in a cluster close to their homes. HA would keep in view the waiting time of patients in specialist out-patient clinics under the various clusters. In respect of the admission of non-locally trained doctors, SFH advised that the Government had earlier briefed the Panel on Health Services on the legislative proposal. Recently, it had explained its ideas to relevant stakeholders such as doctors' unions and patient groups, as well as listened to their views. The Government expected that the relevant bill would be submitted to the Legislative Council in the second quarter of 2021 for scrutiny.

15.29 Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(H)119 that according to the outcome of the new round of manpower projection exercise, the "Healthcare Manpower Projection 2020", which the Government had commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct, the shortfall of doctors in 2030 and 2040 would be 1 610 and 1 949 respectively. Hong Kong currently had 2.0 doctors per 1 000 persons. Compared to the per capita doctor ratio in Singapore, Hong Kong should have a shortfall of about 3 000 doctors, or even 5 000 to 6 000 doctors if the fact that approximately 70% of Hong Kong patients were served by 46% of doctors in public hospitals was taken into consideration. He considered that the projections made by the University of Hong Kong were not accurate and objective enough. Mr Tommy CHEUNG also opined that, although the Government intended to amend the legislation to provide that the

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non-locally trained doctors to be admitted had to be Hong Kong permanent residents, it seemed that there were not many such doctors. He urged the Government of the current term to face squarely the shortfall of doctors and implement the proposal of admission of overseas doctors, with a view to shortening the waiting time both for consultation and surgeries.

15.30 SFH advised that the "Healthcare Manpower Projection 2020" had adopted 2017 as the base year for projection and the manpower planning and projection work was conducted once every three years. In the current manpower projection exercise, projections were also made for the shortfall of various healthcare professions and it was expected that the projections would be completed and the results announced within 2021. She pointed out that there was a shortage of 600-odd doctors in HA alone and the waiting time for patients was very long. The Government was adopting a multi-pronged approach to alleviate the shortage, including increasing the number of healthcare training places, rehiring suitable retired healthcare staff and recruiting part-time healthcare staff. Since the above-mentioned measures were not sufficient to address the shortfall of doctors, the Government planned to bring in non-locally trained doctors to work in Hong Kong.

15.31 Mr CHAN Han-pan noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(H)12 that the Medical Council of Hong Kong ("MCHK") had cancelled the two sittings of the Licensing Examination originally scheduled for 2020, and enquired about the reduction in the number of doctors coming to practise in Hong Kong as a result. Expressing concern over HA's employment of only 30 non-locally trained doctors under the Limited Registration Scheme as at 31 December 2020, he considered that HA should be more proactive in employing non-locally trained doctors.

15.32 SFH explained that the sittings of the Licensing Examination had been cancelled mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government had been proactively supporting HA to recruit non-locally trained doctors to work in public hospitals by way of limited registration through the Limited Registration Scheme so as to relieve the work pressure of frontline doctors. It had also provided HA with additional resources. Furthermore, HA had implemented a series of enhancement measures, including increasing promotion prospects for non-locally trained doctors, so as to attract more non-locally trained doctors to come to Hong Kong through the Limited

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Practice Registration Scheme. After enhancements to and active promotion of the Scheme, the number of applicants increased considerably but the increase was slowed down by the social incidents and the epidemic.

District Health Centres

15.33 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)017, Dr Pierre CHAN enquired about the expenditure on the remuneration of the various posts in District Health Centres ("DHCs"). He considered that the Administration should keep such information for the purpose of monitoring the proper use of public money. He further enquired whether DHCs would prescribe drugs for patients. SFH advised that the Government would provide funding to operators for the operation of DHCs. The remuneration of staff of DHCs was determined by their operators having regard to the market and other factors, and the Government had not maintained the relevant information. She also confirmed that DHCs would not prescribe drugs for patients.

Mental health services

15.34 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted from Reply Serial No. FHB(H)152 that the Government had decided to allocate \$300 million from the Beat Drugs Fund to better support the needy in the community and raise public awareness of mental health. She enquired about the details of the funding scheme, such as whether family health and women health would be promoted. Referring to a recent case in which a child had been abused to death at home, she urged the Administration to identify and support people and families in need at an early stage. Ms YUNG also referred to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)239, and asked about the details of the "Shall We Talk" initiative, the level of public participation, as well as whether the initiative could help the public to address problems relating to mental health and mental stress.

15.35 SFH advised that the Government had been concerned about the mental health of members of the public, and had set up the Advisory Committee on Mental Health ("Advisory Committee") to take forward the broad direction in this regard and implement the recommendations of the previous reviews. She pointed out that, apart from the additional resources of \$300 million from the Beat Drugs Fund, the Government had allocated an

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additional funding of \$156 million to HA to address the escalating demand for psychiatric services across different age groups in both hospital and community settings. The related measures included enhancing the collaboration with paediatricians and training up multidisciplinary expertise for enhancing mental health services for children and adolescents; enhancing community psychiatric services by recruiting additional case managers; enhancing psychogeriatric outreach services for the elderly; and supporting the upcoming service commencement of the new Kwai Chung Hospital, etc. As for the additional resources of \$300 million from the Beat Drugs Fund, the Government would launch a programme in this respect in the light of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

15.36 Regarding the "Shall We Talk" initiative, DoH advised that under the steer of the Advisory Committee, DH, in collaboration with other departments and non-governmental organizations, had carried out a series of work. The first phase of the initiative was officially launched in July 2020, with a dedicated website providing information on common mental health problems, treatment, getting help, community support, activities and story sharing, etc., as well as school-related mental health information. The initiative also promoted mental health in the community through social media such as Facebook, Instagram and a KOL (key opinion leader). Through two local universities, the Advisory Committee conducted three mental health prevalence surveys for children, adolescents and elderly persons respectively. The baseline survey had commenced in the first half of 2019 and was expected to be completed in 2022. She explained that the surveys mainly served to investigate comprehensively the mental health status of Hong Kong's population as a whole, and the data obtained would help the Government to formulate the long-term development direction of mental health services according to the needs of various age groups.

Tobacco control

15.37 Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)136, Mr MA Fung-kwok pointed out that many members of the Bills Committee on Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019 hoped that the Administration would deal with electronic cigarettes ("e-cigarettes") and heated tobacco products ("HTPs") separately, i.e. legislating against the sale of e-cigarettes first, with the controversial HTPs to be dealt with at a later stage. He considered it imperative to enact legislation to prevent e-cigarettes from continuing to

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harm young people and other members of the public. Referring to Reply Serial No. FHB(H)180, Mr MA enquired why the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office ("TACO") had not received any complaint relating to the sale of HTPs to minors during the period from 2018 to 2020.

15.38 SFH advised that the Government was concerned about the hazards of e-cigarettes and HTPs and hoped to address related issues as soon as possible. The Government had been reviewing the work progress made in these two respects by overseas countries and the relevant scientific evidence, so as to work out the way forward and discuss it with the Bills Committee. She pointed out that both e-cigarettes and HTPs were not safe and should be banned as soon as possible. It was not desirable to deal with them separately. DoH advised that in 2020, DH had received a total of 10 complaints about the sale of tobacco products to minors, and had conducted 19 inspections, none of which involved e-cigarettes or HTPs. DH would continue to monitor the situation closely.

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16.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Alfred SIT, Secretary for Innovation and Technology ("S for IT"), briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditures under the Innovation and Technology ("I&T") portfolio for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-14).

Encouraging research and development

Enhanced tax deduction for research and development expenditures

16.2 Noting from Reply Serial No. ITB065 that a total of 317 claims under a two-tiered enhanced tax deduction regime for expenditures on "qualifying R&D activities" incurred by enterprises were received for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 assessment years, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok considered that the figure was on the low side, and that the Administration should step up its promotion and publicity efforts on the tax measure, so as to encourage more enterprises to conduct research and development ("R&D") locally.

16.3 S for IT responded that Hong Kong's gross expenditure on R&D ("GERD") had been on the rise from \$16.7 billion in 2014 to \$26.3 billion in 2019, representing an increase of 57%. After the implementation of the aforesaid tax measure, the amount involved in the claims for tax deduction on R&D expenditures continued to increase. The total amount involved in such claims for the 2019-2020 assessment year increased by more than 58% over that for the 2018-2019 assessment year. This tax measure would not only benefit all technology companies conducting R&D in Hong Kong, but would also promote and encourage private sector's investment in R&D. The Government would continue to publicize the measure to the trade.

16.4 Permanent Secretary for Innovation and Technology ("PSIT") pointed out that after the aforesaid tax deduction measure came into operation following the amendments made to the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) in October 2018, the total amount of R&D expenditures for which claims for tax deduction were made in the previous year of assessment (i.e. the 2019-2020 assessment year) had more than doubled compared with the corresponding amount before the introduction of the tax measure (i.e. in the 2017-2018 assessment year). As it took time for enterprises to plan for their R&D investments, the number of claims in the short term might not be able to reflect fully the policy effect. A number of factors, including social events, the COVID-19 pandemic and a weakening

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global economy, etc., might also affect enterprises' injection of R&D resources and the related work.

16.5 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok sought further clarification on the ratio of Hong Kong's overall GERD to the Gross Domestic Product ("GDP"), and the goal on the R&D expenditure ratio set by the Administration. S for IT replied that the ratio of GERD to GDP had increased from 0.73% in 2014 to 0.92% in 2019. The Government would continue to promote R&D, so as to achieve the goal of raising the ratio of GERD to GDP to 1.5%.

Public Sector Trial Scheme

16.6 Mr YIU Si-wing noted that the Tourism Commission and the City University of Hong Kong had jointly launched the "City in Time" mobile app, which enabled locals and tourists to bring back to life the history of individual landmarks of Hong Kong by simply scanning the "AR markers" installed at designated locations; and the mobile app was well-received by the public. Given that the "City in Time" tourism project had only been rolled out at 13 designated locations for the time being, Mr YIU asked whether the Administration would consider providing funding support through the Public Sector Trial Scheme ("PSTS") under the Innovation and Technology Fund ("ITF"), so as to extend the application of the "City in Time" mobile app to more locations as soon as possible; and if so, whether the relevant departments would be required to submit applications on their own.

16.7 S for IT advised that the Government had been promoting I&T to improve public services and enhance operational efficiency. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") would provide information technology ("IT") support to various departments. Moreover, the Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology, established and chaired by the Chief Executive, reviewed regularly on matters relating to I&T, so as to strengthen coordination among various departments. PSIT added that PSTS provided funding support for conducting trials of R&D projects under ITF and other eligible R&D projects, and applications should be submitted by the research teams concerned. As for the "TechConnect (block vote)" which supported various government departments in organizing and implementing technology projects, funding applications should be submitted to the Innovation and Technology Bureau ("ITB") by

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individual departments. OGCIO and the Efficiency Office ("EffO") would from time to time discuss with various departments the application of technologies to enhance operational efficiency and improve public services.

InnoHK R&D clusters

16.8 Mr Jimmy NG noted that following the establishment of two R&D clusters, namely "*Health@InnoHK*" and "*AIR@InnoHK*", the Administration would keep in view the need for establishing the third "*InnoHK R&D cluster*" to further promote global research collaboration in Hong Kong. He requested the Administration to provide information, including the implementation progress and timetable of the cluster, and whether its area of focus and mode of operation were different from those of the previous two clusters.

16.9 S for IT advised that the first two clusters, namely "*Health@InnoHK*" and "*AIR@InnoHK*", focused on healthcare technologies, and artificial intelligence and robotics technologies, respectively. The Government was vigorously taking forward the development of the first two clusters in the Hong Kong Science Park ("HKSP") and would explore the development direction and research focus of the third cluster, taking into account factors including the strengths of Hong Kong as well as the development needs of the nation.

Smart city

"iAM Smart" platform

16.10 Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted that over the past three years or so, ITB had rolled out a number of infrastructure projects and initiatives to promote smart city development, including the Common Spatial Data Infrastructure ("CSDI"), "iAM Smart", etc. Members of the public, upon confirming their identities on "iAM Smart", could use various services provided by the Government and public/private organizations. She considered that "iAM Smart" would help support the Government's anti-epidemic and preventive work, and hoped that the Government would encourage more members of the public to use the "iAM Smart" platform when it provided "vaccine passports" and established "travel bubbles" in the future.

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16.11 S for IT advised that the one-stop personalized digital services platform "iAM Smart" had recorded over 200 000 registered users. The Government would continue to utilize to using I&T as far as practicable to support its anti-epidemic and preventive work, such as the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app previously deployed and the "Electronic Vaccination Record" enquiry services added onto the "iAM Smart" platform.

16.12 Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the development progress of electronic business registration certificates. Government Chief Information Officer ("GCIO") replied that OGCI was working with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") on taking forward the first phase of Proof-of-Concept ("PoC") trials and research on the business version of the "iAM Smart" platform, which was expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2021. Based on the trial results, OGCI would further discuss with HKMA and other stakeholders rolling out of the next phase of digital authentication of business identities. Once a consensus among relevant stakeholders was reached, a sandbox test for assessing the system security, protection of users' privacy and its compatibility with related platforms in other jurisdictions, etc. would be conducted. The sustainability of the solution would then be considered based on the assessment results. The Administration was also minded to work with HKMA to link up the business version of the "iAM Smart" platform with the Commercial Data Interchange developed by HKMA, so that enterprises could use their digital identities to give consent to financial institutions (such as banks) to obtain their business data from third-party information vendors for processing their loan applications, etc.

16.13 Mr YIU Si-wing asked whether the Administration would consider requiring the public to show their electronic vaccination records stored in the "iAM Smart" mobile app before they entered shopping venues. S for IT replied that the Government had deployed mobile registration teams in the Community Vaccination Centres to assist the public in registering "iAM Smart" on-the-spot, so as to facilitate the download of, through the "iAM Smart" mobile app, their electronic vaccination records including the time of vaccination and the number of doses administered. Members of the public could show their vaccination records through the "iAM Smart" mobile app before entering specified premises as and when necessary in the future.

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Common Spatial Data Infrastructure

16.14 Ms Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to expedite the roll-out of the CSDI portal. She enquired about the number of government departments that had undertaken to open up their spatial data through the portal. GCIO advised that ITB had been working jointly with the Development Bureau to encourage various policy bureaux/government departments ("B/Ds") to open up their common shareable spatial data through the CSDI portal. It was expected that the CSDI portal would be operational for use by the public by the end of 2022. The Government had launched some quick-win projects (such as providing the GeoAddress data) for use within and outside the Government.

Smart Government

16.15 Mr Tony TSE commented that although the Administration had spared no efforts and invested heavily in boosting I&T development, the promotional effect was far from satisfactory. He suggested that the Administration should step up the publicity on the effectiveness of I&T development in improving Hong Kong's economy, people's livelihood and the Government's operational efficiency; and government departments should also take the initiative to consult ITB and make use of I&T to improve public services and enhance operational efficiency.

16.16 S for IT advised that Hong Kong's performance in respect of I&T development was recognized internationally. According to the rankings announced by the International Institute for Management Development in 2021, Hong Kong climbed from the 18th place in 2019 to the seventh in 2020 on ranking related to technological infrastructure. ITB would step up publicity on Hong Kong's achievement in terms of I&T development. The Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology, established and chaired by the Chief Executive, would regularly monitor the implementation of smart city initiatives and steer collaboration and participation across B/Ds.

16.17 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted that EffO had assisted various B/Ds in enhancing management of information and records, including digitization of documents, so as to facilitate sharing of resources among government departments. She hoped that the Administration would assist various B/Ds in implementing big data analytics projects, and asked whether the Judiciary

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and the Legal Aid Department ("LAD") had consulted EffO on issues relating to data analytics and establishment of data banks, and what difficulties EffO had encountered.

16.18 S for IT advised that through the "Be the Smart Regulator" ("BTSR") Programme and the "Streamlining of Government Services" Programme, EffO had encouraged participating B/Ds to provide more e-licensing services and other e-Government services. The BTSR Programme currently covered some 400 business licences, involving 29 B/Ds. EffO would continue to promote more e-licensing services through the BTSR Programme. GCIO advised that OGCIO had been maintaining close liaison with the Judiciary. Despite the lack of interoperability of computer systems among the Judiciary and various government departments, he had shared his experience at a meeting of the Judiciary on how to enhance operational efficiency by adopting big data and data analytics. Established by OGCIO in April 2019, the Smart Government Innovation Lab ("Smart Lab") had so far matched 44 business needs of departments with solutions and arranged 56 thematic workshops for the relevant departments during the process. In collaboration with the relevant departments, the Smart Lab had also arranged PoC for 21 solutions with potential. Over 90 business needs of government departments had been uploaded to the Smart Lab website, which had also received more than 320 IT solutions provided by the industry. OGCIO would continue to strengthen the exchange and collaboration between departments and the industry to identify more suitable solutions for testing, so as to help departments (including LAD) expedite their adoption and implementation of more IT solutions.

16.19 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan requested OGCIO and EffO to make enquiries with the Judiciary regarding the feasibility of analyzing data from court files (such as family background information of the case concerned), and what information could be shared with other government departments (such as LAD and the Social Welfare Department). The Government took note of Ms YUNG's views.

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Smart Government Innovation Lab

16.20 Quoting Reply Serial No. ITB134, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan pointed out that the Smart Lab matched the business needs of government departments with solutions for the provision of services such as psychological treatment through the use of chatbots. She was concerned whether the chatbot technology was mature, say, in terms of the depth of chatbot questions raised for psychological consultation, and whether only simple questions could be answered. Ms YUNG opined that the Administration should allocate more resources for conducting R&D on the chatbot technology, in particular application of Cantonese-speaking chatbots and wider use of chatbots at/on the 1823 centre and websites of other government departments for handling public enquiries.

16.21 S for IT replied that the use of gerontechnology products (such as chatbots) in elderly care services could effectively strengthen communications with the elderly and enhance quality of their psychological health. GCIO advised that OGCIO had launched an AI chatbot "Bonny" on the GovHK portal at the end of December 2019 to facilitate the search and use of e-Government services by the public. Generally speaking, chatbots were not able to answer enquires of a technical nature. Given the technical aspects involved in medical and psychological consultation, professional support was needed to help chatbots handle enquiries, and referrals should be made to professionals for reply and follow-up as and when necessary.

Pro-innovation government procurement policy

16.22 Mr Michael TIEN pointed out that in awarding outsourcing contracts, government departments generally adopted the "lowest bid wins" principle. Outsourced service providers might not have the incentive to improve their services due to cost consideration, thereby failing to fully adhere to the Government's objective of making use of technology applications for service enhancement. He enquired whether ITB would review the procurement documents such as outsourced service tenders used by various departments (e.g. whether a contractor was required to procure specified equipment for street cleaning or whether specific clauses on elements of innovation, etc., were included in the tender document of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department), so as to ensure support for

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the pro-innovation procurement policy in outsourcing services.

16.23 S for IT advised that the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau was responsible for formulating the Government Procurement Policy and Procedures and coordinating the related matters. The Government introduced the pro-innovation procurement policy in April 2019, including that all procuring departments were required to increase the weighting of technical score and product quality in tender evaluation, and certain scores should be allocated to assess innovative suggestions.

STEM Internship Scheme

16.24 Noting from Reply Serial No. ITB061 that the Innovation and Technology Commission ("ITC") would provide universities that had implemented the STEM Internship Scheme with an additional subsidy of 15% of the total allowance disbursed to the student interns to cover their administrative expenses, Mr Martin LIAO enquired about the criteria for determining the administrative expenses, whether ITC had discussed the details with the universities before launching the scheme, and the criteria for allocating the internship quotas. Mr LIAO also asked whether there was any limit on the number of times for taking up internship under the scheme; and if there was a shortfall in the quotas for internship, whether the Administration would consider allowing each student to join the scheme once only, so that more students could have a chance of taking up internship in the I&T industry. Ms Elizabeth QUAT welcomed the regularization of the STEM Internship Scheme by the Administration.

16.25 Commissioner for Innovation and Technology advised that the Financial Secretary had earmarked \$40 million in the 2020-2021 Budget for subsidizing local universities to arrange short-term internships for undergraduates and postgraduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics ("STEM")-related programmes, with a view to encouraging the students to gain I&T-related work experience during their studies, thereby fostering their interest in pursuing a career in I&T. In 2020 summer and winter, more than 1 600 students and over 1 000 companies/organizations participated in the scheme, with overwhelming response and high regard for the scheme. The Government planned to regularize the STEM Internship Scheme in 2021, and there would be no limit on the quotas for internship and the number of times for

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taking up internship. With reference to other existing schemes under ITF, ITC decided to provide an additional subsidy of 15% of the total allowance disbursed to student interns for the universities to cover their administrative expenses. Prior to the launch of the pilot STEM Internship Scheme in 2020, ITC had discussed with the universities the implementation details of the scheme, including the provision of a subsidy of 15% of the total allowance for the universities to cover their administrative expenses, and all the universities had raised no objection.

16.26 PSIT added that considering that universities would incur administrative costs in implementing ITF-funded projects, the Government agreed to pay their administrative expenses through ITF, which was capped at 15% of the total allowance disbursed. Such arrangement had been in place for many years.

Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park

16.27 Mr Tony TSE said that the Government should make good use of the digital data of the construction projects of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park ("HSITP") located in the Lok Ma Chau Loop ("the Loop"), such as the Building Information Modelling ("BIM") data, so as to provide reference for future operation and facility maintenance and improve the development efficiency of the region. S for IT advised that digital simulation systems, such as BIM, would be actively adopted in the engineering design and construction of HSITP as well as the management and maintenance of facilities to enhance cost-effectiveness and strengthen project management.

16.28 Mr LAU Kwok-fan asked how the Administration would expedite the development of HSITP; for instance, whether it would directly grant land to target enterprises for them to construct the required facilities on their own. This would be more efficient than having the Government plan and develop the facilities, and could better meet the operational needs of enterprises. Mr LAU also asked whether the Administration would reserve land in the Loop for future extension of HSITP.

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16.29 S for IT replied that the Government was vigorously taking forward the development of HSITP. The first parcel of land in the Loop would be delivered to the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park Limited for commencing the construction works. Building design would be carried out in parallel with the site formation works for the remaining land in Batch 1, so that the construction of buildings could commence immediately upon completion of the site formation works; hence, the eight buildings in Batch 1 were estimated to be completed in phases from the end of 2024 to 2027. The Government would be happy to listen to suggestions made by enterprises on the design of HSITP, and would keep an open mind on the financing proposals for the remaining batches of buildings. On the other hand, the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen agreed to allow the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation ("HKSTPC") to lease and manage certain areas of the I&T Zone in Futian, Shenzhen before the completion of HSITP's first batch of buildings, so that the institutes and enterprises that were interested in starting their business in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") could first establish a presence in the I&T Zone in Futian, Shenzhen. With regard to land planning, the Government had reserved different land sites, in addition to those in the Loop, for I&T development and industrial use. If co-location arrangements were to be implemented at the new Huanggang Control Point in Shenzhen, then the land at Lok Ma Chau Control Point in Hong Kong could be released for other uses, e.g. consideration could be given to align the use of such land with the development of HSITP in the Loop and create synergy.

16.30 Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that the country had promulgated the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 ("the 14th Five-Year Plan"), underlining its support for Hong Kong's development as an international I&T hub. She asked how the Administration would complement the work relating to the 14th Five-Year Plan in order to develop Hong Kong into an international I&T hub.

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16.31 S for IT said that the 14th Five-Year Plan stated the country's support for Hong Kong's development as an international I&T hub and its integration into national development. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government would make every endeavour to complement the work relating to the 14th Five-Year Plan, proactively participate in the domestic and international dual circulation, act as an important connecting platform under the country's "dual circulation" strategy, and help Mainland enterprises to enter the international market and overseas investors to develop the business opportunities in the Mainland and Asia. Moreover, the Government would continue to actively facilitate the work of developing the Greater Bay Area into an international I&T hub, including taking forward in full swing the development of HSITP in the Loop and realizing the "one zone, two parks" concept of the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Co-operation Zone, which comprised HSITP and the Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone.

Promoting re-industrialization

16.32 Noting that HKSTPC was developing the Microelectronics Centre ("MEC") in Yuen Long Industrial Estate ("IE") and the Advanced Manufacturing Centre ("AMC") in the Tseung Kwan O IE, Mr Holden CHOW enquired about the number of enterprises that would be attracted to establish a presence in these two centres, and whether the Administration would publish in phases the list of enterprises to be admitted. Mr CHOW also asked the Administration about the major publicity campaigns to be launched for promoting re-industrialization, and requested the Administration to step up publicity on related initiatives overseas.

16.33 PSIT advised that AMC would provide a gross floor area of about 1.2 million sq m, and the number of manufacturers that it could accommodate would depend on the production scale and land demand of the enterprises concerned. The Government had not set any target on the number of manufacturers to be solicited. S for IT advised that HKSTPC, which was responsible for the management of MEC and AMC, would publicize the relevant facilities in its leasing exercise. The Government would also strengthen its publicity effort to promote the development of re-industrialization in Hong Kong.

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16.34 Mr Holden CHOW pointed out that it was not easy for the manufacturing industry to find suitable land in Hong Kong for setting up advanced manufacturing facilities. He welcomed HKSTPC to provide concessionary measures to tenants of AMC and the Data Technology Hub. He enquired about the details of such measures, including whether rentals at a discount to market rates were offered to manufacturers. Noting that only 12 applications were received under the Re-industrialization Funding Scheme ("RFS") which aimed to subsidize manufacturers to set up new smart production lines in Hong Kong, Mr CHOW suggested that the Administration should step up its publicity efforts. Citing as an example the success of Israel's traditional manufacturing industries in bringing back business opportunities through optimizing production lines, he asked the Administration to explain the measures in place to strengthen support for smart production lines and enhance traditional manufacturing industries.

16.35 S for IT responded that in terms of infrastructure, shared use of infrastructural facilities, such as MEC and AMC, among industries could reduce costs. In terms of funding, the Government launched RFS to subsidize manufacturers on a matching basis to set up new smart production lines in Hong Kong, with an aim to inject impetus into traditional industries. Regarding talents, the Government launched the Re-industrialization and Technology Training Programme to subsidize local companies on a matching basis to train their staff in advanced technologies. On the concessionary measures provided by HKSTPC to its tenants, PSIT advised that depending on whether the projects of individual companies could play a pivotal role in the overall I&T ecosystem in Hong Kong, HKSTPC would consider providing subsidies to them on a matching basis. As the ancillary facilities of AMC were more advanced than those of ordinary industrial premises, the rent proposed by HKSTPC was already at a concessionary rate.

16.36 Following up on Reply Serial Nos. ITB024 and ITB025, Mr Jimmy NG asked whether ITB would formulate a comprehensive blueprint and a set of performance indicators for "re-industrialization", and whether it would appoint an inter-departmental task force to press ahead with the policy issues of "re-industrialization". S for IT said that apart from promoting re-industrialization actively, the Administration had been promoting R&D from various aspects. While re-industrialization was currently implemented under a cross-bureau/department collaboration

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mechanism, ITB would explore the feasibility of setting up an inter-departmental task force as and when necessary.

16.37 Mr Holden CHOW said that in terms of the share of the manufacturing sector in GDP, Hong Kong lagged behind a number of developed economies, such as Israel, Austria, Singapore, etc. He suggested that the Administration should set an indicator for the share of an industry/the manufacturing sector in GDP, so as to further promote the development of re-industrialization. Sharing the views of Mr Jimmy NG and Mr CHOW, Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that the Administration should set short, medium and long term goals in order to promote re-industrialization effectively.

16.38 S for IT responded that the Government had been fostering favourable conditions for re-industrialization in terms of infrastructure, technology, talent, funding and scientific research. The Government adopted an open-minded attitude towards the suggestion of setting a target for the share of the manufacturing sector in GDP. That said, it must first set its development goals and roadmaps and improve the work on infrastructure, support and talent nurturing. S for IT advised that Hong Kong possessed strong R&D capabilities and advantages as an international and market-oriented economy, whilst the Greater Bay Area had a sizeable market as well as capabilities in commercializing R&D results and advanced manufacturing. With the ability of pooling innovation resources from the Mainland and across the globe and achieving synergistic development with other cities in the Greater Bay Area with regard to their comparative strengths, Hong Kong could, by creating a value-adding chain that covered the upstream, midstream and downstream processes, build up a comprehensive industry chain for commercializing R&D results.

Arts Tech

16.39 Mr MA Fung-kwok said that although there was a need for industries to upgrade or transform their business processes, the number of applications for ITF was small. For instance, only 190 applications were received from the creative industries or the film and entertainment sectors under the Technology Voucher Programme ("TVP"); worse still, only three applications related to Arts Tech were approved under the General Support Programme. He enquired about the reasons attributable to the

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small number of applications from these industries, and whether these programmes could help them. Mr MA noted that the Secretary for Home Affairs had taken the lead in setting up a task force to co-ordinate the work of various policy bureaux, including ITB, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and the Education Bureau, and formulate strategies and measures to develop and promote Arts Tech. He enquired about the role of ITB in the task force, and whether the task force consisted of members who had knowledge about Arts Tech. In his view, the Government should encourage technology companies to take the initiative to approach art groups, and strengthen the promotion and publicity of Arts Tech to specifically target the needs of the industries.

16.40 S for IT responded that the Government helped promote the development of Arts Tech through various funding schemes under ITF. In particular, TVP helped promote technology application and I&T culture in connection with arts. However, the number of applications relating to Arts Tech received under TVP was not high compared with the overall number of applications. ITB would work closely with the Home Affairs Bureau to promote and sponsor the development of Arts Tech. The arts tech industry was welcome to apply for funding through various funding schemes under ITF, such as TVP. Moreover, the Government encouraged technology companies located at HKSP and the Cyberport to cooperate with various art groups to promote the development of Arts Tech. He also agreed that the Government could encourage technology companies to take the initiative to approach art groups.

Measures to nurture talents

16.41 Ms Elizabeth QUAT welcomed the Administration's launch of the "IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools" Programme and the "Knowing More About IT" Programme to cultivate students' interest in IT. She quoted that many countries had incorporated programming and artificial intelligence courses into the regular curricula in primary and secondary education, and requested the Administration to make reference to the relevant practice and equip young people with the knowledge as early as possible.

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16.42 S for IT advised that the Financial Secretary had announced in the 2021-2022 Budget that the Government would implement the "Knowing More About IT" Programme by extending the "IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools" Programme to publicly-funded primary schools to enable students to learn about the benefits of I&T at an early age. The aim of the "Knowing More About IT" Programme was to stimulate primary school students' interest in IT and strengthen their basic IT knowledge through extra-curricular activities ("ECAs"). ITB would continue to assist schools in implementing various ECAs relating to the promotion of IT.

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17.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr Michael WONG, Secretary for Development ("SDEV"), briefed members on the major initiatives and expenditure on the policy areas of planning and lands for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-15).

Land Supply

New development area projects

17.2 Citing Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)224, Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired whether the Administration would commence large-scale site formation projects in the coming years, so as to provide sufficient land to meet the housing demand.

17.3 SDEV replied that the Government would take forward a number of new development area ("NDA") projects in the coming years to meet the housing demand, including the projects in Yuen Long South ("YLS"), Tung Chung New Town Extension (which would provide more than 60 000 housing units), Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen ("HSK/HT") (which would provide more than 60 000 housing units) and Kwu Tung North/Fanling North ("KTN/FLN") (which would provide more than 70 000 housing units). In the long run, the Government would increase the housing supply through the projects to develop artificial islands in the Central Waters and New Territories North ("NTN").

17.4 Mr LAU Kwok-fan thanked the Development Bureau ("DEVB") and the departments under its purview for working together to take forward NDA projects. Quoting Reply Serial Nos. DEVB(PL)181 and 186, he pointed out that as the ex-gratia zonal compensation system which had been in use for many years had become outdated, there were discrepancies between the amounts of compensation calculated under the system and the expectations of landowners. Therefore, he suggested that the Administration should review the system.

17.5 SDEV said that the Government would provide statutory/ex-gratia compensation and make rehousing arrangements (including the non-means tested rehousing arrangement introduced in recent years) for people affected by NDA projects, so as to facilitate the resumption of the land concerned for development. The ex-gratia zonal compensation system was an alternative

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to statutory compensation. The ex-gratia compensation rates were reviewed on a half-yearly basis and the amounts of compensation were generally higher than those of statutory compensation. Nevertheless, affected landowners who were not satisfied with the amounts of compensation calculated under the ex-gratia compensation system might submit claims for statutory compensation to the Court. The Government had no intention to review the ex-gratia compensation system at this stage.

17.6 Mr LAU Kwok-fan urged that the Administration should follow the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA")'s practice of conducting "freezing surveys" and, upon an announcement of conducting a study on or taking forward a certain NDA project in future, it should immediately conduct a freezing survey for the affected residents, so as to ensure that none of them would not be compensated or rehoused because they had been forced to move out before the implementation of that project.

17.7 In response, Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) (PS/DEV(P&L)) advised that it took time to complete the relevant studies, and if a "freezing survey" was conducted upon an announcement of conducting a study on a NDA project, residents who moved in in subsequent years and resided there for a period of time before clearance would not be compensated or rehoused. As such, the Government had to strike a balance among different perspectives in considering when to conduct a "freezing survey". Starting from the KTN/FLN NDA project, "freezing surveys" would generally be conducted after the studies for the relevant projects had been substantially completed and when Outline Zoning Plans were submitted to the Town Planning Board ("TPB"). In fact, URA had carried out a study on a redevelopment project before it conducted a freezing survey for the residents affected by that project.

17.8 Mr LUK Chung-hung said that members belonging to the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions supported the adoption of a multi-pronged approach (including resuming land for other development) by the Administration to increase land supply. Quoting Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)056, he noted that while there were approximately 324 hectares of private land within HSK/HT NDA, only about 12 hectares of private land relating to the first phase development of the NDA had been resumed so far, with the numbers and sizes of the remaining private land lots not yet resumed to be confirmed. He was dissatisfied with the uncertainties in the

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Administration's land resumption efforts, which had caused distress to those who might be affected. As such, he urged the Administration to finalize the scope and timetable of land resumption as soon as possible.

17.9 SDEV replied that the Government had introduced a new arrangement in recent years to allow eligible residents living within the NDAs but not yet affected by the works to move out and surrender their structures first, so as to facilitate early rehousing. PS/DEV(P&L) supplemented that the funding proposal relating to the HSK/HT NDA project had been approved by the Finance Committee ("FC") last year. The funding proposal covered the works for the First Phase development and the detailed design for the Second Phase development. The works under the First Phase development were smaller in scale with a specific programme, and mainly included the development of a Dedicated Rehousing Estate and multi-storey buildings for accommodating brownfield operations, so as to meet the rehousing needs arising from the Second Phase and Remaining Phase development. As for the detailed design for the Second Phase development, it would take about three years to complete. Upon the completion of the design, the Government would have a better grasp of the programme of works for the Second Phase development, and would seek funding approval from FC for such works. In other words, people affected by the works under the Second Phase development could still stay where they were to live and operate business for at least two more years. The Government would put this message across clearly to those affected.

Creating land by reclamation

17.10 Quoting Reply Serial Nos. DEVB(PL)061 and 077, Mr Michael TIEN asked for the reasons for the long delay in commencing the planning and engineering study on the Sunny Bay reclamation. Mr TIEN said that tourism was one of the four pillar industries in Hong Kong, and as there had been calls in the community for the construction of recreational facilities such as a multi-purpose motor racing circuit on the reclaimed land at Sunny Bay, he requested that the aforesaid works to reclaim land and construct recreational facilities be taken forward as soon as possible, so as to promote the development of tourism. Mr TIEN also enquired whether the relevant works could be completed before 2034 (i.e. the time for the first population intake at the artificial islands in the Central Waters).

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17.11 SDEV replied that in 2011, the Government had put forward the Enhancing Land Supply Strategy to explore the feasibility of reclamation outside the Victoria Harbour and the development of rock caverns, under which many projects were underway. As the artificial islands in the Central Waters and NTN development could accommodate a large population, the Government would give priority to implementing the aforesaid two development projects. Therefore, following FC's approval of the funding proposal for the studies related to artificial islands in the Central Waters in December last year, the Government would consult the Panel on Development on the studies related to NTN development in May this year. Besides, the development of brownfield sites was the Government's another priority land supply option to meet the demand for public housing. In comparison, as Sunny Bay was affected by aircraft noise, the land to be reclaimed there would not be suitable for housing development, and could only be used for the provision of tourism facilities. Hence, reclamation at Sunny Bay was currently not a project for priority implementation.

Planning for border sites

17.12 Citing the development of a columbarium, a crematorium and related facilities by the Administration at the Sandy Ridge Cemetery which was near the border as an example, Dr Priscilla LEUNG enquired about the number of obnoxious or unpopular facilities that were located at sites near the border with Shenzhen among those planned in the past 10 years, and whether there would be room for the Administration to review and adjust the uses of such sites; if so, of the feasible adjustment options and the additional expenditure involved. She also requested the Administration to coordinate with neighbouring cities in planning for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in future, so as to reduce the adverse impacts brought about by the development of Hong Kong to neighbouring cities.

17.13 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok opined that the Administration should also make good use of the border sites adjacent to Shenzhen apart from pressing ahead with a number of NDA projects. He pointed out that the Administration had already drawn up a specific development plan for the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop, and was currently planning for the future development of Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai. Ir Dr LO urged the Administration to consider

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developing border sites other than those mentioned above and adopting the approach of according priority to transport infrastructure to promote the development of border sites.

17.14 Quoting Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)212, Mr Michael TIEN said that upon the redevelopment of the Huanggang Port, over 20 hectares of land at the Lok Ma Chau Control Point could be released for other uses. He suggested that the Administration should consider allocating part of the land released for building quarters for the staff working at the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park.

17.15 SDEV replied that based on the findings of the "Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy" and after extensive public consultation, the Government made planning for a number of development projects such as YLS Development Area, HSK/HT and KTN/FLN NDAs. Likewise, based on the findings of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030", the Government had proposed to develop a "northern economic belt" at sites close to the border and include NTN as one of the strategic growth areas. A number of development projects at border sites/NTN were under planning or construction. For example, the NTN development comprised three potential development areas (namely, NTN New Town, the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node and the Man Kam To Logistics Corridor), and among them, NTN New Town (which could accommodate an estimated population of more than 200 000) was close to Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point. The Government was studying the development of the land near Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point into a high technology industrial estate, and would consult LegCo Members on the study outcome in due course. Besides, the Government had set the commissioning dates of Kwu Tung Station and the Northern Link (in 2027 and 2034 respectively) and would use such dates as the basis for planning the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node. The Lok Ma Chau Loop would be used for constructing the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park and the relevant site formation works were underway. Besides, as co-location arrangement would be implemented at the redeveloped Huanggang Port, the land at the Lok Ma Chau Control Point could then be released for other uses. The Government would explore how to optimize the use of these released land.

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17.16 SDEV further advised that there was no specific definition for the so-called "unpopular public facilities", but in taking forward certain projects which might create certain impacts, the Government would conduct relevant impact assessments and formulate mitigation measures. Regarding the works at the Sandy Ridge Cemetery, the Food and Health Bureau had communicated with the Shenzhen Municipal Government regarding such works and had adjusted the design in response to its views, so as to minimize the impacts of the works on the landscape and the residents. The Planning Department had all along maintained communication with their counterparts in Shenzhen on matters at a macro planning level, such as the long-term strategic town planning.

Development of brownfield sites, Green Belt sites and the periphery of country parks

17.17 Citing Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)064, Mr Frankie YICK was concerned that while the resumption of the brownfield sites within HSK/HT NDA was underway, the site formation works for the development of the first batch of multi-storey buildings ("MSB") for accommodating the affected brownfield operations would only be completed by 2023 at the earliest, rendering it impossible for the affected brownfield operations to continue with their operations. In this connection, Mr YICK requested that in taking forward other NDA projects in future, the Administration should resume brownfield sites only after the completion of MSBs for accommodating brownfield operations, so as to provide seamless relocation arrangements for affected brownfield operations. Moreover, in granting land to the trade for its use, the Administration should provide longer tenancy periods (which should not be less than three years) to facilitate the operation of the trade. Mr YICK was also dissatisfied that DEVB had earlier designated a brownfield site in Ping Shan, which was originally used for reprovisioning the brownfield operators affected by the HSK/HT NDA project, as a site with potential for housing development but no alternative site had been provided for the affected operators.

17.18 Citing Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)209, Mr LAU Kwok-fan expressed concern that the Administration had not formulated a policy for reprovisioning the brownfield operations affected by land resumption and only provided them with monetary compensation. In this connection, Mr LAU requested DEVB to refer to the information note on the relocation

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of business operators upon land resumption in Singapore and Taiwan (LC Paper No. IN08/20-21), which had been prepared by the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat at his request.

17.19 SDEV replied that the Government would resume about 200 hectares of brownfield sites in HSK/HT. Although it was difficult to provide "one-on-one" reprovisioning arrangements for the affected brownfield operations and achieve a seamless transition in the timing for land resumption and intake of the MSBs, about 61 hectares and 11 hectares of land had been reserved by the Government in HSK/HT NDA and the YLS Development Area respectively for uses such as logistics facilities, port back-up, storage and workshops. He further said that the current policy was to provide monetary compensation for the affected brownfield operations, as well as to provide advisory services and facilitation measures on planning and land matters for operators looking for suitable sites for relocation. SDEV advised that DEVB would refer to the information note prepared by the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat, and undertook to expedite the land formation process to provide sites for logistics operations.

17.20 Director of Lands ("D of L") supplemented that despite the scarcity of land, the Lands Department ("LandsD") would identify suitable government land for lease by brownfield operators on short-term tenancies. For example, a pilot scheme was launched in December last year under which three sites in Yuen Long and the North District were designated for the use of brownfield operations on short-term tenancies for bidding by the operators affected by land resumption in NDAs, and the tenders were being assessed. The Department also planned to put up three other brownfield sites in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun for the trade's bidding by way of short-term tenancies this summer.

17.21 Mr LAU Kwok-fan noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)039 that among the 210 sites identified by the Administration with housing development potential, the rezoning proposals of six, including one which was located to the north of Tseung Kwan O Village and could provide about 3 700 housing units, were not approved by TPB, and the six sites all fell on Green Belts ("GBs"). He opined that consideration should be given to developing GBs to address the land shortage problem in Hong Kong. Mr Jeffrey LAM also suggested that the Administration should adopt a new

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mindset by considering the development of GBs and the periphery of country parks.

17.22 SDEV advised that one third of the 210 sites with housing development potential were GB sites and many of them were undergoing or had completed rezoning procedures. As far as the aforesaid GB site which was situated to the north of Tseung Kwan O Village was concerned, TPB opined that the site was farther away from Tseung Kwan O Town Centre and was not adjacent to any existing road, and if a new access road was to be built, large-scale land formation works would have to be carried out, which would affect the natural slope. Moreover, the proposed high-rise housing development was not compatible with the surrounding low-rise developments. As such, TPB did not approve the proposal to rezone the relevant site for housing development.

17.23 SDEV further advised that the proposal of developing the periphery of country parks had failed to obtain majority public support during the extensive public engagement exercise conducted by the Task Force on Land Supply ("TFLS") on various land supply options in 2018. Therefore, instead of including the proposal as a priority land supply option, TFLS suggested that the Government should accord priority to studying and implementing eight other land supply options. With reference to the order of priority, the Government had no plan at this stage to seek a change to the land use of the periphery of country parks.

Making good use of vacant government sites

17.24 Expressing support for the Administration's funding scheme to support the use of vacant government sites by non-government organizations ("NGOs") ("the Funding Scheme"), Mr MA Fung-kwok pointed out that the sports, performing arts, culture and publication sector had a strong demand for those sites. Citing Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)055, he enquired why only two out of the 16 applications approved since the launch of the Funding Scheme in February 2019 were related to the aforesaid sector, and whether the Funding Scheme would continue to accept applications. Quoting Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)174, Mr Kenneth LAU enquired whether the Administration had formulated any policy to encourage NGOs to apply for leasing vacant government sites (including vacant school premises) and streamlined the application

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procedures.

17.25 SDEV and PS/DEV(P&L) responded that FC had approved in January 2019 the creation of a non-recurrent commitment of \$1 billion for DEVB to implement the Funding Scheme to support NGOs to take forward projects benefitting the community on vacant government sites. To enhance transparency, the Government had uploaded the details of the vacant sites available for application by NGOs onto the "GeoInfo Map" website. The mechanism for submitting and approving funding applications under the Funding Scheme had been kept simple (e.g. LandsD, which was responsible for granting short-term tenancies for such sites, would proactively seek the support of relevant policy bureaux for the tenancy applications submitted by NGOs), so as to encourage more NGOs to rent vacant government sites. According to the progress report on the Funding Scheme for the financial year 2020-2021 submitted by DEVB to the Panel on Development in April this year (LC Paper No. CB(1)762/20-21(01)), since the launch of the Funding Scheme in February 2019, DEVB had approved a total of 16 applications to subsidize NGOs to carry out the restoration works required on vacant government sites provided that in-principle approval of tenancy had been obtained from LandsD. For example, for a project involving the use of the vacant site as a community service centre, a funding agreement was signed between the Government and the NGO responsible for the project in October 2019, and the project was commissioned in February 2021 upon completion of the restoration works.

17.26 PS/DEV(P&L) further advised that LandsD was processing a number of applications from the sports, performing arts, culture and publication sector for the use of vacant government sites by way of short-term tenancies, and so far funding had been provided to two projects relating to the sector. She undertook that LandsD would review the applications relating to that sector and provide the relevant information to members.

(Post-meeting note: As at 31 December 2020, the LandsD was processing 101 applications for the use of vacant government sites (including vacant school premises) by way of short-term tenancies and, among them, 36 applications were submitted by organizations relating to the sports, performing arts, culture and publication.)

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Single site, multiple uses

17.27 Referring to Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)220, Mr Tony TSE said that PlanD indicated in its Controlling Officer's Report under the Estimates that it was reviewing the development potential of over 300 sites originally earmarked for developing standalone "government, institution or community" ("GIC") facilities. He enquired about the number of such sites which the Department had reviewed so far.

17.28 PS/DEV(P&L) replied that the Government had conducted a preliminary review on the sites originally earmarked for developing standalone GIC facilities. For some of such sites, due to their reserved uses (e.g. service reservoirs and sewage treatment facilities), had relatively small development potential because it was difficult to share such sites with other types of facilities under the "single site, multiple use" model. Therefore, the Government was focusing its review of the remaining 40 GIC sites or so with joint use potential at this stage.

17.29 Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the cavern development projects being considered for implementation apart from the project to relocate the Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works ("STSTW") to the caverns in Nui Po Shan, and whether government departments could enhance coordination in developing caverns under the "single site, multiple use" model, to provide, for example, columbaria in such caverns at the same time.

17.30 SDEV explained that as the relocation of the 28-hectare STSTW to the caverns in Nui Po Shan had posed many challenges, it would be difficult to release space in the caverns for other development purposes. As regards other cavern and underground space projects, the Government would accord priority to studying the development of the underground space at Kowloon Park, with a view to improving the connectivity between Tsim Sha Tsui Central and Tsim Sha Tsui West at the same time.

Supporting infrastructure

17.31 Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that the Administration should make proper planning in taking forward NDA projects (including the artificial islands in the Central Waters under the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision") to

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ensure that the construction of supporting infrastructure, including relevant transport and communal facilities, could dovetail with the development progress of the NDA projects to meet the needs of residents moving into the NDAs, as well as to obviate the need to carry out road excavation works repeatedly for improving roads and public utility networks in future.

17.32 Citing Reply Serial Nos. DEVB(PL)056, 057 and 065, Mr LUK Chung-hung shared the concern that the development of supporting transport infrastructure in a number of NDAs (including Tung Chung New Town Extension, HSK/HT and KTN/FLN) was lagging behind and could not keep pace with the development progress of the NDA projects. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok expressed concern about the frequent traffic congestion in the Tolo Highway which served as the main external road link in New Territories East. He requested the Administration to address the problem.

17.33 SDEV responded that the Government was committed to shortening the time for implementing the NDA projects, and would adopt an infrastructure-led planning approach to give impetus to the development of artificial islands in the Central Waters and NTN through the provision of transport infrastructure. Taking the NDAs in the New Territories as examples, he said that the Government had set the commissioning dates of Kwu Tung Station and the Northern Link and had received the proposals submitted by the MTR Corporation Limited for the construction of HSK Station. The Transport and Housing Bureau had also commenced the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030", which included exploring the layout of railways and major roads to link up with the urban areas, so as to tie in with the development of NTN. In addition, the Government would construct underground common utility tunnels in the NDAs wherever possible to minimize road excavation and facilitate the repair of underground common utilities in future.

Land management and streamlining development control

17.34 Citing Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)201, Mr Tony TSE pointed out that as shown in its Controlling Officer's Report under the Estimates, LandsD generally met the target time for processing lease modification and land exchange applications. However, the relevant statistics failed to reflect the actual situation that the vetting and approval time for quite a number of applications was fairly long, arousing discontent among members

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of the trade. He urged the Administration to improve the procedures for vetting and approving the aforesaid applications, in particular those for processing lease modification applications involving the payment of premiums.

17.35 Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that the time taken by the Administration for land development was too long. As such, he welcomed the expansion of the remit of the Steering Group on Streamlining Development Control ("the Steering Group") under DEVB to cover approving departments other than those under DEVB, with a view to reviewing more comprehensively different aspects involved in the development approval process. He was worried that if the current-term Government failed to complete the work on streamlining development control, the incoming Government might not necessarily continue with such work. In addition, citing the study on rezoning five commercial sites in the Kai Tai area for residential use mentioned in Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)026 as an example, Mr CHEUNG enquired about the time normally taken for vetting and approving applications for change of land use and whether the Administration could illustrate, in the form of flowcharts, how to streamline the relevant vetting and approval workflow. Ms Elizabeth QUAT shared the concern that the time taken for vetting and approving applications for change of land use was too long, affecting the completions and prices of private housing. She urged the Administration to set indicators for streamlining the process of private housing development through establishing the Steering Group.

17.36 Illustrating with a site for public housing development as an example, SDEV replied that it normally took about eight years from the commencement of the relevant engineering feasibility study to the handover of the site to the Hong Kong Housing Authority for development. The Government was striving to shorten the time to six years. To this end, DEVB established the Steering Group and the Development Projects Facilitation Office, with the former being tasked to examine ways to streamline the vetting and approval process of development projects and the latter being responsible for following up the vetting and approval of applications for larger-scale private residential development projects, with a view to expediting the vetting and approval process and increasing housing supply. Furthermore, DEVB recently launched a pilot scheme for charging land premiums payable for redevelopment of industrial buildings at standard

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rates. If the pilot scheme was successfully implemented, DEVB would consider introducing similar standard premium schemes for other land uses so as to expedite the development of relevant sites. SDEV believed that the incoming Government would continue with the various good policies of the current-term Government.

17.37 PS/DEV(P&L) advised that the Steering Group under DEVB was exploring ways to streamline the procedures for processing land development/lease modification as well as vetting and approving building plans, including coordinating efforts to come up with a uniform set of criteria for vetting and approving building plans. She said that for example, if the development parameters approved by virtue of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap.131) ("TPO") had stipulated the building height restrictions, there was no need to incorporate height restriction clauses into the land leases concerned so as to obviate the need for making corresponding amendments to the lease conditions in case there was any amendment to the height restrictions in future. The plans for site coverage of greenery would be vetted and approved by the Buildings Department ("BD") centrally instead of being vetted and approved by LandsD and BD respectively as before. Moreover, the Steering Group would also examine if there was room for shortening and improving the vetting and approval timeframe and workflow stipulated in TPO and if there was any room for improving other relevant legislation (e.g. simplifying the procedures for handling objections); if so, the Steering Group would propose legislative amendments. D of L supplemented that LandsD had since 2019 set up task forces to handle issues involving the land leases of larger-scale development projects and to vet and approve building plans respectively, with a view to expediting the workflow.

17.38 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)202 that LandsD had cleared a total of nearly 30 000 government sites from unlawful occupation between 2018 and 2020. He was concerned why a large number of government sites were unlawfully occupied and how the situation could be prevented.

17.39 D of L advised that LandsD received over 10 000 complaint cases in relation to the unlawful occupation of government land each year. The nature of these complaint cases and the circumstances of suspected cases of occupation of government land were not entirely the same. In mid-2019,

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the Department set up the Special Duties Task Force ("the Task Force") to focus its work on handling 100 black spots involving the unlawful occupation of sizeable government land for brownfield operation. As at December 2020, the Task Force completed the clearance of 77 of such black spots, which involved a total of over 20 hectares of unlawfully occupied government land.

Building quality and safety

17.40 Mr Vincent CHENG declared that he was a non-executive director of the URA Board. Mr CHENG noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)019 that since the Administration launched the "Operation Building Bright 2.0" in 2018, a total of 1 173 buildings were approved in the first and second round of applications for Category 1 buildings as of end 2020, of which only 245 buildings were undergoing the prescribed inspection or repair works/had completed the prescribed repair works. Mr CHENG urged the Administration and URA, which was responsible for implementing the Scheme, to explore ways to expedite the progress of the relevant works. SDEV undertook that the Government would follow up members' suggestions with URA.

17.41 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)138 that BD had not conducted any survey on the number of unauthorized building works ("UBWs") erected on the exterior of private buildings across the territory in the past five years. He queried how BD determined the priority of enforcement actions against UBWs based on a "risk-based" approach if it had no information on the number of UBWs. Given that the problem of UBWs had remained unresolved for years, Mr TSE was concerned about the effectiveness of the relevant enforcement actions.

17.42 Director of Buildings ("DB") advised that under BD's enforcement policy against UBWs, which had been formulated in accordance with the "risk-based" principle, BD determined the order of priority for enforcement actions, including taking priority enforcement actions against newly built UBWs as well as UBWs constituting obvious or imminent danger to life or property, on the basis of its past experience in tackling UBWs having regard to the types of UBWs and the risks involved, rather than the findings of the survey on the number of UBWs.

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17.43 Mr Vincent CHENG welcomed that the Administration had sought the provision of \$1 billion through the Appropriation Bill 2021 for implementing the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme. He stated that as shown in the report prepared by the Task Force for the Study on Tenancy Control of Subdivided Units, it was estimated that there were about 100 900 subdivided units ("SDUs") in Hong Kong in 2020. However, he noted from Reply Serial Nos. DEVB(PL)112 and 115 that the number of SDUs inspected by BD had reduced from 3 045 in 2016 to 1 612 in 2019 and 1 045 in 2020. Mr CHENG enquired whether the Administration would allocate additional resources in the current financial year for enhancing the inspection of and enforcement work against SDUs (e.g. addressing the problem of pipe misconnections in SDUs), with a view to improving the living environment of SDUs.

17.44 In reply, DB stated that BD conducted inspections on SDUs and took enforcement actions against actionable building irregularities associated with SDUs through large-scale operations and upon receipt of reports. Due to a decrease in the number of reported cases received last year and the impacts of the epidemic, BD had to intermittently implement special work arrangements and reduce inspection work conducted through large-scale operations, resulting in a smaller number of SDUs inspected in 2020. With the epidemic subsiding, BD would conduct inspections on and take enforcement actions against SDUs according to the targets set in the relevant Controlling Officer's Report under the Estimates this year. Furthermore, many drainage works involving SDUs were minor works under the "Minor Works Control System". In this connection, BD had stepped up random inspections after the completion of such minor works and would strive to increase the ratio of random inspections. SDEV advised that owing to budgetary constraints, BD would increase the number of inspections of SDUs as far as possible through deploying the existing manpower first. In addition, BD would also try out new technologies (e.g. small unmanned aircrafts) to help enhance the efficiency of inspecting the external drainage systems of buildings.

Smart city development

17.45 Ms Elizabeth QUAT commended DEVB for its success in bringing the Common Spatial Data Infrastructure into service early and hoped that more government departments would share spatial data through

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that platform, with a view to promoting the development of Hong Kong into a smart city.

17.46 Mr Tony TSE noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(PL)139 that FC had approved funding in 2019 for BD to spearhead the development of an Electronic Submission Hub ("ESH") as a digital centralized portal for receiving and processing building plans and relevant applications submitted under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123), and ESH was expected to be fully commissioned in the second quarter of 2025. Given that the Administration was promoting the development of Hong Kong into a smart city, Mr Tony TSE was concerned why it would take as long as six years for BD to fully implement ESH.

17.47 SDEV replied that as it was necessary to allow time for the trade and the various relevant government departments to arrange manpower and adapt to the shift in the submission and processing of building plan applications from the current paper-based mode to the new electronic mode, BD would implement ESH in three stages with Stage 1 starting from the first quarter of 2022.

Green buildings

17.48 Ms Elizabeth QUAT suggested that the Administration should incorporate a clause into the tender and procurement policies, requiring contractors to give priority to the use of local recyclables. Director of Civil Engineering and Development advised that the Government had been encouraging contractors to reuse construction waste, including using glass sand as construction materials, and procure wood shredders to shred the trees removed during site formation works into wood chips for composting or other uses. The Government had also set up public fill reception facilities to receive inert construction waste which would be used for reclamation and as backfill materials. Such materials were used in, among others, the reclamation works for the three-runway system at the Hong Kong International Airport and in Tung Chung East. SDEV undertook that DEVB would study members' proposals with the Environment Bureau and the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau.

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18.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Michael WONG, Secretary for Development ("SDEV"), briefed members on the major initiatives and expenditure on the policy areas of works for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-16).

Modular Integrated Construction method

18.2 Mr LAU Kwok-fan noted from Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)019 that the Disciplined Services Quarters for the Fire Services Department in Pak Shing Kok and the Science Park project InnoCell were completed with the Modular Integrated Construction ("MiC") method, and the average construction cost per unit of the two projects stood high in the range of \$2 million to \$2.3 million. He pointed out that the construction cost per public housing unit was about \$0.6 million to \$0.9 million at present, and enquired whether the construction of buildings using the MiC method would result in a significant rise in the construction cost.

18.3 SDEV replied that the public housing units provided to tenants or owners were normally unmodified flats, while most of the disciplined services quarters units for the Fire Services Department were larger in size and were equipped with internal facilities. It was therefore difficult to make a direct comparison of the construction cost between the two. He pointed out that as revealed by a research study conducted by the University of Hong Kong, adopting the MiC method for the construction of buildings could have an average cost saving of about 10% per unit and a time saving of 30% to 50% when compared with those completed with the conventional construction method. The Government estimated that if more buildings in Hong Kong were constructed with the MiC method, there would be further room for reduction in the average construction cost per unit.

18.4 In response to Mr LAU Kwok-fan and Mr Holden CHOW's enquiries about how the MiC method might be applied in Hong Kong, Director of Architectural Services pointed out that the use of the MiC method in the Pak Shing Kok project had yielded encouraging results in terms of, among others, works quality and construction time. For buildings such as school classrooms and student dormitories, the layouts of which were rather repetitive, the use of the MiC method could enhance construction efficiency. SDEV added that the Housing Authority was studying the application of the MiC method in the construction of 40-storey

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public housing blocks, and Singapore was also undertaking a similar 50-storey building project. However, when the MiC method was used for constructing buildings, large precast modules had to be transported to the project site where cranes would be deployed for the erection and assembly of precast modules. There must be sufficient space around the construction sites of this type of building to accommodate the cranes. Hence, not all construction projects were suitable to apply the MiC method.

18.5 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok pointed out that MiC modules currently in use locally were mainly fabricated in Mainland factories. In his view, if the Administration could provide the local engineering industry with land for setting up factories, Hong Kong would be well placed to produce MiC modules locally without relying on imports from the Mainland, which at the same time could boost the development of the local construction industry. Mr Kenneth LAU also shared similar views. He suggested that the industry be incentivized to set up factories for the production of MiC modules in Hong Kong. In this connection, Ir Dr LO and Mr LAU enquired whether the Administration would provide resources such as land to the industry in order to support the industry in producing MiC modules on its own.

18.6 SDEV advised that given the shortage of land supply in Hong Kong, it was difficult to designate a large tract of land for the construction industry to set up factories for the production of MiC modules. Nevertheless, if the local construction industry intended to engage in the relevant production, the Government would be willing to render practicable assistance, including studying the availability of individual sites suitable for setting up such factories. He added that the Government had introduced various measures to facilitate the adoption of the MiC method in Hong Kong, including relaxing the relevant restrictions on the transportation of large MiC modules on local roads.

18.7 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok opined that Hong Kong's abundant natural rock resources, such as granite, would help strengthen the development of the construction materials supply industry in Hong Kong. In this connection, he enquired whether the Administration had explored the use of natural rock resources in Hong Kong.

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18.8 Permanent Secretary for Development (Works) ("PSD(W)") advised that the Civil Engineering and Development Department was studying ways to encourage the wider use of locally available natural rock materials, including using the rock materials generated from cavern development to produce concrete and asphalt for local construction projects.

Conservation of the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir

18.9 Referring to Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)012, Dr Priscilla LEUNG sought further explanation from the Administration on why the Antiquities and Monuments Office ("AMO") considered in 2017 that the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir was an ordinary water tank and approved the demolition works without any in-depth verification or site inspection. She also enquired whether the demolition of the structural parts of the service reservoir could be undone.

18.10 SDEV advised that in April 2017, when the Water Supplies Department ("WSD") consulted AMO on the site works of the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir, AMO considered that the waterworks was a water tank based on the information available then and its communication with WSD. In light of the development of the incident, WSD had commenced temporary strengthening and tidying up works for the service reservoir. The works included sorting and preservation of structural elements taken down earlier to facilitate future rehabilitation. The Antiquities Advisory Board ("AAB") also endorsed the proposed Grade 1 historic building status of the service reservoir in March. SDEV said that the way in which the relevant departments handled the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir project was less than satisfactory, and PSD(W) was leading a working group to review the handling of the incident by the relevant departments and to put forward improvement recommendations. Moreover, when handling similar cases in the future, AMO would request the departments concerned to provide specific details (such as photographs) of the facilities affected by the proposed works and deploy staff to conduct on-site inspection as far as practicable.

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18.11 Mr Vincent CHENG and Dr Priscilla LEUNG opined that the Administration should complete the restoration works of the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir as soon as possible, and develop the service reservoir into a new tourist attraction with conservation characteristics for visit by the public. Dr LEUNG pointed out that a number of small sitting-out facilities with rich local characteristics were mounted at the service reservoir and its surrounding area by members of the public on their own initiative. She suggested that the Administration should designate the area as a tourist attraction with local characteristics, and invite Mainland and overseas conservation or planning experts to give views on the relevant conservation work. Mr CHENG also suggested that WSD should develop the service reservoir and its surrounding area into an exhibition centre to showcase the water resources in Hong Kong.

18.12 SDEV advised that after completing the required strengthening and improvement works and ensuring the structural safety of the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir, the Government intended to allow restricted opening of the service reservoir for visit by the public in the form of guided tours within 2021. In addition, WSD had also launched an online virtual tour for the public to tour the service reservoir and appreciate its internal structures. In the long run, the Government would study ways to conserve the Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir and would take members' views into consideration.

Road infrastructure development

18.13 Referring to Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)050, Mr Michael TIEN pointed out that residents of Sham Tseng had been opposing the construction of a cycle track along the coastal area of Sham Tseng due to concerns about noise nuisance. If the Administration stuck to the plan of constructing a cycle track along the coastal area of Sham Tseng, the whole project would come to a standstill due to opposition from residents. In this connection, he requested the Administration to study the feasibility of constructing a cycle subway at Sham Tseng, with a view to completing the construction of the whole cycle track section from Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan as early as possible. Moreover, Mr TIEN also suggested that the design of cycling tracks should be improved, so that users of cycle tracks needed not dismount and push their bicycles when crossing road junctions with relatively little traffic.

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18.14 Director of Civil Engineering and Development ("DCED") said that the Government understood that residents of Sham Tseng had diverse views on the construction of a cycle track along the coastal area. The Government was studying the feasibility of constructing a waterfront promenade with a cycle track at Sham Tseng and consultation with the public was expected to take place by the end of 2021. As regards Mr TIEN's proposed construction of a cycle subway at Sham Tseng, DCED said that the Government had initially studied the proposal and come to the view that greater difficulty would be encountered in the construction of a cycle subway, as the design of such subway would be constrained by topography and safety issues must be considered.

18.15 Mr Holden CHOW pointed out that with the rapidly growing population of New Territories West ("NTW") in recent years, the transport infrastructure connecting NTW and the urban areas could hardly meet the needs of residents. He urged the Administration to expedite the planning and construction of Route 11 (between Yuen Long and North Lantau). SDEV advised that he would relay Mr CHOW's views to the Transport and Housing Bureau for follow-up.

Lift Modernization Subsidy Scheme

18.16 Referring to Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)071, Mr Vincent CHENG said that since the launch of two rounds of Lift Modernization Subsidy Scheme ("LIMSS") by the Administration in 2019, the modernization works had been completed for only 45 applications involving 102 lifts. He considered the implementation progress of the scheme too slow, and asked the Administration whether the shortage of local lift maintenance workers was a main cause for the slow progress of the scheme.

18.17 Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services advised that in the two rounds of LIMSS, a total of 1 646 applications had been approved, involving 5 094 lifts. He pointed out that as building owners generally needed time to decide whether to participate in the scheme and to draw up lift modernization proposals, the Government had anticipated relatively slow progress at the initial stage of the scheme. Moreover, hampered by the COVID-19 epidemic, many building owners whose applications for lift modernization works had been approved were unable to hold owners' meetings in the past year or so, thereby greatly affecting the implementation

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progress of the works. In view of this, the Government had relaxed some of the requirements to allow owners' corporations to decide on the lift modernization proposal without convening an owners' meeting in the hope that the implementation progress of the scheme could be expedited. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department would collaborate with the Urban Renewal Authority to provide assistance to the owners in order to expedite the implementation of the modernization works. SDEV added that the Government had stepped up training for local lift maintenance workers, and expected faster implementation progress as the scheme moved on to the construction stage.

Promoting digitalization of public works

18.18 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. DEVB(W)020 and DEVB(W)037, Mr Tony TSE and Mr LAU Kwok-fan expressed support for the Administration's continued efforts in actively developing the integrated digital platform to promote digitalization of public works. Mr TSE opined that the relevant data of government works projects on the integrated digital platform should be properly stored upon completion of such projects in order to facilitate application of the data in the future repair and maintenance of government infrastructure. Besides, Mr TSE suggested that the Administration should, through the integrated digital platform, step up its monitoring of the construction works of railway projects entrusted to the MTR Corporation Limited to prevent cost overruns and project delays.

18.19 SDEV advised that the Government was actively promoting digitalization of public works. From 2022 onwards, certain works projects would be required to use only electronic drawings. Relevant departments would be able to perform repair and maintenance through the inspection of electronic drawings in the future. It was believed that this would enhance the efficiency of such work. Head of Project Strategy and Governance Office supplemented that starting from April 2020, all new capital works contracts with a value of over \$300 million should adopt the digital works supervision system. As at February 2021, over 70 public works contracts with a total value of over \$130 billion had adopted the digital works supervision system. Response from the industry had been positive and it was recognized that the system could enhance the efficiency of site supervision, ensure works quality and uplift construction safety.

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18.20 Mr LAU Kwok-fan said that at present, the Government normally engaged consultancy firms to conduct site inspection for government works projects. He was worried that site engineering staff would need to take a great deal of time to perform project record keeping duties as required under the supervision system, thereby increasing their work burden. He enquired whether the establishment of the integrated digital platform could reduce the workload of site engineering staff on project record keeping.

18.21 SDEV said that the integrated digital platform could facilitate performance of project record keeping work by site engineering staff and avoid omission of records as a result of oversight or negligence. Moreover, site personnel could easily access the project data stored on the integrated digital platform, thereby reducing the chance of losing project records in paper form.

Water quality control

18.22 Referring to Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)089, Mr Tony TSE pointed out that the Administration's reply did not expound on the effectiveness of the Water Safety Plan Subsidy Scheme and whether the scheme had achieved the benefits intended. In this connection, he sought further explanation from the Administration.

18.23 SDEV replied that based on the past experience of implementing the Water Safety Plan Subsidy Scheme, the Government believed that the scheme could enhance drinking water safety of private buildings. However, as building owners were unable to convene an owners' meeting to endorse participation in the scheme amid the COVID-19 epidemic, the number of applications for subsidies was fewer than expected.

Facilitating architectural and engineering sectors to practise in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

18.24 Mr Tony TSE pointed out that according to the Interim Guidelines for the Management of Hong Kong Engineering Construction Consultant Enterprises and Professionals Starting Business and Practising in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Cities ("Interim Guidelines"), consultant firms on the lists of the Architectural and Associated Consultants Selection Board of the Architectural Services

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Department and the Engineering and Associated Consultants Selection Board of the Civil Engineering and Development Department were allowed to directly provide services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area by obtaining equivalent qualifications on the Mainland through a registration system. He pointed out that some consultant firms currently not on the lists of approved consultants for public works projects of the Government were also interested in starting business/practising in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area cities. He enquired whether the authorities would relax the relevant requirements, so that such consultant firms might benefit from the Interim Guidelines.

18.25 SDEV advised that it was reasonable for the Government to impose certain requirements on consultant firms on the list of approved consultants for public works projects. He took note of the views of Mr TSE and would study whether there was room for adjustment to the system on the premise of ensuring the professional standards of firms taking part in the scheme.

Promoting green building

18.26 Mr Tony TSE commented that while the Development Bureau had been actively promoting green building in recent years, other departments had made relatively slow progress in this regard. He urged the Administration to more actively incentivize various departments to incorporate green building features into public works projects, such as encouraging the Education Bureau to adopt green building practices in the construction of schools, and encouraging non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") to incorporate green building features when implementing works projects funded by the Government and engage local consultant firms to undertake the relevant works projects.

18.27 SDEV said that the Development Bureau had been working with the Environment Bureau in promoting green building in Hong Kong. Various government departments would continue to promote such efforts, and study how to encourage and subsidize NGOs to incorporate green building features when carrying out construction works.

Chapter XIX : Education

19.1 At the Deputy Chairman's invitation, Mr Kevin YEUNG, Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure on the policy area of education for the coming year (Appendix IV-17).

Post-secondary education

19.2 Mrs Regina IP pointed out that according to Reply Serial No. EDB112, the number of students enrolled in full-time programmes not funded by the University Grants Committee ("UGC") was extremely undesirable, with the number of students being as low as seven for individual institutions. She queried whether the policy of education industrialization implemented since 2009 was a failure. While continuously allocating resources to self-financing post-secondary education, the Government seemed to have neglected vocational and professional education and training ("VPET") programmes which were needed by present-day society.

19.3 SED advised that since the term of the last Government, post-secondary education services had no longer been developed as an industry. The current objective of the Education Bureau ("EDB") was to raise the quality of self-financing post-secondary institutions. To this end, EDB was examining the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) in the light of the recommendations of the Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education, and had consulted the Panel on Education on the proposed amendments to the Ordinance. For the stable and healthy development of the self-financing post-secondary sector, the proposed amendments included the development of a mechanism for the deregistration of institutions which fell short of the prescribed standards, with a view to ensuring that their self-financing post-secondary programmes attained an appropriate level. The Government also attached great importance to promoting VPET. As such, the Government had been providing direct subsidy to the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") so that it could have sufficient financial resources to provide relevant programmes and services for its students.

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19.4 Mr SHIU Ka-fai said that in recent years, the Administration had devoted quite a lot of resources to post-secondary education, attracting many Mainland students to pursue university education in Hong Kong. However, the social incidents in 2019 had led to an exodus of Mainland students back to the Mainland. He asked whether the Administration had any relevant figures, including the number of Mainland students studying in the post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong in the past, their attrition rate, and the financial implications of the reduction in the number of Mainland students on the institutions.

19.5 SED advised that in the 2020 school year, the number of Mainland students coming to pursue university education in Hong Kong had not dropped significantly, and the number of those applying for admission to local university programmes for the 2021 school year had also rebounded to the previous level. However, under the epidemic, there was a need for universities to make different operational arrangements, such as adjusting the mode of delivering lessons and making confinement and quarantine arrangements for Mainland students.

Vocational and professional education and training

19.6 Mr Holden CHOW noted from Reply Serial No. EDB254 that the student intakes of higher diploma programmes of the institutes under VTC had decreased from 10 449 in the 2014/15 school year to 8 359 in the 2020/21 school year. He enquired whether EDB would put in more resources to attract students to apply for admission to VPET programmes, so as to nurture talents for re-industrialization in Hong Kong and the innovation and technology industries. SED explained that the drop in the student intake of VTC was probably related to the decrease in the number of Secondary 6 graduates in recent years. Notwithstanding this, the Administration would continue to actively promote VPET.

19.7 Mr YIU Si-wing noted from Reply Serial No. EDB224 that the number of planned places of diploma/certificate programmes of the Hotel and Tourism Institute, the Chinese Culinary Institute and the International Culinary Institute under VTC had been reduced from 1 185 in the 2019/20 school year to 890 in the 2020/21 school year, but the actual intake in the 2020/21 school year had been 907. He enquired whether the number of places had been wrongly estimated. The Executive Director, Vocational

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Training Council ("ED/VTC") explained that in estimating the number of planned places, VTC would take into account relevant manpower surveys and the future demand of the industries concerned. While discrepancies between estimations and the actual situation were sometimes inevitable, VTC would appropriately deploy resources in the light of the actual situation so that the relevant programmes would not be affected as a result of discrepancies in estimations.

19.8 Mr Vincent CHENG said that as reflected by some members of the trades engaged in lift repair and building renovation works, there was an acute shortage of manpower in such trades. Considering that there was much room for development for the ethnic minorities in such trades, he enquired whether consideration would be given to taking measures to attract and assist more ethnic minority students to apply for admission to the engineering programmes run by VTC, so that they could obtain formal qualifications for further studies or employment, thereby meeting the manpower demand of such trades.

19.9 In response, SED advised that in planning its programmes, VTC would estimate the number of places to be provided by gauging the views of the trades concerned on their future manpower demand. However, it would take students several years to complete their studies and by that time, the demand of the relevant trades might be slightly different from the original estimations. All along, all eligible persons had been welcome to apply for admission to VTC's programmes, and no arrangements had been made for reserving places for the ethnic minorities. To raise the success rate of non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students being admitted, VTC would accept other equivalent qualifications submitted by NCS students in lieu of the requirement for the Chinese Language subject. ED/VTC supplemented that nowadays, the pathway for ethnic minority students had become wider, with successful examples of them pursuing careers in industries such as information technology, design and hospitality. VTC was actively discussing with the lift repair trade the details of a "master level" diploma programme, with a view to launching such a programme as soon as possible to attract more students to apply for admission.

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Primary and secondary education

Senior secondary Liberal Studies subject

19.10 Referring to Reply Serial No. EDB148, Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed disappointment that the Administration had not compiled any statistics on the number of schools adopting "textbooks" of the senior secondary Liberal Studies subject ("LS") which had completed the professional consultancy service. She considered that the selection and use of textbooks by schools had to be monitored closely. SED explained that the list of "textbooks" which had completed the professional consultancy service had been uploaded to the website of EDB. As schools were allowed to select and use their own LS "textbooks" or school-based teaching materials, the Administration had not compiled any statistics on the number of schools adopting "textbooks" which had completed the professional consultancy service.

19.11 Dr Priscilla LEUNG and Mr Holden CHOW were concerned about the details of the forthcoming Citizenship and Social Development subject ("CSD"), including teacher training, teaching materials, pedagogy and the assessment method. They enquired whether the Administration would provide training to teachers, assess teachers' knowledge in the subject and strengthen inspection, so as to ensure that teachers would impart accurate knowledge. In addition, they opined that as far as that subject was concerned, the teaching materials relating to the Constitution and the Basic Law had to be standardized. They suggested that the Administration draw reference from television programmes on the Mainland and adopt a soft approach to impart knowledge about the national situation. Dr LEUNG also opined that students' performance in CSD should not be assessed in the form of multiple-choice questions.

19.12 SED and Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") advised that since the 2020/21 school year, EDB had added contents relating to the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security education to the training for newly appointed teachers, serving teachers as well as teachers to be promoted in order to enhance their understanding of "One Country, Two Systems", national security and national development. Earlier on, EDB provided training on the National Security Law and the concept of the rule of law in Hong Kong in the form of webinars, attracting the participation of

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a total of 4 000-odd teachers. Currently, the Bureau was compiling teaching materials for the teaching modules on the Constitution and the Basic Law. Given that CSD would be introduced to Secondary 4 in September 2021, it would not be feasible in terms of time if each teacher was required to undergo training and be assessed before he or she could teach the subject. In fact, except for the Chinese Language and English Language subjects, EDB did not assess teachers in respect of other subjects. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority would review in detail the examination contents of CSD and design suitable assessment methods. There were two kinds of inspections and they were conducted on the general school level and the subject level respectively. If there was a need to understand the implementation of the curriculum and teaching in schools, manpower for inspections on the subject level could be expanded. EDB would, in light of the actual situation, strengthen inspections as appropriate when the new subject was introduced.

Life planning

19.13 Noting from Reply Serial No. EDB098 that the expenditure on the "Career and Life Planning Grant" had increased over the past three years, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired whether life planning education ("LPE") had met the target in terms of its effectiveness. In response, SED pointed out that the main objective of LPE was to enable students to think about their interests as early as possible and plan their future development pathway according to their own abilities. EDB actively strengthened business-school partnership and invited representatives from various trades to hold seminars. Dr CHIANG urged the Administration to consider conducting a survey to compile statistics on the number of students who had a clear idea of their development pathway when they graduated.

Support for primary and secondary students

19.14 Mr KWOK Wai-keung said that as reflected by some teachers, since only a small number of students had gone back to school during the epidemic, certain schools had not ordered lunchboxes for needy students under the assistance programme of Free Lunch at Schools ("the assistance programme"). Mr KWOK enquired whether cash allowance could be disbursed on an accountable basis for needy students to buy lunch on their own. SED advised that during the epidemic, primary schools only had

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half-day face-to-face classes, and not all students could return to schools. The Administration was aware that some schools had encountered difficulties in identifying lunchbox suppliers because of the declining number of lunchboxes to be ordered. The Administration considered that disbursing cash allowance might not be of genuine help to needy students. However, it would continue to keep in close contact with schools so as to provide feasible support to needy students in a timely manner.

19.15 Ms Alice MAK pointed out that some secondary students from grassroots families hoped that the Government could provide a lunch subsidy to alleviate their financial burden. She urged the Administration to consider extending the assistance programme to secondary students and asked how it would support grassroots secondary students if the assistance programme could not be revised. SED explained that the current practice of providing lunch through schools would be difficult to be implemented in secondary schools. For the proper use of public resources, the Administration had no plan at present to revise the eligibility criteria for the assistance programme. Nevertheless, it would actively explore ways to provide other feasible support for grassroots secondary students in a timely manner.

National security and national education

19.16 While acknowledging the Administration's efforts in promoting national education and national security education, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan noticed that the extent of participation in the National Security Education Day ("the Education Day") varied among schools. For instance, some schools proactively did a lot of explaining among their students, while some other schools merely played videos, and distributed pamphlets and souvenirs to their students. He enquired about the measures in place to improve the quality of the implementation of national security education by schools.

19.17 SED advised that EDB had issued circulars to schools in February 2021 to provide guidelines on school administration and education in relation to safeguarding national security, and information about the implementation mode of national security education under the school curriculum as well as the relevant learning and teaching resources. The circulars also set out the respective functions to be performed by school

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sponsoring bodies, school governance authorities and all levels of school personnel in devising and implementing relevant measures, and the requirement for schools to submit annual reports and future work plans. Apart from examining documents submitted by schools, the Bureau would also conduct school visits and inspections to review schools' efforts in implementing national security education.

19.18 Dr CHENG Chung-tai observed that on the Education Day, some training schools of the disciplinary forces had been open to visits by students. In an activity session, arrangements were made for primary students to participate in a simulated law enforcement operation conducted inside an MTR train compartment. Photos of this activity were widely circulated, arousing negative associations with the social incidents in 2019 among members of the public. He considered that such kind of education activities were superficial and failed to disseminate the concept of administering state affairs well and ensuring national security. He enquired whether EDB had communicated with other departments in coordinating for the Education Day and reminded them of the issues to note when conducting education activities. SED advised that different people might have different views on the same photo, and it was difficult to comment on or negate the arrangements made by individual departments. He believed that the departments would learn from past experience when hosting the same kind of activities in the future. In regard to the area of education, EDB would have the elements of national security education naturally linked up with and integrated into the curriculum contents of various subjects.

19.19 Mr KWOK Wai-keung was concerned about reports of local university students from the Mainland taking part in anti-Chinese activities after their return to the Mainland, and considered it necessary to strengthen national security education in tertiary institutions. SED responded that students from the Mainland would inevitably come into contact with different people and different information in Hong Kong. EDB had made a conscious effort to discuss with the various post-secondary institutions the launch of programmes and activities relating to national security education.

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19.20 Mr YIU Si-wing noted from Reply Serial No. EDB017 that the number of post-secondary students joining Mainland exchange programmes from the 2016/17 school year to the 2018/19 school year had showed a downward trend. Mr YIU enquired about the reasons for the reduction in the number of students and whether concrete measures, including increasing the budget in this respect, would be put in place in future to allow more post-secondary, primary and secondary students to join Mainland exchange programmes, so as to strengthen their sense of national identity. He also asked whether teachers had been provided with training on the proposed itineraries of Mainland exchange programmes, preparatory work and team leading.

19.21 SED advised that according to his understanding, apart from the Mainland exchange programmes funded by the Government, post-secondary institutions as well as many public and private organizations on the Mainland and in Hong Kong also provided local post-secondary students with many Mainland and overseas exchange opportunities which had not been included in the statistics compiled by EDB. The Bureau would decide whether to increase the budget in future in the light of actual needs. For exchange programmes with specific themes, the Bureau would invite teachers to conduct site visits in advance so as to deepen their understanding of the themes and itineraries concerned. Mr YIU requested the Administration to provide after the meeting information on the number of post-secondary students joining non-government funded Mainland exchange programmes.

Monitoring the quality of teachers and teaching materials

19.22 Referring to Reply Serial No. EDB123, Ms Alice MAK noted that the Administration had neither compiled statistics on reported cases of improper content of textbooks and outside-school reading materials nor categorized the complaints by types. She enquired about the measures put in place by the Bureau to ensure the quality of textbooks, reference books and extracurricular reading materials.

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19.23 SED advised that EDB had put in place a rigorous textbook review mechanism to ensure the quality of textbooks. As for school-based teaching materials, it was incumbent upon schools to exercise school-based monitoring and regularly review the content and quality of learning and teaching resources for various Key Learning Areas and across different subjects. All complaints received in relation to teaching would be addressed squarely and handled seriously by the Bureau. Given the extensive coverage of such complaints, and with quite a number of them involving multiple allegations, the complaints had not been categorized by types.

19.24 Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that closed-circuit television systems ("CCTVs") should be installed in classrooms since installing CCTVs was more effective than conducting school inspections. CCTVs would not only assist parents in keeping abreast of their children's learning progress, but also provide evidence to protect teachers against false accusations. Teachers needed not worry about being monitored by CCTVs so long as they upheld professionalism. Some parents also expressed support for this proposal.

19.25 Dr CHIANG Lai-wan considered that apart from their application in monitoring whether there was any bullying incident on campus, CCTVs could also help improve student discipline. She noted that many parents hoped CCTVs could be installed in classrooms and that similar practices were adopted in other countries. To allay teachers' concerns, the Bureau might consider allowing schools to determine on their own whether CCTVs would be used for capturing images only with the audio recording function disabled. In reply, SED stated that EDB had not made any decision on the installation of CCTVs in classrooms. While understanding the concerns of some parents, he stressed that the Bureau placed its trust in teachers' professionalism and hence would take into account the feelings of teachers as well. It would also continue to discuss the proposal with parent groups.

19.26 Mr Tommy CHEUNG enquired about the source of the number of complaints on suspected professional misconduct of teachers in relation to the social incidents in 2019 as set out in Reply Serial No. EDB092. SED advised that all the complaints received by EDB had been included in the said figure.

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Schools' handling of suspected cases of child maltreatment and domestic violence

19.27 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan was concerned about a recent court case involving a child who had been abused to death and asked whether schools could effectively handle suspected cases of child maltreatment and domestic violence in accordance with the existing EDB guidelines, whether there was a need to enhance the reporting mechanism, and whether additional resources would be allocated to assist schools in identifying and handling child abuse cases at an early stage.

19.28 Mr Michael TIEN considered that schools and teachers should be in the best position to identify child abuse cases at an early stage. Many countries had already enacted legislation to make reporting of suspected cases mandatory. Mr TIEN enquired whether EDB would undertake to study the practices adopted in other countries and take the lead in discussing the possibility of enacting local legislation. He suggested that EDB should provide a list of the obvious signs of child abuse and enact legislation requiring the parties concerned to report cases with such signs.

19.29 SED advised that the existing relevant guidelines served to call upon schools to pay attention to students' conditions from time to time for early identification and intervention, and to remind schools to take appropriate measures to provide the children concerned and their families with necessary assistance. EDB would continuously review the guidelines so as to reduce the risks of students being abused. However, the handling of child abuse cases involved many different parties, including not only schools, but also other people/units such as doctors, social workers and organizations providing services for children, and it was impossible for schools to shoulder the responsibility of identification entirely. Children welfare was under the policy purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB"), and there was a need for the question of whether or not to legislate to be discussed in detail by various sectors of society.

19.30 Ms Elizabeth QUAT stated that various sectors of society had already had thorough discussion of the subject of protecting children from maltreatment and were awaiting the Government's determination to legislate. LWB and EDB should accord high priority to handling issues relating to child protection, including the issuance of clear administrative instructions

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making it mandatory for teachers to report suspected cases of child maltreatment to the Social Welfare Department.

19.31 SED stressed that the Bureau was very concerned about the well-being of children and had included it as one of the work priorities. In the past two years, EDB adopted various administrative measures, including enhancing communications with schools, requiring schools to report students' prolonged absence from school and organizing relevant workshops to assist teachers in identifying and handling problematic cases at an early stage. EDB would continue to discuss with LWB the ways for improving the relevant child policies to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents.

School bullying

19.32 Referring to Reply Serial No. EDB120, Mr KWOK Wai-keung said that to his understanding, the actual numbers of complaints and reported cases involving school bullying had far exceeded those provided by the Administration. He enquired whether such figures covered the school bullying cases associated with the social incidents in 2019 and how the Administration had followed up school bullying incidents, for example, in addition to providing counselling services to the bullied, whether there were measures to rectify the moral values of the bullies. SED advised that the figures provided by the Bureau had already covered all the complaints and reported cases received. For cases which had been resolved at the school level, they would not be reflected in the figures.

Vaccination of teachers and school staff

19.33 Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired whether EDB knew the number of teachers who had received vaccination and whether it would provide incentives to encourage teachers to get vaccinated. In reply, SED pointed out that teachers and school staff had been included in the vaccination priority groups and that EDB also encouraged teachers to receive vaccination. Under the existing arrangements, the Government would consider allowing a school to resume half-day face-to-face classes if that school could arrange for all its teachers and staff to take regular virus tests or receive two doses of the vaccines. The Government currently had no data regarding the vaccination of teachers and school staff. However, it could compile such statistics at the request of Mr SHIU.

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20.1 At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Mr John LEE, Secretary for Security ("S for S") briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure on the policy area of security for 2021-2022 (Appendix IV-18).

Police

20.2 Referring to the number of vacancies on the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"), Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed concern about the adequacy of police manpower and equipment, particularly against the possible threats from local terrorism. Noting from Reply Serial No. SB041 that the numbers of officers recruited by the Police Force in 2020-2021 was still far from reaching the recruitment targets, Mr Christopher CHEUNG enquired about the reasons for that, as well as future manpower planning and ways to improve the vacancy situation. Mr Holden CHOW was concerned about the drop in the number of applicants for police posts over the past year or two, and asked whether HKPF would consider stepping up auxiliary police recruitment.

20.3 S for S said that some media outlets had been defaming the Police Force over the past period of time, which indeed had a negative impact on the Force. Commissioner of Police ("CP") elaborated that the Force guarded against local terrorism mainly through intelligence gathering and operations. As regards police manpower, 70% and 40% of the recruitment targets for probationary inspectors and police constables, respectively, were achieved in 2020-2021. Last year, the Force encountered many challenges in recruitment. There was a 30% drop in the number of police applications. The reasons included damage to the prestige of the police stemming from discrediting remarks against the Force, applicants' concerns about excess workload, peer pressure and online doxing, etc. This year, although the recruitment situation had gradually stabilized, there was a drop in the number of applicants who met the physical fitness requirements. In this connection, HKPF had provided physical fitness training for persons who were interested in joining the Force with a view to improving their fitness levels. It had also stepped up publicity of the Police Mentorship Programme in order to enhance mentees' understanding of the police recruitment process and optimize the application process. Besides, HKPF had enhanced recruitment publicity targeting specific applicants (e.g. those with several years of working experience), which had resulted in an increase in the number of such applicants. To alleviate the manpower shortage, the

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retirement age for police officers appointed before 2000 was raised to 60. HKPF would also enhance auxiliary police recruitment. As a matter of fact, the number of applicants in response to auxiliary police had nearly doubled in 2019-2020, and a considerable number of auxiliary officers had joined the regular force. In terms of equipment, HKPF had introduced flame-retardant, corrosive-resistant anti-riot protective suits, as well as pistol-sized pepper ball launchers, tear spray guns and other non-lethal, short-range weapons.

20.4 Mr Christopher CHEUNG, Mr CHAN Hak-kan, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan, Mr Holden CHOW and Mr Vincent CHENG expressed gratitude to the Security Bureau and the disciplinary forces for their dedication in maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong, as well as their participation in anti-epidemic work. Mr SHIU suggested that HKPF should strengthen the publicity of its publication "OffBeat" and, through this publication, help members of the public discern fact from fiction so that they would not be easily misled by fabricated news. Mr CHOW said that the Government should launch an all-out effort to stop the smears against the Force. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok suggested that the Security Bureau should take more proactive enforcement actions in this regard.

20.5 S for S thanked members for their appreciation and support. He said that the disciplinary forces would unite as one and stay vigilant in ensuring the stability of Hong Kong. While order in the community had broadly resumed, risks still remained. For instance, some lawbreakers continued to incite and advocate Hong Kong independence and various vandalizing acts through different media, publications, arts and culture, etc., thereby endangering national security. A number of external forces, through their agents in Hong Kong, used fabricated news and false information to incite hatred, create discord in society and frighten people. Apart from law enforcement, the community must build a common awareness of law-abiding, promote justice, and instill in young people a sense of social responsibilities and an awareness of national security. CP stressed that the Force would conduct thorough investigation into anyone who used fabricated news to jeopardize Hong Kong's security, and that arrests and prosecutions would be made when sufficient evidence was found.

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20.6 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB050, Dr Junius HO expressed concern about the progress of the Police's investigation into the persons arrested in connection with the anti-extradition bill incidents. S for S stressed that HKPF and the Department of Justice ("DoJ") had been proactively conducting the relevant work. CP said that the Force had arrested more than 10 000 persons so far, and over 2 500 had been prosecuted. Among those being prosecuted, about 1 100 had undergone judicial proceedings. More than 70% of the arrestees had been convicted, sentenced or bound over, with about 1 400 still pending court appearance. For the remaining some 7 000 cases, the Force would make every effort to conduct investigation and collect evidence; and some cases were pending instructions from DoJ. Mr Holden CHOW urged HKPF and DoJ to expedite the handling of these cases.

20.7 Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the progress of the study on and the legislative timetable for the introduction of the offence of insulting a police officer. S for S responded that the Security Bureau and the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") were concerned about the issue. The issue did not only concern the Force but also other frontline public officers in various areas. The Security Bureau had conducted a relevant legal study on the subject for reference of CSB and would consult DoJ. Furthermore, the Chief Executive had indicated earlier that the work on enacting legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers was yet to reach an advanced stage, and the Government had to deal with other more pressing issues.

20.8 Mr Frankie YICK expressed concern about the use of body-worn video cameras ("BWVCs") by the Police and opined that the use of BWVCs might significantly reduce the time taken by disciplinary forces for handling complaints. He suggested that the use of BWVCs be extended to other law enforcement departments. S for S pointed out that past experience showed that, in addition to providing objective evidence, BWVCs were effective in de-escalating most confrontational situations. The Security Bureau was prepared to consider the introduction of BWVCs to other disciplinary forces. CP added that the Force currently had 10 000 BWVCs, and the majority of frontline police officers, including traffic wardens, were equipped with them; an additional 5 000 BWVCs had been procured. By 2022, all frontline police officers were expected to be equipped with BWVCs. More BWVCs would be procured as and when necessary.

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20.9 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB092, Mr Frankie YICK requested the Administration to step up enforcement against illegal carriage of passengers for reward. CP said that the Police was very concerned about the situation regarding illegal carriage of passengers for reward. In 2020, 49 prosecutions were instituted against illegal carriage of passengers for reward, representing a drop when compared to 2019, which was mainly due to the decrease in the number of people travelling to and from the airport amid the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, the Court of Final Appeal ruled in September 2020 that the carriage of passengers for reward by Uber drivers was illegal. The Police would continue to take corresponding enforcement actions.

Processing of non-refoulement claims

20.10 Ms Elizabeth QUAT was concerned that there were more than 1 200 non-refoulement claims in 2020 and, as at the end of February 2021, there were some 700 pending completion of screening by the Immigration Department ("ImmD"). She queried why the number of claims had not decreased when most of the flights had been suspended due to the epidemic, as well as how the authorities would combat abuse of the system and expedite the screening process. Furthermore, she expressed concern about claimants committing criminal offences and enquired about the related detention facilities.

20.11 S for S explained that despite the implementation of stringent immigration control measures at the airport and boundary control points in response to the epidemic, there had been a rise in the number of illegal immigrants (including non-refoulement claimants) arriving in Hong Kong via sea route. ImmD and HKPF would step up efforts to combat illegal entry. Moreover, the Security Bureau and the Mainland Ministry of Public Security had carried out joint law enforcement operations to combat illegal entry, involving Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan and Xinjiang.

20.12 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB017, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan said that 2021 saw an upsurge in the number of non-ethnic Chinese persons (mostly non-refoulement claimants) arrested for shop theft. She enquired about the measures to raise their law-abiding awareness. Referring to Reply Serial No. SB012, Dr Junius HO expressed concern about the detention capacity of the Castle Peak Bay Immigration Centre and the Tai Tam Gap Correctional

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Institution (together accommodating 600 detainees) and their utilization rates, given the risks to public safety posed by non-refoulement claimants. He opined that the Government should take public interest and security into consideration when formulating the detention policy.

20.13 S for S advised that currently, due to the limited availability of detention facilities in Hong Kong, ImmD handled and followed up cases of non-refoulement claims by way of detention and regular reporting to ImmD in parallel. When determining whether a claimant should be detained, ImmD would adhere strictly to the law while taking into account the circumstances of each claimant, such as whether the claimant had committed a serious crime or was likely to pose a risk to the safety of the community, as well as their likelihood of abscondance. The Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution to be commissioned shortly would have a detention capacity of 160, thereby expanding ImmD's capacity for handling more detention cases. The Security Bureau would continue to explore ways to increase detention facilities and strive to enhance law-abiding awareness among claimants.

Drug situation in Hong Kong

20.14 Mr Jimmy NG said that according to the figures from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse, although the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2020 had declined by 4% compared to 2009, there were substantial increases to the number of cannabis and ketamine abusers, particularly young abusers aged under 21, by 20% and 76% respectively. The median drug history of newly reported cases was 5.1 years, indicating that the issue of hidden drug abuse still persisted. He enquired how the Administration would enhance anti-drug publicity and step up the combat against drug abuse. Commissioner for Narcotics ("C for N") advised that the anti-drug work in Hong Kong had yielded positive results with the concerted efforts of various sectors of the community, and the drug problem was generally under control. That said, there had been an increasing trend of cannabis and ketamine abuse among young people in recent years. In this connection, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau would continue to strengthen the relevant preventive education and publicity ("PE&P") efforts. In addition, the Beat Drugs Fund, which was established by the Government with a capital base of \$3.35 billion, would provide funding to various organizations on a

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sustainable basis for participating in anti-drug work. Since its establishment, the Beat Drugs Fund had funded 1 720 projects with a funding of more than \$1.9 billion .

20.15 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB019, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired about the effectiveness of the Healthy School Programme with a Drug Testing Component ("HSP(DT)"). Noting that the Beat Drugs Fund had granted \$53.47 million and \$161 million in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 respectively to finance anti-drug PE&P projects, she enquired about the purpose of the increased funding. C for N advised that HSP(DT) was launched in the 2011/12 school year with the aim of fostering a "healthy and drug-free" school culture. Participating schools might, on their own or in collaboration with NGOs, organize diversified personal growth programmes and arrange voluntary school drug testing for students. Despite the impact of the epidemic, the number of participating schools had increased annually since the launch of the programme, with the 2011/12 school year recording a 4% increase to 182. The programme had also received strong support from parents of participating schools. The authorities would continue with the publicity efforts, including arranging for participating schools to share their experiences with non-participating schools. Furthermore, the Government had all along been committed to promoting general anti-drug PE&P and would deploy the resources as appropriate.

Immigration matters

20.16 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB104, Mr YIU Si-wing pointed out that Hong Kong's inbound and outbound passenger traffic had plummeted due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and enquired about the manpower arrangements at the boundary control points. Moreover, with the epidemic gradually coming under control and immigration clearance services expected to resume normalcy next year, he also enquired how the relevant services would be strengthened. S for S said that although passenger clearance services at most of the control points had been suspended, cargo clearance remained in operation. The Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED") and ImmD would deploy manpower flexibly having regard to the actual circumstances, so as to spare manpower to support anti-epidemic work, among other efforts, while ensuring normal operation at the boundary control points. He pointed out that the number of disciplined services personnel deployed each day to support anti-epidemic efforts peaked at

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nearly 3 000. Upon resumption of passenger clearance services at boundary control points, normal immigration clearance service would be maintained; where necessary, additional staff would be deployed and additional resources would be sought by the relevant departments.

20.17 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB099, Mr YIU Si-wing enquired about the measures to assist Hong Kong residents stranded overseas and on the Mainland during the epidemic in obtaining proof of identity, passports or other travel documents, and to ensure dissemination of relevant information to them. S for S advised that the Security Bureau and ImmD had been actively exploring the provision of online services for application of personal documents despite the challenges on how to verify an applicant's identity. Nevertheless, continued efforts would be made to overcome the challenges and make use of technology to bring further convenience to the public. At present, ImmD had introduced the "Smart Renewal" service to enable the processing of online applications for visas for further employment of foreign domestic helpers and the public response was positive. Director of Immigration supplemented that a 24-hour hotline ((852)1868) had been set up by ImmD to provide emergency assistance for Hong Kong residents staying outside Hong Kong. When in need, members of the public could call the 1868 Hotline by phone or using network data to make a call via the Immigration Department Mobile Application.

Correctional services

20.18 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB075, Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed concern about juvenile arrestees convicted in the anti-extradition bill disturbances and how the authorities would assist juveniles in rehabilitation. She pointed out that she had suggested on various occasions that a specialized court be set up by the relevant departments by drawing reference from the practices adopted by the government of the United Kingdom for dealing with the disturbances in 2011, and a systematic approach be adopted to follow up with the provision of counselling services to juvenile offenders. She enquired about the Administration's follow-up work in this respect.

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20.19 S for S advised that the Government had all along attached great importance to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders as well as the promotion of law-abiding awareness and positive values among them. Also, the Chief Executive had indicated that the Police would only consider dealing with juvenile offenders by way of the Police Superintendent's Discretion Scheme ("PSDS") with the prerequisite that they must admit their wrongdoings. PSDS had a built-in counselling element with joint participation of relevant government departments and non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"). Commissioner of Correctional Services added that in view of the large number of juveniles recently admitted to correctional institutions, the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") had established a Youth Lab to assist young persons in custody ("PICs") to undergo psychological rebuilding, restore positive values, understand Chinese history and receive civic education. CSD would communicate with parents to strengthen the relationship between the parents and their juvenile children in custody. It would also organize different events in collaboration with religious groups and NGOs. As some young PICs were required to be placed under supervision after being discharged from correctional institutions, CSD had planned to set up a specialized psychological counselling centre to provide community-based psychological counselling for young PICs after release and to reform their values. Besides, CSD and HKPF had jointly launched the "Walk with YOUTH Programme" to instil positive values in young PICs through various activities. The programme had received positive response and would prevail.

20.20 Dr Priscilla LEUNG hoped that the Administration would seek additional resources in due course to play a more active role in advancing the counselling work for juvenile offenders, such as the adoption of "roundtable trials" for juvenile offenders with reference to the practice of some countries. In addition, she expressed concern about the follow-up work on adult offenders arrested and convicted in connection with the anti-extradition bill disturbances. S for S said that the "roundtable trial" proposal involved the entire judicial system and hence would need to be studied. Commissioner of Correctional Services added that CSD had provided rehabilitative services to PICs of different ages for two decades. The Psychological Services Section of CSD would provide psychological services to PICs with the aim to improve their institutional adjustment and general mental health as well as to change their offending behaviours.

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Fire service

20.21 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. SB009 and SB010, Mr Vincent CHENG enquired about the Administration's timetable for the public consultation exercise in respect of the amendments to the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572). Furthermore, he noted that although the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme had received enthusiastic response, there were not many applications that had completed fire safety improvement works and complied with Fire Safety Directions. He enquired about the measures to expedite the progress of the works and the support to be provided to "three-nil buildings", such as the progress of the provision of the "two treasures of firefighting tools" (i.e. fire extinguishers and fire blankets).

20.22 S for S advised that the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") had various programmes in place to provide support for owners of "three-nil buildings" in the formation of owners' corporations in order to carry out fire safety improvement. In the short term, the Security Bureau would distribute fire blankets and extinguishers, on a pilot basis, to residents of old buildings meeting specified criteria in districts with more "three-nil buildings", namely Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po, via District Fire Safety Committees. Director of Fire Services ("D of FS") advised that apart from implementing the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme, the Fire Services Department ("FSD") had also launched a series of measures to facilitate owners' compliance with Fire Safety Directions. FSD had approved in principle the adoption of the facilitation measures for about 3 700 eligible buildings as of April 2021. It was expected that the number of buildings with enhancement works completed and the relevant fire safety requirements complied with would continue to rise in the coming few years. D of FS stressed that upon the issuance of Fire Safety Directions, responsible case officers would take the initiative to contact owners to assist them in solving potential problems concerning the fire safety works.

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Customs and excise matters

20.23 Mr SHIU Ka-fai expressed concern about C&ED's recent enforcement action against a chain retailing group suspected to be in contravention of the Consumer Goods Safety Regulation (Cap. 456A). He also suggested that C&ED should enhance publicity to let businesses and the public understand the Regulation requirements. Commissioner of Customs and Excise ("C of C&E") advised that C&ED had been committed to protecting the interests of consumers. It would spare no effort in investigating businesses or members of the public found to be in violation of the law. If there was sufficient evidence, prosecution would be instituted.

Government Flying Service

20.24 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB185, Mr MA Fung-kwok recalled that he had suggested installing the retired Super Puma and Dauphin helicopters at the Kai Tak Runway Park for long-term public exhibition. He enquired about the Government Flying Service's ("GFS") communication with the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") about the matter and the feasibility of the proposal.

20.25 S for S advised that the Government concurred that the retired helicopters should be actively considered for public exhibition in order to further the public's understanding of the work of GFS. However, installing an outdoor exhibition would involve more complicated problems. Controller, Government Flying Service added that GFS's old helicopters, including the Super Puma and Dauphin helicopters, had retired in mid-2020 and had completed the first stage of decommissioning. These retired aircrafts were being prepared for auction through open tender. GFS was communicating with the Science Museum to arrange for the exhibition of a retired small training aircraft and a helicopter. Given the complexity of the repair and maintenance issues associated with the outdoor exhibition, GFS would proactively explore its feasibility with the relevant departments (e.g. LCSD and the Architectural Services Department).

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Other issues

20.26 Referring to Reply Serial No. SB045, Mr CHAN Hak-kan expressed concern about the recruitment difficulties faced by disciplinary forces. He enquired about the Security Bureau's measures to attract talents to join the disciplinary forces. He was also concerned about the amount of resources put into innovation and technology to facilitate the discharge of duties by frontline staff. S for S advised that the Government had been actively promoting awareness among young people of the work of the various law enforcement departments and encouraging disciplinary forces to organize youth group activities, thereby strengthening law-abiding awareness among young people and enhancing their knowledge in the work of the disciplinary forces. These were considered to be conducive to improving recruitment. Furthermore, the Security Bureau, along with the six disciplinary forces and two auxiliary services, had maintained communication and reviewed regularly their resource requirements. The Government had established various mechanisms and systems and provided funds to facilitate the use of technology by government departments for carrying out regular duties. CP added that the Force had introduced a pilot scheme on Electronic Fixed Penalty Tickets and was developing various investigation systems to improve compatibility.

20.27 Mr Jimmy NG suggested that vaccination against COVID-19 should be arranged for the staff and trainees of disciplinary forces training schools. S for S advised that he would consider and follow up the matter with the departments concerned.

20.28 Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired whether the disciplinary forces had planned to organize more public education programmes in the future to enhance public understanding of the disciplinary forces and national security. S for S said that the disciplinary forces would continue to organize public education programmes on safeguarding national security. He hoped that such move would have a leading impact in raising the awareness of the entire society in safeguarding national security.

Chapter XXI : Welfare and Women

21.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the major initiatives and expenditure concerning welfare and women for the 2021-2022 financial year (Appendix IV-19).

Planning for welfare facilities

Child care services

21.2 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)135, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned that the utilization rate of the places provided by aided standalone child care centres ("CCCs") for children aged below two in 2020-2021 (as at December 2020) had reached 98%. While the Administration had raised the level of subsidies for subvented day CCC places to alleviate the financial burden of parents in paying the service fee, he considered that increasing the number of service places was a measure which could benefit even more parents.

21.3 SLW advised that the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") planned to purchase a total of 28 suitable premises for aided standalone CCCs in about three years under the programme of "Purchase of Premises for the Provision of Social Welfare Facilities" ("purchase of premises exercise"), with around 100 places to be provided for each centre. The Government expected that at least one additional centre would be set up in each district, and districts with a larger population of young families would have more such centres. As to the subsidies provided by SWD for aided standalone CCCs, the average percentage of subsidies out of the operating costs of the centres had risen from 5% at the initial stage to 40% at present, which included the full costs incurred in enhancing the manning ratios for child care workers in the 2019/20 school year borne by the Government. Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") undertook to provide information in writing on the estimated number of CCC places to be provided through the purchase of premises exercise after the meeting.

21.4 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)203, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the progress of the purchase of premises exercise had been affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") epidemic. SLW responded that the purchase exercise did not progress satisfactorily at the initial stage. The Administration hoped that it could catch up with the

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progress in 2021-2022. DSW added that owners of potentially suitable non-domestic premises available for sale had submitted their sale proposals to the Government through different channels, and SWD was assessing the suitability of offered premises for purchase.

Residential care services for the elderly

21.5 Referring to Reply Serial Nos. LWB(WW)057 and LWB(WW)090 respectively, Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan were concerned that the overall average waiting time for various types of subsidized residential care places for the elderly was as long as dozens of months, and there were several thousand elderly persons having passed away in total each year while being waitlisted for subsidized care-and-attention ("C&A") places and nursing home places. Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the measures put in place by the Administration to shorten the waiting time for subsidized residential care places for the elderly. In his view, the Administration should consider providing the services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") so as to provide an additional option for elderly persons in need. Referring to a recent family tragedy caused by the inability to take care of spouses in a family of elderly doubletons, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan urged the Administration to consider using the land for provision of columbarium and Garden of Remembrance at Sandy Ridge Cemetery to build residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") in order to increase the supply of RCHE places within a short time to meet the pressing needs of the members of the public. In the long run, she suggested that the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB"), in collaboration with other policy bureau, should develop the periphery of country parks for use as RCHEs.

21.6 SLW advised that the Government had all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach to identify suitable sites and premises for the provision of more welfare services which were in acute demand. He pointed out that as subsidized RCHEs needed to take up significant floor area with more stringent technical and layout requirements, they were preferably accommodated in purpose-built premises through a planning process. However, it often took longer time for the Government to build RCHEs by converting, redeveloping or developing the relevant sites. A case in point was the RCHE project in Kwu Tung North New Development

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Area 29, which was planned in 2008 and expected to commence operation in 2023. Incorporating land sales clauses in suitable land sales plans to require private developers to construct specified welfare facilities was one of the measures adopted by the Government in recent years in order to provide the relevant services as early as possible. In addition, the Government currently provided elderly persons waiting for subsidized C&A places with an option to live in the two RCHEs in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing operated respectively by two non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") of Hong Kong through purchase of services from them. If there were other RCHEs in the region run by local organizations which met the relevant requirements, the Government would consider providing elderly persons waiting for subsidized C&A places with an additional option in the same way. The interface between the healthcare services on the Mainland and in Hong Kong was another issue that needed to be considered in order to facilitate Hong Kong residents to retire permanently in the Greater Bay Area.

21.7 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)106, Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed concern about the support provided by the Administration for the increasing number of Hong Kong residents working or living in the Mainland while promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area. He expressed disappointment that SWD did not have the number of Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above taking up long-term residence in the Mainland because a lack of the relevant figures was not conducive to the planning for provision of cross-boundary social service. He asked whether the Administration had compiled the relevant statistics. SLW responded that SWD did not have the relevant statistics as it was difficult to conduct such surveys. Based on the immigration figures of Hong Kong residents provided by the Immigration Department, the Census and Statistics Department estimated that at present, there were about 70 000 to 90 000 Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above who were ordinarily residing in the Greater Bay Area. However, he did not have the relevant information in hand.

Residential care services for persons with disabilities

21.8 Dr Priscilla LEUNG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed concern about the long waiting time for various types of residential care services ("RCS") for persons with disabilities. According to Reply Serial No.

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LWB(WW)167, the average waiting time for hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons was about 12 years, and that for hostels for severely mentally handicapped persons was about 13 years. Ms Elizabeth QUAT requested the Administration to raise the number of subsidized RCS places for persons with disabilities. Dr Priscilla LEUNG suggested that the Administration should consider changing the use of some government sites for provision of more such service places.

21.9 SLW advised that the Government often met with considerable resistance when conducting local consultations on proposals for provision of residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs") in developed areas. Therefore, preserving sites for the provision of rehabilitation facilities in new development areas or redevelopment projects at the preliminary stage of planning was considered a better approach. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, the Government had invited the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society to explore the option of setting aside about 5% of the gross floor area in suitable public housing projects in the future for the provision of social welfare facilities, which included RCHDs, on the premise that the original flat production and development scale of ancillary facilities would not be affected. SWD would also maintain close liaison with relevant government departments with a view to reserving sites in new development or re-development projects as far as possible for constructing RCHDs, and providing such facilities in vacant government properties and vacant school premises as far as practicable. As regards the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("Special Sites Scheme"), which encouraged NGOs to provide or increase welfare facilities in acute demand on their own sites, its "Shopping List" of welfare facilities also included various types of RCHDs. Besides, the Government planned to include in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines the planning ratio for subsidized rehabilitation services (including RCS for persons with disabilities) in 2021-2022. In the short term, a major rehabilitation project soon to commence service was the redevelopment of the site of former Siu Lam Hospital in Tuen Mun, which would provide various types of RCHDs. Mr SHIU Ka-fai was worried that setting aside about 5% of the gross floor area in future public housing projects for the provision of social welfare facilities would increase the waiting time for public housing which was in great demand. SLW said that there was no need to worry about that as the measure would be implemented with the prerequisite that the original flat

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production would not be affected.

Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses

21.10 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)197, Mr Wilson OR noted that launched in 2013, Phase 1 of the Special Sites Scheme involved 50 projects which were expected to provide about 9 000 additional elderly service places and about 8 000 additional rehabilitation service places, and a total of 25 proposals were received under Phase Two of the Special Sites Scheme launched in 2019. In light of the strong demand for elderly services and rehabilitation services in the community, he was disappointed that as at the end of December 2020, only five projects under Phase 1 of the Special Sites Scheme had been completed and had commenced service. He enquired about the difficulties the Administration had encountered in taking forward those projects, and the measures in place to expedite the progress of their implementation. In his opinion, key performance indicators should be formulated to assess the effectiveness of the Special Sites Scheme.

21.11 SLW advised that the implementation of the aforesaid projects depended on various factors, including the discussions between SWD and the NGO applicants, feedback received from local consultations, as well as the time taken to complete the necessary planning procedures at different stages. With regard to the latter, the Development Bureau had been exploring ways to streamline the vetting and approval procedures for development projects, including rationalizing the standards and technical definitions adopted by different government departments, and studying the provision of one-stop coordinated support for development projects. The progress of the projects was also subject to the NGO applicants' efficiency in making various decisions during the planning or development process. Mr Wilson OR was disappointed with the Administration's reply.

Children and youth services

Mandatory reporting mechanism for suspected child abuse cases

21.12 Mr Michael TIEN referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)128. Regarding the Chief Executive's remark made in 2018 that LWB and the Education Bureau would explore how to improve the existing mechanism to

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protect children from abuse, he enquired about the progress of the relevant work and whether a mandatory reporting mechanism for suspected child abuse cases would be established. He pointed out that a survey conducted in 2018 showed that mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse had been legislated in more than 70 countries. He considered that the Administration should establish such mechanisms and provide professionals (e.g. teachers, social workers and healthcare personnel) with guidelines setting out the indicators of abuse which required reporting. Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed similar concerns and enquired about the legislative timetable for establishing such mechanisms.

21.13 SLW advised that protecting children from abuse was under the policy portfolio of LWB, which also worked with the Education Bureau on protection of school children. He drew Members' attention to a consultation paper released by a subcommittee of the Law Reform Commission ("LRC") in 2019, which had made preliminary proposals for reform of the law relating to the criminal liability arising from children or vulnerable adults died or were seriously harmed as a result of an unlawful act or neglect. The paper also reviewed mandatory reporting mechanisms for suspected child abuse. According to his understanding, LRC would release the relevant report in one to two months. LWB would keep in view of the final recommendations put forward by LRC and take appropriate follow-up actions. At present, the codes of professional conduct for certain professions also stipulated their duties to report cases which might involve criminal offences. Therefore, it might be less controversial if the mandatory reporting mechanism for suspected child abuse would only target professionals.

After school care programme

21.14 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)095, Mr Holden CHOW expressed concern that the utilization rate of after school care programme ("ASCP") in 2020-2021 (as at December 2020) had dropped compared to the figures in 2019-2020. For example, the utilization rate of ASCP in Central and Western District had dropped from 94% to 32%, and the utilization rate in Yuen Long had fallen from 86% to 60%. He raised query about the reasons for the decline in utilization rate, including whether the service quality of operators was involved, and the measures put in place to raise the utilization rate of the services, e.g. whether additional manpower

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would be trained under the Love Upgrading Special Scheme to meet the manpower demand of the services.

21.15 SLW advised that the Government did not have information about the reasons for the decrease in utilization rates of ASCP in various districts. According to his understanding, the utilization of ASCP mainly depended on the needs of parents. The decline in utilization rate was not necessarily related to the service quality of the operators, and there was no manpower shortage in the provision of the services. In fact, the utilization rate of ASCP was generally 80% to 90%, reflecting that the utilization of the services had almost reached saturation. However, the utilization rate had seen a decline since 2019-2020, which might be due to the fact that students had spent less time attending classes in schools amid the COVID-19 epidemic.

Elderly services

Accreditation Subsidy Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for the Elderly

21.16 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)143, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned whether the 162 private RCHEs registered for joining approved accreditation schemes included under the five-year Accreditation Subsidy Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for the Elderly ("Subsidy Scheme") had made any improvement in terms of occupancy rates and service quality since the launch of the Subsidy Scheme in October 2019. However, SWD did not have the information on the admission of elderly persons to accredited homes. He suggested that the Administration should step up efforts in promoting the Subsidy Scheme in a bid to attract the remaining 400-odd private RCHEs to join the Subsidy Scheme.

21.17 SLW advised that the Subsidy Scheme aimed at encouraging private RCHEs to enhance their service quality on a continuous basis and join independent accreditation schemes for an objective assessment of their services by certification bodies. The occupancy rate of RCHEs depended on the demand and supply of RCS. Currently, the occupancy rate of subsidized RCHEs was around 97% and that of private RCHEs had risen from about 70% to about 80% in recent years. DSW supplemented that the

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implementation progress of the Subsidy Scheme had also been affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. The Government would continue its efforts in promoting the Subsidy Scheme. According to his understanding, many private RCHEs were willing to join the approved accreditation schemes included under the Subsidy Scheme.

Home and community care services

21.18 Referring to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)238, Mr YIU Si-wing considered that additional resources should be allocated to increase the provision of home and community care services in order to achieve "ageing in place" and reduce the service demand for RCHEs. He suggested that more support should be provided for carers of elderly persons in order to reduce the number of persons on the waiting list under the Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases). As for the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases), he suggested that the Administration should consider enhancing publicity efforts to promote the caregiving sector so as to attract people who were recently unemployed to join the welfare sector, thereby increasing the healthcare manpower of subsidized service units.

21.19 SLW advised that the Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment had been launched to provide necessary home care and support services to elderly persons assessed to have mild impairment and were on the waiting list for the Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases). Besides, more resources had been allocated in April 2021 to provide 1 500 additional service places for the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases). He drew Members' attention to the fact that the major bottleneck for increasing service capacity was the acute shortage of healthcare manpower over a long period time. Although SWD had in recent years increased recurrent provision for subsidized elderly service units to increase the salaries of posts such as personal care workers and home helpers, thereby enabling subsidized service units to recruit and retain staff more effectively, statistics in 2020 showed that the vacancy rate of personal care workers and home helpers still stood at 20%. The Government would continue to explore ways to address the problem of healthcare manpower shortage.

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Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services

21.20 Mr LUK Chung-hung referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)174. He noted that as at the end of December 2020, the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services ("Navigation Scheme") had recruited a total of about 1 200 trainees, and 538 of them had left the Navigation Scheme for various reasons. Among the graduated trainees, only 299 continued to be employed in social welfare service units. He considered that although the starting salaries of care workers had already increased, the 12-hour shift system of RCHEs was a factor contributing to the wastage of frontline care workers. He asked the Administration whether it would promote the implementation of an 8-hour shift system by RCHEs. SLW advised that SWD had reduced the working hours per week for trainees of the Navigation Scheme from 44 to 40 in 2020-2021. As regards the working hours of workers not employed under the Navigation Scheme, subsidized RCHEs had already implemented an 8-hour shift system, while staff members of private RCHEs generally worked under a two-shift system due to shortage of manpower. The Government would continue to discuss the matter with the sector.

Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care

21.21 Mr POON Siu-ping referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)204. He noted that three tranches of grants totalling over \$200 million had been approved under the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care ("I&T Fund"), and vetting of the fourth tranche application was underway. He enquired about the situation of eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units after they had procured, rented or tried out technology products, and whether those technology products could help reduce the burden and pressure on carers. He also sought information on the most popular types of products procured by service units. DSW advised that technology products which were procured by more service units included lifting aids and smart hospital beds with extra low position. In view of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the demand for mobile applications for delivering remote rehabilitation service via videoconferencing had also increased. SLW advised that the Government would examine the utilization of the technology products by service units as well as their effectiveness when reviewing the I&T Fund.

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Support for persons with disabilities and their carers

21.22 Dr Priscilla LEUNG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT opined that there was a lack of support for carers of persons with disabilities while the persons under their care were waiting for residential care services, which put them under immense pressure and led to the occasional occurrence of family tragedies involving persons with disabilities and their carers. Ms Elizabeth QUAT called on the Administration to step up support for carers of persons with disabilities, including setting up a 24-hour emergency hotline for carer support, increasing the carer allowance and stepping up case manager service. Dr Priscilla LEUNG requested that coordinated effort among bureaux be made to provide appropriate support for carers of persons with disabilities.

21.23 SLW said that in recent years, SWD had strengthened the case management service for persons with disabilities living in the community. When in need, persons with disabilities who received community care services could obtain timely support by making contact with the relevant service units. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) supplemented that the day respite and short-term residential respite services for persons with disabilities enabled their family members/carers to take a short break or attend to their personal business, so as to relieve them from the caring duties temporarily and alleviate their stress. As at the end of 2020, the number of service places of day respite and residential respite services was 160 and 344 respectively.

21.24 Mr Frankie YICK referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)253. He opined that the service demand could not be adequately met even with the procurement of 12 new rehabuses by the Administration in 2021-2022. Given that the inability to use the rebus service had driven some persons with disabilities to use light goods vehicles used for carriage of passengers for hire as a mode of transport, he was concerned about the lack of protection afforded to passengers using such illegal transport service. Furthermore, some drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis were unwilling to provide transport service for persons with disabilities due to the need to spend an extra 20 to 30 minutes on helping the wheelchair user get on and off the taxi. He suggested that SWD should issue a subsidy to taxi drivers providing transport for wheelchair users in order to incentivize them to provide service for these passengers.

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21.25 SLW acknowledged that the traffic situation in Hong Kong put tremendous pressure on taxi drivers helping wheelchair users get on and off the taxi. He aspired that in the future, the taxi trade would introduce more taxi models that were more convenient for wheelchair users and elderly people with mobility difficulties to get on and off. Regarding the suggestion of providing subsidies for these taxi drivers, the Government would continue to discuss the related issues with stakeholders. It should be noted that the Disability Allowance currently provided by SWD was provided for the severely disabled to meet their special needs, including transport, arising from disability. Persons with disabilities might use the allowance flexibly depending on their own actual needs.

Services for street sleepers

21.26 Mr KWOK Wai-keung referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)184. He was concerned that the number of street sleepers whose duration of street sleeping spanned over one month and up to one year had increased significantly from 86 in 2019-2020 to 200 in 2020-2021 (as at December 2020). He opined that street sleepers with shorter periods of street sleeping could quit street sleeping more easily and enquired about the Administration's specific measures to assist these street sleepers. SLW said that the Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers provided the necessary support services for street sleepers regardless of their duration of street sleeping, so as to enhance their self-reliance for reintegration into the community.

Social security

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

21.27 Mr POON Siu-ping referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)211. He noted that as at the end of December 2020, the number of unemployment cases under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme amounted to around 19 500. He was concerned about the number of rejected applicants and enquired whether the arrangement of exempting the amount of loan obtained under the 100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme from the asset test under the CSSA Scheme was time-limited. SLW said that for the asset test under the CSSA Scheme, SWD would exempt the amount of the relevant loan from the asset test for a period of

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time.

Old Age Living Allowance

21.28 Mr LUK Chung-hung and Mr KWOK Wai-keung referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)110. Regarding the Government's proposal in January 2020 to combine the Normal and Higher Old Age Living Allowances ("OALA") and adopt the higher payment rate of OALA and to significantly relax the asset limits for OALA, they enquired about the implementation date of the above measures. Mr LUK Chung-hung opined that the above measures could enable more elderly people to benefit from the OALA scheme while a universal retirement protection system was not yet established. SLW said that as stated in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, the Government would reassess in 2021 the timing of implementing the above measures in view of their financial implications. For the time being, no relevant expenditure was earmarked for implementing the above measures under the estimates of expenditure for the 2021-2022 financial year.

21.29 Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted that in 2020-2021 (as at the end of December 2020), 253 new applications for OALA were rejected on the grounds that the applicant did not meet the residence requirement. He enquired about the number of cases among them in which the elderly person had failed to satisfy the residence requirement due to being stranded on the Mainland by the epidemic. DSW said that consideration would be given to disregarding the absences from Hong Kong of OALA applicants who failed to satisfy the residence requirement owing to the epidemic. He undertook to find out after the meeting if the information requested by Mr KWOK Wai-keung could be provided.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration had provided information in response to the supplementary question raised by Mr KWOK Wai-keung after the meeting (Reply Serial No. S-LWB(WW)01).)

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Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects

21.30 Mr POON Siu-ping referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)202. He requested the Administration to provide information to explain why both the additional amount of resources expected to be allocated to NGOs operating the Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects ("STFASPs") and the expected number of beneficiaries would double after the regularization of STFASPs in August 2021. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung noted from Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)138 that the number of beneficiaries was not evenly distributed among the seven NGOs operating STFASPs, as the number attributed to some NGOs was only half that of others. He was concerned whether it was unfair to the relevant NGOs and would put pressure on those facing higher demand. He enquired about the Administration's measures to improve the situation.

21.31 SLW said that the demand for short-term food assistance had increased in 2020 amid the COVID-19 epidemic. The Government had earmarked expenditure to support the relevant NGOs in meeting the expenses arising from the expected increase in demand under the epidemic. DSW said that the Government was inviting NGOs to submit service proposals in order to select the operators of the regularized service under STFASPs. The exercise included re-demarcation of the service boundary based on the latest statistics on the distribution of beneficiaries. Operators were also provided with appropriate support for their administrative expenses based on the actual beneficiary numbers. Furthermore, the estimates of expenditure were derived based on the latest usage of STFASPs and were thus expected to meet the service needs in the coming year.

21.32 Dr Junius HO referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)022. He noted that millions of meals had been provided under STFASPs in each of the past three years, and those numbers did not include the meals provided by NGOs and eateries for people in need but not under the scope of STFASPs. He was concerned that despite the Government's huge recurrent expenditure on social welfare every year, it seemed that the services and financial support provided were unable to help all those in need meet their basic needs. The result was that the demand for service under STFASPs had increased year by year in the past three years. He requested the Administration to provide information on the actual public demand for food assistance for meeting basic needs and work with NGOs to explore the

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long-term solutions to provide assistance for those people.

21.33 SLW explained that STFASPs aimed at providing one-off basic food assistance for a short period of time to low-income individuals having temporary difficulties coping with their daily food expenditure (including those facing immediate financial hardship due to unemployment or underemployment). On the other hand, the CSSA Scheme provided financial assistance for those who could not support themselves financially to meet their basic needs by bringing their income up to a prescribed level. The application process for CSSA could normally be completed within four weeks. During the application process, those who were in need would be referred to STFASPs for receiving short-term basic food assistance. He pointed out that the demand for service under STFASPs had increased due to the weak economy under the COVID-19 epidemic. In 2020-2021 (as at December 2020), the number of cases (on a household basis) granted short-term food assistance had increased to 15 167. The latest statistics indicated that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period between December 2020 and February 2021 was 7.2%, as opposed to only 2.8% for the same period in 2018-2019. He believed that the demand for service under STFASPs would decrease when the labour market showed some improvement.

Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

21.34 Mr CHAN Chun-ying referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)008. He noted that as part of the progressive steps to lower the eligible age threshold for the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities ("the \$2 Scheme") from 65 to 60 from the first quarter of 2022, the Administration would require persons aged 60 to 64 to apply for and use a Personalized Card ("P-Card") tailor-made for the \$2 Scheme as a prerequisite for benefitting from the concessionary fare. The non-recurrent commitment in 2021-2022 for launching the P-Card for this purpose amounted to \$208 million. He opined that to prevent abuse in advance, the Administration should issue P-Cards to both persons aged 60 to 64 and the existing beneficiaries aged 65 or above in this year.

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21.35 SLW said that since it would take time to process the applications and distribute the P-Cards, the Government would first issue P-Cards to about 600 000 new beneficiaries aged 60 to 64 to enable them to benefit from the concessionary fare as soon as possible. As the number of existing beneficiaries aged 65 or above was as many as 1.32 million, the work of processing their applications and distributing P-Cards to them would be handled after completion of the issue of P-Cards to new beneficiaries. Before the mandatory requirement of using the P-Card was extended to all existing beneficiaries aged 65, these people could still use an anonymous Elder Octopus card or a personalized Octopus card for receiving the fare concession.

21.36 Mr Wilson OR referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)251. He noted that only two abnormal cases had been detected by the Transport Department ("TD") so far since the launch of the \$2 Scheme, which showed that the problem of abuse was not serious. He called on the Administration to expedite the work of issuing P-Cards to new beneficiaries, so that the eligible age for the \$2 Scheme could be lowered with effect from December 2021 ahead of the original schedule of the first quarter of 2022. Dr Priscilla LEUNG called on the Administration to take measures to help those in need under the current economic situations. As the Administration would neither provide unemployment benefits nor allow the application for CSSA on an individual basis, she opined that the new initiative was useful in enabling more people in need to cope with their transport expenses. The Administration should not let the concern of preventing abuse of the \$2 Scheme slow down its pace of implementing the new initiative, as those issues were solvable with the use of technology. SLW said that the Government had commenced the relevant work. While the specific timetable was expected to be announced in June 2021, the current target was to lower the eligible age threshold to 60 with effect from the first quarter of 2022. Mr Wilson OR expressed disappointment with SLW's reply.

21.37 Mr Frankie YICK welcomed the Administration's initiative to extend the \$2 Scheme to red public light buses and enquired whether the scheme would be further extended to non-franchised public buses. SLW replied that a host of factors were considered in deciding what modes of transport should be included under the \$2 Scheme. That included, for example, whether the mode of transport concerned was a form of public transport, whether other modes of transport were available to offer useful

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alternatives to passengers, and whether the operators were willing to comply with the regulatory requirements of TD. The Government did not preclude the possibility of giving consideration to extending the \$2 Scheme to non-franchised buses if they could comply with those requirements.

Universal Accessibility Programme

21.38 Mr YIU Si-wing referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)018. He enquired whether the Administration would expand the scope of the Universal Accessibility Programme to cover the construction of lifts at roads leading to columbaria in remote places (e.g. Chinese Permanent Cemeteries) to make it more convenient for the elderly and other people to access those locations for grave sweeping. SLW said that discussion would be held with the Home Affairs Bureau on the ways to improve the relevant situation.

Funds administered by the Labour and Welfare Bureau

21.39 Mr CHAN Chun-ying referred to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)013. He was concerned that for the 15 funds that were administered by LWB or government departments under its purview and had received government injection, there was a total amount of \$360 million in investment and other income in 2019-2020. However, the income attributed to the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Fund ("TAVA Fund") accounted for more than 90% of the amount, while seven other funds did not have any income. He requested the Administration to explain the reasons for the high amount of income for TAVA Fund. Furthermore, he opined that the Administration should consider placing the seven funds which had no investment income with the Exchange Fund for the purpose of making investment, so as to increase their income source and reduce the need to provide funding for them.

21.40 SLW said that LWB would explore if there was room for improvement in the investment return of the funds. However, some of those funds might not qualify for being placed with the Exchange Fund. DSW supplemented that the income of TAVA Fund came partly from the levies imposed on vehicles and holders of driving licence. In response, Mr CHAN Chun-ying said that the Administration should provide a breakdown setting out the income sources of various funds.

Chapter XXII : Labour

22.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the main initiatives and expenditure on the policy area of labour and manpower development for the coming year (Appendix IV-20).

Employees retraining and continuing education

Love Upgrading Special Scheme

22.2 With respect to the third tranche of the Love Upgrading Special Scheme ("the Special Scheme") launched by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") in January 2021, Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the number of enrollment. SLW advised that given that the third tranche of the Special Scheme had been implemented for a rather short period of time since its launch in January 2021, detailed statistics were not yet available.

22.3 Mr YIU Si-wing was concerned whether trainees could enter into specific industries upon completion of relevant retraining courses under the Special Scheme. He asked whether the Administration would consider providing job referral services for graduate trainees to enter into selected trades and industries.

22.4 SLW responded that apart from the Special Scheme, ERB provided around 140 000 training places with a wide variety of training courses each year. Many of these training courses were placement-tied and were recognized under the Qualifications Framework. As such, it enabled graduate trainees and industry practitioners to move up the articulation ladder progressively.

22.5 SLW further advised that corporations or trade associations could liaise with ERB in arranging enterprise-based training for employees or staff of corporate members under the Special Scheme as appropriate. Besides, ERB had implemented the "First-Hire-Then-Train" Scheme in industries with demand for manpower, such as the elderly care services, to enable trainees to make flexible arrangements for further studies, acquire recognized qualifications, and join the sector.

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22.6 Referring to the increase in the maximum amount of monthly allowance under the Special Scheme from \$4,000 to \$5,800 per trainee from May 2020, Mr YIU Si-wing asked whether the Administration would consider further increasing the monthly or daily allowance per trainee so as to provide more support for those employees affected by economic downturn.

22.7 SLW responded that the maximum amount of allowance per month had increased from \$4,000 to \$5,800 in 2020. The increase had made reference to the rise of the inflation rate since the allowance was last reviewed; the Administration considered the revised amount reasonable. The Administration would study the need for conducting timely reviews as appropriate.

22.8 Mr Vincent CHENG sought information on the number of trainees who had successfully switched to other types of work upon completion of the retraining courses under the Special Scheme. SLW advised that the Administration did not maintain the relevant statistics. That said, a great majority of ERB training places were offered under the placement-tied courses which facilitated trainees in entering specific industries or switching jobs.

Training courses under the Continuing Education Fund

22.9 Mr YIU Si-wing asked about the Government's plan and timetable for recognition of online courses provided under the Continuing Education Fund ("CEF"). SLW responded that in the light of the COVID-19 epidemic, CEF courses were increasingly delivered through online mode plus assessment. It was expected that such direction would continue. To cater for advancement in technology and changes in learning mode, the Government was formulating a framework to provide learners with more diversified means of continuing learning, with a view to promulgation in September 2021.

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Employment support

Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme

22.10 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok said that the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong called on the Administration to introduce policies and measures to facilitate young people to seek employment or start business in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA"). With respect to the launch of the GBA Youth Employment Scheme ("the Scheme"), Ir Dr LO considered the monthly salary at no less than \$18,000 attractive for university graduates to work in the Mainland cities of GBA. Ir Dr LO sought information on the response from target participants as well as the recruitment progress and employment situation under the Scheme. Ir Dr LO further asked whether the Administration would consider launching another round of the Scheme.

22.11 SLW responded that as of 7 April 2021, 275 enterprises had offered a total of 2 005 job vacancies under the Scheme. So far, the response was satisfactory and over 5 000 job applications were made by target graduates through the Scheme's website. For the majority of these posts, the recruitment process was underway. The Administration would review the Scheme and, depending on its outcome, decide whether to launch another round of the Scheme.

22.12 Mr Michael TIEN enquired about the rationale for launching the Scheme under the Anti-Epidemic Fund ("AEF") and whether the Scheme would continue upon completion of the anti-epidemic work.

22.13 In reply, SLW drew reference to the creation of 31 000 time-limited jobs under AEF in 2020-2021 and advised that the Scheme was likewise implemented under AEF which aimed at, among others, relieving the worsening unemployment situation and addressing disruption of a wide range of economic activities due to the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, given that the Scheme would last for 18 months and straddle two financial years, it would therefore be more flexible to launch the Scheme under AEF. As regards the future direction of the Scheme, it would be subject to the review outcome of the Scheme and the overall development policy in GBA. Mr Michael TIEN held the view that the Administration should conduct long-term planning of the Scheme in the

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light of the tremendous development potential of GBA and the opportunities for career development for the younger generation.

Other employment support measures for young people

22.14 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok enquired about the employment support for young people, including university graduates, in entering the labour market and finding employment amid the COVID-19 epidemic.

22.15 SLW responded that in 2020-2021, the Government created about 31 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors through AEF for people of different skill sets and academic qualifications, including seasoned professionals and fresh graduates. In the 2021-2022 Budget, it was proposed to further allocate \$6.6 billion to create around 30 000 time-limited jobs for a period up to 12 months to relieve the worsening unemployment situation due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The Administration would closely monitor the epidemic situation and would continue to launch supporting measures to assist young people in finding employment as necessary.

22.16 Dr Junius HO sought explanation for the decrease in the number of trainees placed into on-the-job training vacancies from 2 264 in 2017-2018 to 1 435 in 2019-2020 under the Youth Employment and Training Programme ("YETP"). SLW explained that the drop in the number of relevant trainees in recent years was partly attributed to the decrease in population of the target age group of 15-24 for YETP. At Dr HO's request, the Administration agreed to provide information on the percentage of ethnic minorities ("EMs") trainees by industries and occupational groups under YETP from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020.

Employment support for ethnic minority job seekers

22.17 Dr Junius HO expressed concern about the difficulties encountered by EM job seekers in finding employment and the effectiveness of the Government policies in providing employment support for EM job seekers.

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22.18 SLW advised that the statistics from the Census and Statistics Department might not be able to accurately reflect the employment situation of EM job seekers due to small number of samples collected. Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services) added that under the Employment Services Ambassador ("ESA") Programme for EMs implemented by the Labour Department ("LD"), trainees of YETP who could communicate in EM languages were engaged to work in LD's job centres since September 2014. These ESAs helped EM job seekers use various job search facilities and services. So far, a total of 12 batches of more than 160 ESAs had been engaged since its implementation and their on-the-job training period had been extended from half year to one year. ESAs engaged in the first 11 batches had all secured employment, except for those who had no intention to seek employment due to leaving Hong Kong, pursuing further studies, health, family and other personal reasons. At Dr Junius HO's request, the Administration agreed to provide the requisite information in writing after the meeting.

22.19 Echoing difficulties faced by EM job seekers in securing employment because of language barrier, Mr Vincent CHENG called on the Administration to provide necessary employment support, including job referral services and interpretation services, to assist EM job seekers to enter specific trades and industries with acute demand for manpower, such as lift maintenance and building repair works.

22.20 Commissioner for Labour responded that to strengthen the employment support for EM job seekers, LD had commissioned two non-governmental organizations to implement the Racial Diversity Employment Programme ("RDEP") since November 2020. RDEP provided, on a pilot basis, one-stop employment services for EM job seekers with case management approach and customized employment support, including provision of needs assessment, pre-employment counselling and job matching services. Up till now, a total of 28 placements of EM job seekers were recorded under RDEP since 1 November 2020. The Administration would further study how to strengthen the job matching services for EM job seekers.

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General employment services

22.21 Referring to LD's organization of different kinds of job fairs in 2018 to 2020, Mr LUK Chung-hung said that the number of successful placements was rather small as opposed to the large number of job vacancies placed by employers. Mr LUK cast doubt about the effectiveness of job fairs in assisting the job seekers in securing employment.

22.22 SLW responded that job fairs would help enhance the understanding of job seekers on the job opportunities and employment conditions as well as career development offered by various employers. Currently, the vast majority of vacancies advertised through LD provided employers' contact details. Job seekers who did not attend job fairs could still secure employment through direct application to the employers concerned. As job seekers who had found employment were not required to report their placement positions to LD, information on such placements was not captured. Mr LUK Chung-hung urged the Administration to step up its online publicity efforts on job fairs staged by LD.

Labour relations

22.23 Noting that the number of employees involved in labour disputes had significantly increased from 15 837 in 2019 to 22 152 in 2020, Mr POON Siu-ping sought explanation in this regard. SLW responded that it was largely attributable to the pressure on the business environment arising from the COVID-19 epidemic.

22.24 Regarding the Government's plan to relax the social distancing measures for the operation of catering businesses with conditions with "vaccine bubble" as the basis, Mr Michael TIEN expressed concern that it might give rise to labour disputes if staff members must receive COVID-19 vaccination. In the event that an employee who refused to get vaccinated was dismissed by his employer, Mr TIEN sought clarification as to whether such case would constitute unreasonable dismissal. In his view, the option of undergoing COVID-19 testing at regular intervals should be provided to those staff members who did not receive COVID-19 vaccination for various reasons.

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22.25 SLW responded that the Food and Health Bureau and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department were liaising with the catering industry on the operational details. Member's views and concerns would be relayed to them for consideration.

Occupational safety and health

Current level of penalty for non-compliance with occupational safety and health legislation

22.26 With respect to the amount of fines imposed by the court on the duty holders concerned for cases of industrial fatalities handled in 2018 to 2020, Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed concern that the highest amount was a total fine of \$455,000 involving nine summons and the average fine for each summons for fatal industrial accidents in the construction industry in the past years was about \$20,000 only. Mr LUK considered the level of penalties for non-compliance with the occupational safety and health ("OSH") legislation too low to achieve sufficient deterrent effect. Mr LUK sought information on the number and results of appeals filed by the Department of Justice ("DoJ") at LD's request in respect of the penalties imposed by the court on OSH offences in the past years.

22.27 Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health) ("DC for L (OSH)") advised that from 2015 to February 2021, LD requested DoJ to consider filing a review or an appeal in respect of low fines for 94 cases involving offences under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509) and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap. 59) ("FIUO"). Among these applications, DoJ approved 10 cases to proceed for review or appeal and there were two successful review/appeal cases. Mr LUK Chung-hung considered the successful rate of applications for review or appeal too low and expressed concern about the difficulties in proving that an employer had intentionally committed an offence under FIUO. He called on the Administration to plug the loophole.

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Raising penalties of occupational safety and health legislation

22.28 Pointing out that the Administration's proposal for raising penalties of the OSH legislation was announced in the 2017 Policy Address, Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed concern about the relevant legislative timetable in view of the business sector's grave concern about increasing the maximum fine for the general duty provisions for employers/proprietors under FIUO. Mr POON Siu-ping opined that the Administration should be proactive in taking forward the legislative amendment exercise.

22.29 SLW responded that after consulting the Panel on Manpower on the revised amendment proposal to raise the penalties of the OSH legislation in January 2021, LD was launching a new round of consultation exercise to consult relevant stakeholders on the revised amendment proposal. The Administration would, taking into account the policy objective of raising the penalties of the OSH legislation, carefully analyze and consider the views received for further refining the legislative amendment proposal, if necessary. Subject to stakeholders' views and progress of law drafting, the Government would submit the Amendment Bill to the Legislative Council as soon as possible. It was working towards completing the legislative exercise within the current term of Government for immediate commencement.

22.30 Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok acknowledged that improvement had been made to the occupational safety performance over the years. Ir Dr LO advised that the industry practitioners attached great importance to work safety, but generally held a strong view that the maximum fine level of general duty provisions i.e. \$50 million under the revised amendment proposal was too high. Pointing out that the legislative proposal to raise the penalties of the OSH legislation, if enacted, would be applicable to all trades and industries, Ir Dr LO called on the Government to be prudent in taking forward the legislative exercise and listen to the views of the industries.

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Whether lower limbs illness should be categorized as an occupational disease

22.31 Mr POON Siu-ping noted with concern that out of the 730 consultations of new patients at LD's occupational health clinics in 2020, 627 consultations (i.e. 86%) were related to musculoskeletal diseases. Mr POON asked about the number of consultations relating to lower limbs and whether the Administration would consider prescribing musculoskeletal diseases of lower limbs as an occupational disease under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282).

22.32 DC for L (OSH) responded that around 230 consultations of new patients in LD's occupational health clinics were related to musculoskeletal diseases of the lower limbs. Notably, many patients concerned were engaged in the cleaning services, retail and catering industries. However, it was noteworthy that many of these patients also had various factors other than work that might contribute to their lower limb diseases, such as personal habits, physical exercise and age. LD had issued guidelines in 2019 to advise employers to take various preventive measures at work, such as reminding employees to wear shoes suitable for standing work, installing footrests at workplace, etc. The Administration had currently no plan to prescribe lower limb musculoskeletal disease as an occupational disease.

Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work

22.33 Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the progress of the preparatory work and the implementation timetable of the three-year Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work ("the Pilot Programme") which targeted at injured employees from the construction industry.

22.34 DC for L (OSH) responded that LD had consulted various stakeholders on the design framework of the Pilot Programme, including the Panel on Manpower and rehabilitation professionals. The Government was drawing up the service protocols and operational details of the Pilot Programme. Subject to the time required for the preparatory work, the Government targeted to launch the Pilot Programme as soon as possible in 2022.

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Employees' rights and benefits

Review of the Statutory Minimum Wage rate

22.35 Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed grave concern that the Government had accepted the latest recommendation of the Minimum Wage Commission ("MWC") on maintaining the prevailing Statutory Minimum Wage ("SMW") rate at \$37.5 per hour. In the light of the cumulative inflation recorded in 2020, Mr LUK opined that the frozen SMW rate could not safeguard the livelihood of the grassroots employees earning the SMW rate. Moreover, the level of the SMW rate was too low as reflected by the decreasing number of employees receiving the SMW rate over the years. Mr LUK suggested that review of the SMW rate should be conducted on an annual basis to catch up with the inflation. Mr LUK further asked whether the Government would consider putting in place an adjustment formula for the SMW rate.

22.36 SLW advised that MWC had been tasked to report to the Chief Executive in Council its recommendation about the SMW rate pursuant to the Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap. 608). In discharging its functions, MWC would consider a host of socio-economic factors, the labour market conditions, price forecasts, etc. under an evidence-based approach. MWC would also conduct extensive consultations with stakeholders and members of the public and fully consider the views of various sectors of the community. It was noteworthy that MWC's recommendation of maintaining the prevailing SMW rate at \$37.5 per hour was the majority consensus of MWC.

Digital platform workers

22.37 Pointing out that more than 10 work accidents involving digital platform workers engaged in food delivery had been reported in 2020, Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed concern about employees' right and benefits of digital platform workers. Mr LUK considered that there existed in essence an employer-employee relationship between the digital platform workers and the platform companies, although the platform workers were so called self-employed persons. Drawing reference to overseas court cases which held that there was an employment relationship between digital platform workers and the platform companies concerned, Mr LUK asked

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whether the Administration would consider plugging the legal loophole of false self-employment so as to safeguard employees' rights and benefits of the digital platform workers.

22.38 SLW responded that from 2018 to 2020, LD received two complaints involving digital platform workers who suspected that they were deprived of labour rights and benefits by means of false self-employment. Upon investigation, no concrete evidence was found to establish the employment relationship between both parties. While legislative review was considered not necessary at the moment, the Administration would keep in view overseas development in this respect and would seek to collect relevant statistical data to facilitate further study.

Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund

22.39 Mr POON Siu-ping expressed concern that LD did not keep the number of cases with ex gratia payment granted under the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund ("PWIF") from 2018 to 2020. Mr POON sought explanation in this regard and asked whether the Administration would consider maintaining such statistics in future. Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Labour Administration) ("DC for L (LA)") clarified that LD maintained information on the number of applications with ex gratia payment granted which was reckoned on a per-employee basis, and not the number of cases with ex gratia payment granted which might involve more than one employee.

22.40 Mr LUK Chung-hung sought explanation for the significant increase in the number of applications for ex gratia payment rejected by PWIF from 31 in 2019 to 106 in 2020. DC for L (LA) explained that the increase was mainly due to two cases in 2020 involving a relatively large number of employees. For example, one of the refusal cases did not meet the application criteria as neither the employment contract was made in Hong Kong nor the workplace was in Hong Kong.

22.41 Referring to a wage dispute case in which a number of employees who worked in a restaurant could not receive ex gratia payment from PWIF upon business closure of the restaurant because these employees were engaged by another company to work in that restaurant, Mr LUK Chung-hung appealed to the Administration to handle such

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applications for ex gratia payment from PWIF in a flexible manner so as to provide timely assistance to the affected employees.

22.42 DC for L (LA) advised that LD would provide appropriate assistance to the employees affected by the cessation of business or insolvency of their employers to file claims for outstanding wages and other termination payments and refer the cases to PWIF for application of ex gratia payment, if applicable. As regards the case cited by Mr LUK Chung-hung, LD would continue to offer assistance to the employees concerned as far as practicable.

Manpower development

22.43 Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed disappointment at the work of the Human Resources Planning Commission in mapping out strategies for developing human resources to meet the manpower needs of Hong Kong. Mr LUK was concerned about whether the Government in mapping out future manpower needs of Hong Kong had taken into account the National 14th Five-year Plan and the evolving global changes in manpower needs, such as the use of automation and artificial intelligence.

22.44 SLW said that the Government released the Report on Manpower Projection to 2027 ("the Report") in December 2019, which assessed, at the macro level, the broad trends of Hong Kong's future manpower supply and requirements up to 2027. The impact of automation and artificial intelligence on future manpower requirements was one of the factors considered. The Report showed that, for some time in the future, whilst the requirements for lower-skilled jobs would decrease due to automation, the decrease in the supply of lower-skilled workers would take place at a faster rate. Therefore, lower-skilled jobs would not be completely replaced and manpower shortages still existed, i.e. the market would still need lower-skilled workers. The manpower shortage for higher-skilled jobs was also evident as the projection that the local manpower supply reaching a plateau in 2022 might have been advanced due to the COVID-19 epidemic and other factors.

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Importation of labour

22.45 Regarding the investigations into suspected breaches of labour laws and/or the requirements of the Standard Employment Contract by employers of imported workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme in 2019 and 2020, Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the respective numbers of warning letters issued to the employers concerned and prosecutions taken out against them by LD. SLW advised that the Administration would provide the requisite information after the meeting.

**Programme of special meetings of Finance Committee
to examine the Estimates 2021-2022
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

<u>Director of Bureau / Controlling Officer</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Secretary for the Civil Service	12 April	2:00 pm - 3:00 pm
(i) Judiciary Administrator (ii) Secretary for Justice	12 April	3:10 pm - 4:25 pm
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs	12 April	4:35 pm - 6:05 pm
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury • Financial Services	13 April	2:00 pm - 3:10 pm
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury • Public Finance	13 April	3:20 pm - 4:00 pm
Director of Administration Director of Audit Permanent Secretary to Chief Executive Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption Secretary General, Legislative Council Secretariat The Ombudsman	13 April	4:10 pm - 5:25 pm
Secretary for the Environment	13 April	5:35 pm - 6:45 pm
Secretary for Transport and Housing • Housing	14 April	9:00 am - 10:30 am
Secretary for Transport and Housing • Transport	14 April	10:40 am - 12:10 pm

<u>Director of Bureau / Controlling Officer</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Secretary for Home Affairs	14 April	2:00 pm - 3:20 pm
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development • Commerce, Industry and Tourism	14 April	3:30 pm - 5:00 pm
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development • Communications and Creative Industries	14 April	5:10 pm - 6:05 pm
Secretary for Food and Health • Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	15 April	9:00 am - 10:30 am
Secretary for Food and Health • Health	15 April	10:40 am - 12:15 pm
Secretary for Innovation and Technology	15 April	2:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Secretary for Development • Planning and Lands	15 April	3:40 pm - 5:10 pm
Secretary for Development • Works	15 April	5:20 pm - 6:30 pm
Secretary for Education	16 April	9:00 am - 10:45 am
Secretary for Security	16 April	10:55 am - 12:40 pm
Secretary for Labour and Welfare • Welfare and Women	16 April	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Secretary for Labour and Welfare • Labour	16 April	5:10 pm - 6:40 pm

Appendix II

Summary of written and supplementary questions and requests for additional information

<u>Director of Bureau/ Controlling Officer</u>	<u>No. of initial written questions</u>	<u>No. of supplementary questions</u>	<u>No. of requests for additional information (verbal)</u>
Secretary for the Civil Service	97	6	0
(i) Judiciary Administrator	31	0	0
(ii) Secretary for Justice	43	0	0
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs	112	1	0
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Services 	94	0	0
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Finance 	98	0	1
Director of Administration	26	0	1
Director of Audit	0	0	0
Permanent Secretary to Chief Executive	11	0	0
Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption	5	0	0
Secretary General, Legislative Council Secretariat	19	0	0
The Ombudsman	1	0	0

<u>Director of Bureau/ Controlling Officer</u>	<u>No. of initial written questions</u>	<u>No. of supplementary questions</u>	<u>No. of requests for additional information (verbal)</u>
Secretary for the Environment	148	3	0
Secretary for Transport and Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing 	79	2	0
Secretary for Transport and Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport 	227	0	2
Secretary for Home Affairs	200	0	0
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commerce, Industry and Tourism 	229	0	1
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications and Creative Industries 	63	0	0
Secretary for Food and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene 	233	3	1
Secretary for Food and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health 	249	4	0
Secretary for Innovation and Technology	137	0	0
Secretary for Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Lands 	237	3	4

<u>Director of Bureau/ Controlling Officer</u>	<u>No. of initial written questions</u>	<u>No. of supplementary questions</u>	<u>No. of requests for additional information (verbal)</u>
Secretary for Development • Works	99	0	0
Secretary for Education	275	9	3
Secretary for Security	207	0	0
Secretary for Labour and Welfare • Welfare and Women	223	2	1
Secretary for Labour and Welfare • Labour	144	3	3
Total :	3287	36	17

**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the afternoon of 12 April 2021
2:00 pm to 6:05 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP

Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 1 – Civil Service

Mr Patrick NIP, JP	Secretary for the Civil Service
Mrs Ingrid YEUNG, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service
Mrs Angelina CHEUNG, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1)

Miss Ann CHAN	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)
Mr Gary POON, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)
Mr Hermes CHAN, JP	Director of General Grades
Ms Bertille LI	Principal Executive Officer (Management), Civil Service Bureau
Mr Charlix WONG, JP	Director of Accounting Services
Mr YAU Kin-chung, JP	Secretary General, Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service
Dr Teresa LI	Acting Deputy Director of Health
Ms Fontaine CHENG	Secretary, Public Service Commission

Session 2 – Judiciary Administration and Legal Administration

Ms Esther LEUNG, JP	Judiciary Administrator
Ms Wendy CHEUNG	Deputy Judiciary Administrator (Operations)
Mr Jock TAM	Assistant Judiciary Administrator (Corporate Services)
Mr Desmond LAM	Chief Treasury Accountant, Judiciary
Ms Teresa CHENG, GBS, SC, JP	Secretary for Justice
Ms Gracie FOO, JP	Director of Administration and Development
Mr William TAM, SC	Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions (II)
Mr Wesley WONG, SC, JP	Solicitor General
Mr Michael LAM	Law Draftsman
Ms Christina CHEUNG, JP	Law Officer (Civil Law)
Ms Linda LAM	Acting Law Officer (International Law)
Dr James DING	Commissioner of Inclusive Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Office

Session 3 – Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Mr Erick TSANG, IDSM, JP	Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
Mr Roy TANG, JP	Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
Ms Maisie CHAN, JP	Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (1)
Miss Katharine CHOI	Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (2)
Mr Tommy YUEN, JP	Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area
Mr Benjamin MOK	Deputy Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area
Ms Elena SHUM	Chief Executive Officer (Newspaper and Article Administration / Communications Authority)
Mr Alan YUNG	Chief Electoral Officer

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Assistant Secretary General 1
Ms Angel SHEK	Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Miss Queenie LAM	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)2
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**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the afternoon of 13 April 2021
2:00 pm to 6:45 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP

Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ¹
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 4 – Financial Services

Mr Christopher HUI, JP	Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Mr Joseph CHAN, JP	Under Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Ms Salina YAN, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services)
Ms May CHAN, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services) ¹

Mr Aaron LIU, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services) ²
Mr Sam HUI	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services) Special Duties
Miss Crystal YIP	Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Mr Raymond CHAN	Chief Executive Officer (Financial Services), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau
Ms Marion CHAN, JP	Commissioner for Census and Statistics
Ms Phyllis McKENNA, JP	Official Receiver
Ms Kitty TSUI	Registrar of Companies
Mr Darryl CHAN, JP	Executive Director (External), Hong Kong Monetary Authority
Mr Colin POU, JP	Executive Director (Financial Infrastructure), Hong Kong Monetary Authority
Mr Clement CHAN	Senior Vice President (Operations), Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited

Session 5 – Public Finance

Mr Christopher HUI, JP	Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Ms Alice LAU, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Mr Maurice LOO, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ²
Mr Howard LEE	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ³
Miss Crystal YIP	Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

Mr Ronald FAN	Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) (H)
Ms Jessie WONG, JP	Head, Budget and Tax Policy Unit, Financial Secretary's Office
Mr Hermes TANG, CDSM, CMSM	Commissioner of Customs and Excise
Mr Jimmy TAM, CMSM	Assistant Commissioner of Customs and Excise (Excise & Strategic Support)
Mr TAM Tai-pang, JP	Commissioner of Inland Revenue
Mr Kevin SIU, JP	Commissioner of Rating and Valuation
Miss Mary CHOW, JP	Director of Government Logistics
Miss Leonia TAI, JP	Government Property Administrator
Ms Winnie HO, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr Charlix WONG, JP	Director of Accounting Services

Session 6 – Central Administration and Other Services

Mr Daniel CHENG, JP	Director of Administration
Mr Bobby CHENG, JP	Deputy Director of Administration 1
Mr Andrew AU, JP	Government Economist
Ms Doris HO, JP	Head, Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office
Mr Fletch CHAN	Deputy Head (2), Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office
Mr Thomas Edward KWONG, JP	Director of Legal Aid
Ms Angelina KWAN, JP	Head, Human Resources Planning and Poverty Co-ordination Unit
Mr John CHU, JP	Director of Audit
Ms Candy CHUI	Departmental Secretary, Audit Commission
Ms Shirley LAM, JP	Permanent Secretary, Chief Executive's Office
Mr Steve CHOW	Chief Executive Officer (Administration), Chief Executive's Office

Mr Simon PEH, SBS, IDSM	Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption
Mr Ken HO	Director of Investigation (Private Sector), Independent Commission Against Corruption
Ms Sally KWAN, IDS	Assistant Director (Administration), Independent Commission Against Corruption
Mr Kenneth CHEN, SBS	Secretary General, Legislative Council Secretariat
Miss Roxanna LO	Accountant, Legislative Council Secretariat
Ms Winnie CHIU, PDSM, PMSM	The Ombudsman
Mr SO Kam-shing	Deputy Ombudsman

Session 7 – Environment

Mr WONG Kam-sing, GBS, JP	Secretary for the Environment
Mr TSE Chin-wan, BBS, JP	Under Secretary for the Environment
Ms Maisie CHENG Mei-sze, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment/Director of Environmental Protection
Ms Irene YOUNG Bick-kwan, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Environment
Dr Samuel CHUI Ho-kwong, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1)
Mrs Millie NG KIANG Mei-nei, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Mr Owin FUNG Ho-yin, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3)
Mr Bruno LUK Kar-kin	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Special Projects)
Ms Alice PANG, JP	Director of Drainage Services
Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Mr Ricky LAU Chun-kit, JP	Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Mr PANG Yiu-hung, JP	Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services

Mr Tony CHAN Cheuk-sang

Assistant Director of Marine
(Planning and Services)

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT
Ms Angel SHEK

Assistant Secretary General 1
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Miss Bowie LAM

Council Secretary (1)1

**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the morning of 14 April 2021
9:00 am to 12:10 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP

Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ¹
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 8 – Housing

Mr Frank CHAN Fan, JP	Secretary for Transport and Housing
Dr Raymond SO Wai-man, BBS, JP	Under Secretary for Transport and Housing
Miss Agnes WONG Tin-yu, JP	Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
Mrs Alice CHEUNG CHIU Hoi-yue, JP	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Mr Carlson CHAN Ka-shun, JP	Director (Special Duties), Transport and Housing Bureau/Director of Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority
Mr Davey CHUNG Pui-hong, JP	Deputy Director of Housing (Corporate Services)
Mr Stephen LEUNG Kin-man	Deputy Director of Housing (Development and Construction)
Mr Ricky YEUNG Yiu-fai	Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management)
Miss Kathy CHAN Nap-sze	Head, Secretariat for Task Force for the Study on Tenancy Control of Subdivided Units, Transport and Housing Bureau
Mr Martin TSOI Wai-tong	Head (Independent Checking Unit), Housing Department Permanent Secretary's Office
Mr YU Tak-cheung, JP	Director of Buildings
Mr Kevin SIU Ka-yin, JP	Commissioner of Rating and Valuation
Mr Alan FONG Kim-fung	Deputy Director of Lands(Legal)

Session 9 – Transport

Mr Frank CHAN Fan, JP	Secretary for Transport and Housing
Dr Raymond SO Wai-man, BBS, JP	Under Secretary for Transport and Housing
Ms Mable CHAN, JP	Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)
Mrs Sharon YIP, JP	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)1
Ms Amy WONG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)2
Miss Winnie TSE	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)3
Mr Wallace LAU, JP	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)4
Ms Christina CHONG	Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)5

Mr Jimmy CHAN, JP
Miss Rosanna LAW, JP
Mr Victor LIU, JP
Ms Carol YUEN, JP
Mr PANG Yiu-hung, JP

Director of Highways
Commissioner for Transport
Director-General of Civil Aviation
Director of Marine
Director of Electrical and Mechanical
Services
Head, Airport Expansion Project
Coordination Office

Mr Raymond CHENG

Clerk in attendance:

Mr Derek LO

Chief Council Secretary (1)5

Staff in attendance:

Ms Clara LO

Legislative Assistant (1)9

**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the afternoon of 14 April 2021
2:00 pm to 6:05 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 10 – Home Affairs

Mr Caspar TSUI, JP	Secretary for Home Affairs
Mr Jack CHAN, JP	Under Secretary for Home Affairs
Mrs Cherry TSE, JP	Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs
Mr Sammy LEUNG	Acting Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)
Miss Vinci CHAN	Acting Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)
Ms Kinnie WONG	Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (2)
Mr YEUNG Tak-keung, JP	Commissioner for Sports

Ms YING Fun-fong, JP	Project Manager, Home Affairs Bureau
Miss Janice TSE, JP	Director of Home Affairs
Mr Vincent LIU, JP	Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
Mr Rex CHANG, JP	Director of Information Services

Session 11 – Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Mr Edward YAU, GBS, JP	Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
Miss Eliza LEE, JP	Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce, Industry and Tourism)
Ms Vivian SUM, JP	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry) ¹
Mr Eric CHAN, JP	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry) ²
Ms Betty HO, JP	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry) ³
Mr Joe WONG, JP	Commissioner for Tourism
Mr Denis YIP	Commissioner for Belt and Road
Ms Louise HO, CMSM	Deputy Commissioner of Customs and Excise
Miss Cathy CHU, JP	Postmaster General
Mr David WONG, JP	Director of Intellectual Property
Mr Stephen PHILLIPS	Director-General of Investment Promotion
Mr Brian LO, JP	Director-General of Trade and Industry
Dr CHENG Cho-ming, JP	Director of the Hong Kong Observatory
Mr Dane CHENG	Executive Director, Hong Kong Tourism Board
Ms Margaret FONG	Executive Director, Hong Kong Trade Development Council

Session 12 – Communications and Creative Industries

Mr Edward YAU, GBS, JP	Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
Mr Clement LEUNG, JP	Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries)
Mr Johann WONG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries)
Miss Grace KWOK	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries) (Support Services)
Mr Victor TSANG	Head of Create Hong Kong
Mr Patrick LI, JP	Director of Broadcasting
Mr Eugene FUNG, JP	Deputy Director of Broadcasting
Mr Chaucer LEUNG, JP	Director-General of Communications
Mr Tony LI, JP	Deputy Director of Film, Newspaper and Article Administration

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Assistant Secretary General 1
Ms Angel SHEK	Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Miss Bowie LAM	Council Secretary (1)1
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**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the morning of 15 April 2021
9:00 am to 12:15 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ¹
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 13 – Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Prof Sophia CHAN, JP	Secretary for Food and Health
Miss Vivian LAU, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Mr Michael YOUNG	Head, Resource Management and Administration, Food and Health Bureau
Ms Irene YOUNG, JP	Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Miss Diane WONG, JP	Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Environmental Hygiene)

Ms Karyn CHAN, JP

Deputy Director of Food and
Environmental Hygiene
(Administration and Development)
Controller, Centre for Food Safety
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and
Conservation
Government Chemist

Dr Edwin TSUI

Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP

Dr SIN Wai-mei, JP

Session 14 – Health

Prof Sophia CHAN, JP

Mr Thomas CHAN, JP

Secretary for Food and Health
Permanent Secretary for Food and
Health (Health)

Mr Michael YOUNG

Head, Resource Management and
Administration, Food and Health
Bureau

Dr Constance CHAN, JP

Dr Teresa LI

Director of Health

Acting Deputy Director of Health /
Assistant Director of Health (Health
Administration and Planning)

Dr Tony KO Pat-sing

Dr Deacons YEUNG Tai-kong

Chief Executive, Hospital Authority
Director (Cluster Services), Hospital
Authority

Dr SIN Wai-mei, JP

Government Chemist

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT

Ms Angel SHEK

Assistant Secretary General 1

Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Ms Alice CHEUNG

Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1

**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the afternoon of 15 April 2021
2:00 pm to 6:30 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan

Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 15 – Innovation and Technology

Mr Alfred SIT, JP	Secretary for Innovation and Technology
Dr David CHUNG Wai-keung, JP	Under Secretary for Innovation and Technology
Ms Annie CHOI Suk-han, JP	Permanent Secretary for Innovation and Technology
Mr Alan LO Ying-ki	Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Technology (1)
Ms Eva YAM Ya-ling	Acting Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Technology (2)

Ms Rebecca PUN Ting-ting, JP	Commissioner for Innovation and Technology
Mr Victor LAM Wai-kiu, JP	Government Chief Information Officer
Mr Ivan LEE Kwok-bun, JP	Commissioner for Efficiency

Session 16 – Planning and Lands

Mr Michael WONG Wai-lun, JP	Secretary for Development
Mr LIU Chun San, JP	Under Secretary for Development
Ms Bernadette LINN, JP	Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands)
Mr Vic YAU Cheuk-hang, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands)1
Ms Jenny CHOI Mui-fun	Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands)2
Ms Sabrina LAW Chung	Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) 3
Mr Andrew LAI, JP	Director of Lands
Mr Ivan CHUNG, JP	Director of Planning
Mr YU Tak-cheung, JP	Director of Buildings
Mr Ricky LAU Chun-kit, JP	Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Ms Brenda AU Kit-ying, JP	Project Coordinator (Invigorating Island South), Development Bureau

Session 17 – Works

Mr Michael WONG Wai-lun, JP	Secretary for Development
Mr LIU Chun San, JP	Under Secretary for Development
Mr LAM Sai-hung, JP	Permanent Secretary for Development (Works)
Ms Angela LEE Chung-yan, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Works)1
Mr Vincent MAK Shing-cheung, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Works)2
Mr Francis CHAU Siu-hei, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Works)3

Mr Ricky LAU Chun-kit, JP	Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Mr Kelvin LO Kwok-wah, JP	Director of Water Supplies
Ms Alice PANG, JP	Director of Drainage Services
Mr PANG Yiu-hung, JP	Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services
Ms Winnie HO Wing-yin, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr Ivanhoe CHANG Chi-ho	Commissioner for Heritage
Mr John KWONG Ka-sing, JP	Head of Project Strategy and Governance Office
Ms Amy CHEUNG Yi-mei, JP	Head of Energizing Kowloon East Office

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT	Assistant Secretary General 1
Ms Angel SHEK	Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Ms Clara LO	Legislative Assistant (1)9
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**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the morning of 16 April 2021
9:00 am to 12:40 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan

Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP

Deputy Secretary for Financial
Services and the Treasury (Treasury)¹
Principal Executive Officer
(General), Financial Services and the
Treasury Bureau (The Treasury
Branch)

Miss Jennie Chan

Session 18 – Education

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP

Secretary for Education

Dr CHOI Yuk Lin, JP

Under Secretary for Education

Ms Michelle LI, JP

Permanent Secretary for Education

Mr Esmond LEE, JP

Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Priscilla TO, JP

Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Mrs CHAN SIU Suk-fan

Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mr Edward TO, JP

Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Mrs HONG CHAN Tsui-wah

Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Ms Cora HO, JP

Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Prof James TANG

Secretary-General, University Grants
Committee

Mrs Carrie YAU, GBS, JP

Executive Director, Vocational
Training Council

Professor WEI Xiang-dong

Secretary General, Hong Kong
Examinations and Assessment
Authority

Mr Donald NG, JP

Head, Working Family and Student
Financial Assistance Agency

Session 19 – Security

Mr John LEE, SBS, PDSM,
PMSM, JP

Secretary for Security

Mr Sonny AU, PDSM,
PMSM, JP

Under Secretary for Security

Ms Carol YIP, JP

Permanent Secretary for Security

Ms Ivy LAW, JP

Commissioner for Narcotics

Mr Simon CHENG

Principal Management Services
Officer (Security)

Mr TANG Ping-keung, PDSM

Commissioner of Police

Mr Joseph LEUNG, FSDSM

Director of Fire Services

Mr AU Ka-wang, IDSM

Director of Immigration

Mr WOO Ying-ming, CSDSM

Commissioner of Correctional
Services

Mr Hermes TANG, CDSM, CMSM

Commissioner of Customs and
Excise

Captain West WU, MBS, GDSM, AE

Controller, Government Flying
Service

Mr Francis FONG

Chief Staff Officer, Civil Aid Service

Mr WONG Ying-keung

Chief Staff Officer, Auxiliary
Medical Service

Mr Daniel MUI

Acting Secretary-General,
Independent Police Complaints
Council

Ms Flemy YIP

Secretary, Secretariat, Commissioner
on Interception of Communications
and Surveillance

Mr Victor LIU, JP

Director-General of Civil Aviation

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT
Ms Angel SHEK

Assistant Secretary General 1
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance:

Ms Alice CHEUNG

Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1

**Attendance of members and public officers at the
special meetings of the Finance Committee
from 12 to 16 April 2021**

**Meeting held in the afternoon of 16 April 2021
3:00 pm to 6:40 pm
Legislative Council Complex Conference Room 1**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Raistlin Lau, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Miss Jennie Chan	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Session 20 – Welfare and Women

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP	Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mr HO Kai-ming, JP	Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Ms CHANG King-yiu, JP	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mr David LEUNG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1
Ms Polly KWOK, JP	Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)2

Ms Manda CHAN, JP	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Donald NG, JP	Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency
Mr Gordon LEUNG, JP	Director of Social Welfare
Mr TAN Tick-ye	Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
Mr KOK Che-leung	Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)
Miss Rosanna LAW, JP	Commissioner for Transport

Session 21 – Labour

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP	Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mr HO Kai-ming, JP	Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Ms CHANG King-yiu, JP	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mr Stanley WAN	Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Manpower)
Mr Chris SUN, JP	Commissioner for Labour
Miss Mabel LI, JP	Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Labour Administration)
Mr Jeff LEUNG, JP	Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health)
Mr Charles HUI, JP	Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services)
Mr WU Wai-hung, JP	Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety)
Dr WAN Yuen-kong	Occupational Health Consultant (1), Labour Department
Mr Donald NG, JP	Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Clerk in attendance:

Mr Derek LO	Chief Council Secretary (1)5
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Staff in attendance:

Miss Queenie LAM	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)2
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**Opening Remarks by Secretary for the Civil Service
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council on 12 April 2021**

Chairman,

Among the matters related to the civil service in the 2021-22 Draft Estimates of Expenditure, I would like to focus my introduction on three items.

2. **The first item is civil service establishment.** It is of utmost importance to maintain the sustainability of public finance amidst the economic downturn. We will have zero growth in the civil service establishment in 2021-22 in order to contain the growth in establishment expenditure. We have encouraged bureaux and departments to enhance effectiveness and efficiency through re-prioritisation, internal redeployment and streamlining of work processes, so that the workload can be coped with even without increase in civil service establishment.

3. **The second item is on the creation of time-limited jobs under the Anti-Epidemic Fund.** To relieve the worsening unemployment situation due to the epidemic and the anti-epidemic measures, the Government has earmarked \$6.6 billion under the Anti-epidemic Fund last year to create 30 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors within two years for people of different skill sets and academic qualifications. As at end March 2021, around 31 000 jobs have been created, with half of the jobs being created in the Government and the other half in the non-governmental sector. Among the jobs already created, over 20 000 jobs have been filled while the recruitment of the remaining 11 000 jobs is in progress or will commence shortly. In view of the persistently high unemployment rate, the Government announced in the 2021-22 Budget to further earmark \$6.6 billion to create an additional 30 000 time-limited jobs. Relevant government departments will liaise with the non-governmental organisations or relevant associations under their purview to formulate details of the additional jobs.

4. **The third item is about financial provisions.** In the 2021-22 Draft Estimates of Expenditure, we have reserved over \$2,700 million for the Government, as a good employer, to continuously improve the medical and dental services for civil service eligible persons (including pensioners). Over \$1,050 million out of the said provision is for providing medical and dental services at Families Clinics and government dental clinics respectively. Apart from meeting the operating expenses of the clinics, the provision will also be used for strengthening manpower support and setting up an additional specialised dental surgery. Also, we have reserved \$1,660 million for the payment and reimbursement of medical fees and hospital charges, to meet expenses on reimbursement of medical fees, which are not entirely predicable.

5. Chairman, this is the end of my introduction. I would welcome questions from Members.

**The Judiciary Administrator's Speaking Notes
at the Special Meeting of Finance Committee
on 12 April 2021**

Overview of the Judiciary's Work and Operation in 2020-21

Coping with multiple unprecedented challenges

Since January 2020, the operation of courts and tribunals has been considerably affected by the unprecedented challenges, mainly from the combined effects of the prolonged COVID-19 epidemic, the upsurge of cases relating to social events at various levels of court, and the phenomenal increase in leave applications for judicial review relating to non-refoulement claims at the High Court.

2. The Judiciary has been making pro-active and dedicated efforts in coping with the multiple challenges through a series of measures which seek to make the best possible use of available manpower and court facilities to handle the maximum volume of court business-

(a) Prolonged COVID-19 epidemic

In light of the evolving public health situation, the Judiciary has been striking a balance between public health risks and administration of justice. Following the three months' General Adjourned Period from late January to early May 2020, the Judiciary had been adjusting its conduct of court business and adopting social distancing measures to ensure that courts can continue to carry on business as safely as circumstances permit. These include more flexible deployment of court premises across different levels of courts, using remote hearings and paper disposals as alternative means of disposing suitable civil cases, and engaging additional judicial manpower.

With such efforts, the total number of cases disposed in 2020 amounted to around 85%, with civil cases at 90% and criminal cases at 70-80% to the corresponding figures in 2019; and the target court waiting times for civil cases were generally achieved. The impact of longer court waiting time has fallen mainly on criminal cases, because these cases especially those with many defendants had to be scheduled at wider intervals and the lack of legal basis for remote hearings on criminal proceedings.

(b) Upsurge of social event (“SE”) cases

The upsurge of SE cases has been posing particular challenges to the Judiciary as their operational arrangements tend to be more complex because they invariably involve a large number of defendants, legal representatives, media and public viewers, and evidences in the form of large volume of video recordings.

We have been according suitable priority to processing such cases through pro-active case management (including setting stricter procedural timetable), enhancing courtrooms and broadcasting facilities to enable the handling of multi-defendant cases as far as possible, re-commissioning the former Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building in the second half of 2021, and arranging longer court sitting hours and Saturday sittings as necessary.

As of 28 February 2021, the Judiciary has already disposed of 1,140 (65%) of the 1,752 SE cases brought to various levels of court. Many of such cases require a considerably long hearing period of over 30 days. With only around 130 courtrooms suitable for hearing criminal cases in the Judiciary, we have been handling around 100 hearings relating to SE cases each week in around 10 court buildings.

(c) Leave application for Judicial Review (“JR”) relating to Non-refoulement claims

From 2016 to 2020, the total number of applications to the Court of First Instance of the High Court (“CFI”) for leave to apply for JR increased from 228 to 2,500. The vast majority (over 90%) of the increase came from cases related to non-refoulement claims,

which increased from 60 to 2,367. The number of other JR cases has remained stable at an annual average of around 160 cases with no apparent trend of increase. The Judiciary has been adopting a stringent and prudent approach in handling such applications. The percentage of leave granted remains at a very low level. Only 3.5% of non-refoulement claims disposed as at end January 2021 were approved.

The Judiciary will continue to deploy additional manpower resources and streamline processing procedures as far as possible, with a view to expediting the processing of the outstanding and increasing number of leave applications at CFI and appeal cases at Court of Appeal of the High Court (“CA”). With these measures, we aim at disposing of up to 2,000 cases at CFI and 1,000 cases at CA each year, which are effectively more than double the average caseload disposed in the past few years.

Greater Use of Technologies

3. In light of the above challenges, the Judiciary is committed to making greater use of technology for enhancing the efficiency of court business. We have been and will continue to be taking proactive efforts in taking forward a series of technology-related initiatives in 2021-22 and the years ahead. These include implementation of electronic filing of court documents at the key levels of court by phases from 2021 to 2024, and giving effect to the option of remote hearings for criminal proceedings. Continued efforts will be made in parallel at both legislative and implementation fronts.

2021-22 Draft Estimates

4. The draft Estimates of 2021-22 for the Judiciary, amounting to \$2,325.7 million, represents an increase of \$183.0 million or 8.5% over the revised estimates for 2020-21, but only 2.7% over the original estimates for 2020-21. In 2021-22, the additional provision mainly reflects the net additional financial resources required for creation of four additional non-judicial civil service posts, filling of existing judicial and non-judicial vacancies, additional operating expenses for strengthening court operations, facilitating the application of information technology in the Judiciary and enhancing administrative support on various fronts of the Judiciary.

Judicial Manpower

5. The establishment of judicial posts now stands at 222. Over the past years, the Judiciary has been launching open recruitment exercises for filling judicial vacancies at appropriate timing, having regard to the overall judicial manpower situation and operational needs of the different levels of courts-

- (a) at the Judge of the CFI level, the Judiciary has conducted five open recruitment exercises on a regular basis since 2012. A total of 26 CFI Judges have been appointed. A new round of recruitment exercise launched in November 2020 is in progress;
- (b) for the District Judge (“DJ”) level, three rounds of open recruitment were conducted from 2011 to 2018. A total of 36 judicial appointments were made. The Judiciary has launched a new round of recruitment of DJs in March 2021; and
- (c) four rounds of open recruitment exercises for Permanent Magistrates conducted since 2011 were completed. A total of 55 Permanent Magistrates were appointed. The next recruitment exercise for Permanent Magistrates will be launched within 2021.

6. In addition, the Judiciary would continue to keep in view the judicial manpower situation and engage deputy Judges and Judicial Officers in the interim in helping to meet pressing operational needs as far as practicable.

Non-Judicial Manpower

7. In 2021-22, additional provision has been made to cope with the net addition of four civil service posts for:

- (a) providing continuous/enhanced support for the use of information technology in the Judiciary;

- (b) additional workload arising from the District Court satellites arrangements for expediting processing of court cases relating to social events; and
- (c) supporting the re-commissioning of the former Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building.

Conclusion

8. The Judiciary will continue to explore areas for improvement to enhance access to justice and to provide quality services to court users and members of the public.

9. Thank you.

**Opening Remarks of
Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, Secretary for Justice,
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative
Council to Examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2021-22
on 12 April 2021 (Monday)**

Chairman and Members,

The total estimated expenditure of the Department of Justice (DoJ) for 2021-22 is about \$2,506.3 million. The Revised Estimates for the last financial year (i.e. 2020-21) reflect underspending that is largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic is gradually brought under control, the Estimates for this financial year are drawn up on the assumption that DoJ will essentially resume normal operations during the period. Therefore, there is a noticeable difference between the 2021-22 Estimates and the Revised Estimates for the last financial year. By comparing the Estimates for this financial year against the Original Estimates for the last financial year, there is an increase of 2.4% only.

2. I would like to briefly introduce our key initiatives in 2020 and 2021¹.

(A) International initiatives

3. Despite the pandemic, with the support of the Central Government, DoJ managed to organise a number of international conferences and successfully concluded various cooperation arrangements with international bodies in the past year, including:

- (1) the virtual signing of a memorandum of understanding with the APEC Secretariat on the establishment of a sub-fund to strengthen economic and legal infrastructure;

¹ The policy initiatives implemented by DoJ in 2020 have been set out in detail in the paper submitted to the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services.

- (2) the virtual signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Hague Conference on Private International Law on the secondment arrangements of local legal professionals in both public and private sectors; and
- (3) the establishment of the DoJ Project Office for Collaboration with UNCITRAL to support the set-up of the Inclusive Global Legal Innovation Platform (iGLIP), and the successful holding of the first iGLIP meeting online.

(B) Mainland-related initiatives

4. The initiatives that Hong Kong successfully achieved in the past year include:

- (1) allowing wholly-owned Hong Kong enterprises (WOKEs) set up in Qianhai, Shenzhen to choose Hong Kong law as the applicable law despite the absence of any foreign-related elements;
- (2) allowing Hong Kong legal professionals to participate in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination; and
- (3) signing of the Supplemental Arrangement concerning mutual enforcement of arbitral awards with the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and passing of the relevant amendments in the Legislative Council for implementation of the Supplemental Arrangement.

5. Moreover, we expect to conclude the following arrangements with SPC soon:

- (1) Establishment of a framework for cooperation on mutual recognition of and assistance in corporate insolvency matters; and
- (2) Refinement of the Arrangement for Mutual Service of Judicial Documents in Civil and Commercial Proceedings between the two places.

(C) Local initiatives

6. With funding provided under the “Anti-epidemic Fund 2.0”, DoJ plans to create 276 time-limited posts² through recruitment and procurement of services from professional bodies or contractors.

7. Meanwhile, DoJ also actively encourages the legal profession to hire and send local university graduates to work in the Mainland cities in the GBA under the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Youth Employment Scheme launched by the SAR Government.

(D) Policy initiatives on strengthening Hong Kong as a capacity building centre

8. DoJ co-organised with Tsinghua University a seminar course entitled “The Fundamental Principles of Chinese Law” online. We hope that Hong Kong lawyers in private practice will be able to enroll in future courses to better familiarise them with the Mainland’s judicial system and our country’s latest developments.

(E) Vision 2030 for Rule of Law

9. DoJ officially launched Vision 2030 for Rule of Law during Hong Kong Legal Week 2020 held virtually and physically on 2 November last year. Efforts are also being taken at different levels to promote proper education about the rule of law, the Constitution and the Basic Law among the public, teachers and students.

10. Meanwhile, DoJ successfully organised the Basic Law 30th Anniversary Legal Summit with the theme “Back to Basics”, the proceedings of which will be published in due course.

² Including 231 legal professionals, 21 Legal Clerks and 24 Executive Assistants or Clerks.

(F) Highlights of other work of DoJ

(i) Judicial review cases

11. There were 3 899 and 2 499 applications for leave to apply for judicial review in 2019 and 2020 respectively; the Civil Division of DoJ handled 745 and 565 judicial review cases respectively in these two years.

(ii) Prosecutions

12. During the pandemic, the Special Duties Section of the Prosecutions Division focused its efforts on advising and making prosecutorial decisions on a large volume of cases, and actively proceeded with related prosecutions and appeals. Since last year, the appeal courts have so far heard and adjudicated on 17 applications for review of sentence in respect of public order offences, all of which were successful.

(iii) Law Drafting

13. In addition to the existing drafting tasks, the Government made 10 principal regulations (such as Cap. 599C-599K) and 63 amending regulations amid the pandemic to provide for various arrangements to combat the disease.

(iv) LawTech

14. DoJ will set up the Hong Kong Legal Cloud Fund for the development of Hong Kong Legal Cloud by selected non-profit-making non-governmental organisations through public-private partnership. A webinar on Hong Kong Legal Cloud was organised in collaboration with the Law Society of Hong Kong on 1 April.

(G) Legal Hub

15. Hong Kong Legal Week 2020 marked the official opening of Hong Kong Legal Hub, where around 20 local, regional and international law-related organisations operate with a view to enhancing exchange and collaboration.

**Opening remarks by the
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee of the
Legislative Council on 12 April 2021**

Dear Chairman,

I wish to brief Members now on the main points of the estimates of expenditure of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) in 2021-22.

Estimates of expenditure of the CMAB

2. In 2021-22, the CMAB is allocated \$830.91 million of funding. The focus of our work for this financial year is as follows:

(I) Improving the electoral system

3. On 11 March 2021, the National People's Congress (NPC) made the Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Decision). On 30 March, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) adopted the amended Annex I to the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (the Basic Law) on Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Annex II to the Basic Law on Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Its Voting Procedures.

4. The HKSAR Government resolutely supports the Decision made by the NPC and the amended Annexes I and II to the Basic Law adopted by the NPCSC. The improved electoral system will be able to establish a political structure which conforms to the "one country, two systems" principle, meets the actual situation of Hong Kong and fulfills the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong".

5. The HKSAR Government is working in full speed to implement Annexes I and II. First, we need to amend the relevant electoral legislations to implement the concrete content of Annexes I and II. If approved by the Executive Council, we will introduce the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill 2021 into the Legislative Council (LegCo) at a specially convened meeting of the LegCo on 14 April for First Reading. We would like to thank the LegCo for setting up a subcommittee to discuss the Decision and the amended Annexes I and II. The Subcommittee has already had five meetings. Upon the introduction of the above-mentioned bill to the LegCo, the subcommittee will transform into a bills committee to commence scrutiny of the bill.

6. Also, we will continue to conduct explanatory work towards the public. In the past period, the HKSAR Government has already met with various sectors to brief them on the background, principles and major content of improving the electoral system. We will strengthen our explanatory and publicity work aimed at the public so that more members of the public will agree with the necessity and urgency of improving the electoral system as well as support the relevant work.

7. In the coming twelve months, there will be three elections, including the elections of the Election Committee, LegCo and Chief Executive. To cope with the tremendous preparatory work for these elections, we hope that scrutiny of the aforementioned bill could be completed and the bill could be passed by the end of May this year. We hope that Members could continue to support the work in improving the electoral system.

(II) Oath-taking by public officers

8. Upholding the Basic Law and bearing allegiance to the HKSAR are the basic requirements for people administering Hong Kong and public officers as well as their fundamental obligation and responsibility. This is also an important foundation for implementing the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”.

9. To accurately implement Article 104 of the Basic Law and the Interpretation of Article 104 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China adopted by the NPCSC in November 2016, to fulfil the constitutional responsibility of the

HKSAR, and to implement the legislative intentions and principles in respect of oath-taking requirements by public officers laid down in the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the HKSAR Government has introduced the Public Offices (Candidacy and Taking Up Offices) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2021 into the LegCo on 17 March 2021 for First and Second Reading. The relevant bills committee has already convened four meetings. We will continue to support the scrutiny work and strive for early passage of the bill.

(III) Amendments to the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance

10. The amended National Flag Law of the People's Republic of China (the National Flag Law) and the National Emblem Law of the People's Republic of China (the National Emblem Law) came into force on 1 January 2021. The CMAB is now preparing amendments to the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance in accordance with the provisions, principles and spirit of the amended National Flag Law and National Emblem Law, with a view to implementing provisions that are applicable to the HKSAR. We will complete the drafting of the amendment bill as soon as practicable and then introduce it to the LegCo for scrutiny so as to fulfil the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR.

(IV) Promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law

11. The Constitution and the Basic Law together form the constitutional basis of the HKSAR and provide the strongest safeguard for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. To ensure the steadfast and successful implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle, we have responsibility to let the general public have a comprehensive, accurate and thorough understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law, as well as the constitutional order enshrined therein. The CMAB will set aside about \$23 million in 2021-22 for carrying out promotion and publicity work through different means and in a diversified manner, including organising or sponsoring various types of promotional activities, in order to promote and enhance the atmosphere of studying and learning the Constitution and the Basic Law in the society.

(V) Rights of the individual

12. In 2021-22, subventions to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) will remain the major parts of the estimated total provision in human rights under the CMAB.

The EOC and the PCPD

13. The EOC is responsible for implementation of the four anti-discrimination ordinances. The total subvention for the EOC in 2021-22 is \$132.1 million, a decrease of 2.4% as compared with the revised estimate of the previous financial year (i.e. \$135.3 million). The reason is that an one-off provision was provided to the EOC in 2020-21 for enhancing its work and stepping up publicity and public education. Such provision is not necessary in this financial year.

14. The PCPD will continue to raise public awareness in protecting and respecting personal data, as well as encourage public and private organisations to embrace personal data protection as an essential part of corporate governance. In 2021-22, the allocation to the PCPD is \$88.90 million, which is comparable to the revised estimate of 2020-21.

15. In recent years, doxxing acts, which literally weaponise personal data, have blatantly infringed personal data privacy. Such acts are rampant and deemed despicable. To put a stop to such destructive behaviour, our target is to introduce an amendment bill to combat doxxing within this legislative year so as to better protect the personal data privacy of the general public.

Discrimination law review

16. The Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 was passed by the LegCo in June last year, enhancing protection from discrimination and harassment under the existing four anti-discrimination ordinances. Consequential to suggestions received in the course of scrutinising this bill, we have separately introduced the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2020 to prohibit harassment of breastfeeding women. The bill was passed by the LegCo on 17 March 2021 and will take effect on 19 June.

Anti-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity

17. The HKSAR Government has always been committed to promoting equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations and transgenders, with a view to fostering in the community the culture and values of inclusiveness, mutual respect and non-discrimination. We have been broadcasting promotional video on different platforms to promote the message of “Eliminate Discrimination, Embrace Inclusion”, as well as encouraging more organisations to adopt the Code of Practice against Discrimination in Employment on Ground of Sexual Orientation to provide equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations. We will also continue to provide support services to sexual minorities through the Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme and by providing funding to the 24-hour hotline operated by Tung Wah Group of Hospitals.

(VI) Mainland affairs and co-operation with Taiwan

18. In 2021-22, the financial provision for the Mainland and Taiwan Offices is \$366.33 million, an increase of \$32.12 million (about 9.6%) as compared with the revised estimate for 2020-21. The reason is to step up promotional efforts to rebuild the positive image of Hong Kong.

The National 14th Five-Year Plan

19. On 11 March 2021, the NPC adopted the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 (the 14th Five-Year Plan). The part concerning Hong Kong and Macao states from the outset that to maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, it is imperative to fully and faithfully implement the principles of “one country, two systems”, “Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong” and a high degree of autonomy, to uphold the constitutional order as enshrined in the Constitution and the Basic Law, to uphold the Central Authorities’ overall jurisdiction over the Special Administrative Regions (SARs), and to implement the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the SARs to safeguard national security, etc.

20. In addition, the 14th Five-Year Plan mentions numerous constructive supporting statements for Hong Kong in terms of economic and social development, amongst which a number of them were raised for the first time in a national five-year plan. On economic development, the 14th Five-Year Plan includes for the first time the support for Hong Kong to enhance its status as an international aviation hub, to develop into an international innovation and technology hub and a regional intellectual property trading centre, and to develop into a hub for arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. As regards social development, the 14th Five-Year Plan raises for the first time the support for Hong Kong to foster co-operation and exchanges with countries and regions around the world, and improve policy measures to enable Hong Kong and Macao residents to develop and live in the Mainland.

21. The HKSAR Government will utilise the opportunities brought about by the 14th Five-Year Plan. Under the new development pattern which takes the domestic market as the mainstay while enabling domestic and foreign markets to interact positively with each other, the HKSAR Government will take the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as an entry point so as to better integrate Hong Kong into the overall development of our Country.

Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

22. The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) is not only a key development strategy in our Country's Reform and Opening-up in the new era, but also a further step to enrich the implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle. With the support of the 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong will actively participate in high-quality GBA development.

23. Since the promulgation of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in February 2019, the HKSAR Government has spared no efforts in taking forward GBA development, including working closely with the relevant Central Ministries or Departments and the Guangdong Provincial Government to take forward the implementation of the 24 policy measures that have been approved by the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Measures already rolled out include: tax concessions, facilitation of property purchase, support for young

entrepreneurs, cross-boundary remittance of science and technology funding, and liberalisation of the legal and construction professional services, etc. These measures have facilitated Hong Kong residents to reside, work and develop in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

24. At the same time, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office (the Office) was formally established under the CMAB in November 2020. In 2021-22, the Office will maintain close liaison with Central Ministries or Departments, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Macao SAR Government on GBA development. The Office will also co-ordinate efforts amongst bureaux and departments of the HKSAR Government to actively take forward the implementation of various policy measures, and on the basis of the “one country, two systems” principle, pursue policy innovation and breakthroughs with a view to identifying and creating new opportunities for Hong Kong. Moreover, the Office will maintain close liaison with local stakeholders and through publicity and promotional efforts enhance the awareness of various sectors of society on GBA development and encourage them to actively participate in GBA development.

Resumption of cross-boundary people flow

25. As a first step in gradually resuming the cross-boundary flow of people amongst Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao in an orderly manner, the HKSAR Government introduced the Return2hk Scheme (the Scheme) on 23 November 2020 to facilitate Hong Kong residents in Guangdong or Macao, after having been tested negative for a COVID-19 test, to return to Hong Kong without being subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine. As at 11 April 2021, over 123 000 return journeys have been made by Hong Kong residents under the Scheme. The HKSAR Government is exploring extending the scope of the Scheme to areas outside Guangdong and allowing certain Mainland residents to come to Hong Kong without being subject to compulsory quarantine. The HKSAR Government will announce the details at a suitable juncture.

Enhancing promotion in the Mainland after the epidemic

26. The social unrests in 2019 dealt a heavy blow to Hong Kong’s image in the Mainland as a safe city. In 2020, the people flow between the two places almost came to a standstill due to the epidemic. In

collaboration with relevant departments and organisations, the five Mainland Offices of the HKSAR Government will, after the epidemic, enhance the promotional work in the Mainland and rebuild Hong Kong's positive image as a safe, law-abiding, civilised, pluralistic and inclusive society. We will launch the relevant promotions in due course.

27. Chairman, this is the end of my introduction. My colleagues and I would be glad to answer enquires from Members.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
April 2021

**Special Meetings of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council
to Examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2021-22**

(2:00 pm - 3:10 pm on 13 April 2021)

(Financial Services)

**Speaking Note of the Secretary for
Financial Services and the Treasury**

Chairman and Honourable Members,

I will briefly introduce the estimates of expenditure for financial services and our key areas of work in the coming year.

Estimates of Expenditure

2. The allocation to the Financial Services Branch and departments under its purview for 2021-22 is about \$3.8 billion. The amount represents an increase of about \$1.5 billion over the original estimate of last year.

Key Areas of Work

3. In the coming year, to reinforce our status as an international financial centre, we will focus our work in safeguarding Hong Kong's financial stability on the one hand and continue to launch new initiatives for promoting market development on the other. We will also enhance financial co-operation with the Mainland. Besides, under the epidemic, we will be launching initiatives to relieve people's hardship.

(I) Safeguarding Financial Stability

4. Financial stability provides a sound foundation for the development of Hong Kong's financial market. With our resilient regulatory regime and robust risk management, Hong Kong's financial system has demonstrated resilience despite the impact of the pandemic and other uncertainties in the global environment on our financial markets over the past year or so. The Linked Exchange Rate System and various facets

of the markets have been functioning in an orderly manner. According to the latest data, major banks' average liquidity coverage ratio exceeded 150%, and the industry's average capital adequacy ratio exceeded 20%, both well above the international standards. We will continue to closely monitor the financial market situation.

(II) New Initiatives for Promoting Market Development

5. On promoting market development, I would like to give a brief account of our new initiatives.

- (a) On the asset and wealth management front, we will step up efforts to enhance Hong Kong's status as an international asset and wealth management centre. To propel the development of the real estate investment trust (REIT) market in Hong Kong, subsidies will be provided to cover the expenses paid to local professional service providers by qualifying REITs authorised by the Securities and Futures Commission and listed in Hong Kong in the coming three years. We will also sponsor open-ended fund companies (OFCs) by providing subsidies to cover the expenses paid to local professional service providers for OFCs set up in or re-domiciled to Hong Kong in the coming three years. In addition, InvestHK's dedicated team is expected to commence operation in the second quarter this year to offer one-stop support services to family offices which are interested in establishing a presence here.
- (b) Regarding the securities market, HKEX is conducting a consultation on expansion of the secondary listing regime for overseas issuers to list in Hong Kong. The consultation includes proposals for allowing overseas-listed Greater China companies from traditional sectors without weighted voting rights structure to seek listing; and proposals for providing greater flexibility for issuers seeking dual-primary listings whilst retaining their existing weighted voting rights structures and variable interest entity structures. In respect of the expansion of mutual capital market access programmes, we will seek to launch and implement Southbound Trading of Bond Connect, expand the scope of

eligible securities under Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect and Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect, and launch A-share index futures. Regarding ETF Connect, which was first mentioned at the launch of Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect, we hope to gradually include ETFs as eligible securities under the programmes as soon as possible.

- (c) In relation to the development of insurance industry, thanks to the support of the Legislative Council, we have completed a number of legislative exercises to promote the development of the insurance industry, including those relating to insurance-linked securities (ILS). In order to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in this area, we propose to launch a two-year Pilot ILS Grant Scheme to subsidize the upfront costs of issuing ILS in Hong Kong.
- (d) To further consolidate Hong Kong's position as a green and sustainable finance hub in the region, we will issue green bonds regularly and expand the scale of the Government Green Bond Programme by doubling its borrowing ceiling to \$200 billion to allow for further issuance of green bonds totalling \$175.5 billion within the next five years, having regard to the market situation. We also plan to issue retail green bonds for the participation of the general public. Moreover, the Government will launch a Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme to provide subsidy for eligible bond issuers and loan borrowers to cover their expenses on bond issuance and external review services.
- (e) As regards the bond market, a steering group led by the Financial Secretary will be set up to formulate a roadmap for promoting the diversified development of the Hong Kong Bond Market. At the same time, we will enhance the efficiency and capacity of the Central Moneymarkets Unit (CMU) of debts instruments to support its future commissioning of Southbound Trading. In the long run, we will develop CMU as a major international central securities depository platform. In addition, we plan to raise the borrowing limit of the Government Bond Programme to HK\$300 billion. We will also issue more iBond and Silver

Bond, and lower the eligible age for subscribing Silver Bond from 65 to 60 so that more citizens can participate in it.

- (f) We will continue to drive the development of Fintech in Hong Kong, including promoting the Fintech Proof-of-Concept Subsidy Scheme announced in January this year. We will also press ahead with the development of the eMPF Platform, including the introduction of second-phase legislative amendments to the Legislative Council to provide a legal basis for the operation of the electronic common platform.

(III) Enhancing Financial Co-operation with the Mainland

6. We will continue to strengthen financial cooperation with the Mainland and leverage the enormous opportunities presented by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development. We can see boundless potential for Hong Kong market to make a greater contribution to the country under the “dual circulation” development pattern. The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, together with relevant regulators, has already set up a joint working group to explore how Hong Kong’s markets can, in the future, complement the development of our country and meet the needs of international investors with a view to setting out a development blueprint.

(IV) Relieving Hardship

7. To relieve people’s hardship, the Financial Secretary announced in the Budget the introduction of a 100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme to provide a supplementary financing option to help unemployed persons affected by the pandemic tide over the interim difficulty. Thanks to Members’ support, the Finance Committee has approved the funding to provide a total commitment of \$15 billion for the Scheme. The application details will be announced as soon as possible.

8. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions from Members.

9. Thank you, Chairman.

- End -

**Special Meetings of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council
to Examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2021-22
Public Finance**

(3:20 pm - 4:00 pm on 13 April 2021)

**Speaking Note of the Secretary for
Financial Services and the Treasury**

Chairman and Honourable Members,

This session of the special meetings of the Finance Committee will examine the expenditure estimates of the Treasury Branch and related departments. Before the question session begins, I would like to brief Members on a few points.

Estimates of Expenditure

2. The estimated total expenditure of the Treasury Branch and the departments under its purview for 2021-22 is about \$50.434 billion, representing a decrease of \$34.077 billion (about 40%) over the original estimate of \$84.511 billion for last year. The decrease is mainly attributed to a drop in the estimated non-recurrent expenditure under Head 147 of the Treasury Branch by \$33.852 billion (about 45%). The estimate for last year covered the one-off non-recurrent expenditure on the Cash Payout Scheme, the estimated expenditure of which is also higher than that on the Consumption Voucher Scheme to be launched this year. Discounting the non-recurrent expenditure, the estimated total recurrent expenditure of the Treasury Branch and the departments under its purview this year is \$9.204 billion, which is \$260 million (about 3%) less than the original estimate for last year.

Key Areas of Work

3. I would like to speak briefly on a few key areas of work in the coming year.

4. Firstly, on public finance, we will continue to exercise fiscal prudence to ensure that the financial commitments are commensurate with the increase in revenue, so as to maintain healthy public finance. In the past year, we have increased government expenditure substantially to combat the epidemic and roll out relief measures. As proposed in the 2021-22 Budget, we will continue to implement counter-cyclical fiscal measures to support the economy and alleviate people's hardship. A fiscal deficit of over \$100 billion is envisaged for 2021-22 and deficits are also projected in the Medium Range Forecast for the coming few years. As far as expenditure is concerned, we will have zero growth in the civil service establishment in this financial year. Besides, we will implement an expenditure reduction programme in 2022-23 with the aim to trim recurrent expenditure by 1% without affecting livelihood-related spending. As regards revenue, Hong Kong needs to maintain the development and vibrancy of our economy and identify new areas of growth, with a view to increasing our revenue. We also need to consider seeking new revenue sources or revising tax rates, and reducing one-off relief measures progressively. Having duly considered the impact on the securities market and our international competitiveness, we have decided to raise the rate of Stamp Duty on Stock Transfers. It is expected that government revenue will increase as a result. Having regard to the prevailing economic environment and the impact of the epidemic, we consider that it is not the appropriate time to revise the rates of profits tax and salaries tax. That said, we will keep in view the situation and make adjustments at the appropriate time. As fighting the epidemic and reviving the economy are our current priorities, this is also not the time to introduce new taxes. Nevertheless, we will carry out related research and make preparation to facilitate in-depth discussions at a suitable time, and forge consensus before introducing new taxes to increase revenue.

5. Secondly, on international tax co-operation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is drawing up new proposals to address base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS 2.0), which include a global minimum tax rate and a digital tax. We will actively implement the BEPS 2.0 proposals according to international consensus; strive to maintain the simplicity, certainty and fairness of our tax regime which are our key advantages; minimise the compliance burden on affected corporations; and keep up our efforts in improving Hong Kong's business environment and enhancing our competitiveness. The Advisory Panel on BEPS 2.0 will submit a report to the Government after the proposals are finalised. We

will then study the report carefully with a view to formulating specific response measures.

6. Thirdly, on the rating system, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Rating and Valuation Department are reviewing the rating system, including the case for introducing a progressive element to the rating system, providing rates concession for owner-occupied properties on a regular basis, and shifting the primary liability for rates payment from the occupier to the owner of a property. Our target is to consult the relevant panel of the Legislative Council within this year on whether and how to revise the rating system.

7. Furthermore, the Financial Secretary has announced in the Budget that electronic consumption vouchers with a total value of \$5,000 would be disbursed by instalments to each eligible Hong Kong permanent resident and new arrival aged 18 or above, so as to encourage and boost local consumption. This initiative is expected to benefit around 7.2 million eligible persons. We are working in full swing on the preparatory work, and as announced on Sunday, a number of stored value facility operators have been selected to help implement the scheme. We will continue to discuss the workflow and arrangements with the operators and other collaborating departments. The coverage of the consumption voucher scheme will be as extensive as possible to include different local businesses in the retail, food and beverage, and service sectors and the like. The registration procedures and the entire workflow design of the scheme will follow the principles of simplicity, convenience and security. We will announce the details as soon as possible, with the current target of commencing registration in this summer vacation.

8. Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions from Members.

9. Thank you.

**Speech by the Secretary for the Environment
at the Finance Committee Special Meeting (2021-22)**

Chairman,

The Financial Secretary continues to support the bureau's work towards carbon neutrality and environmental protection in the Budget this year.

2. The 2020 Policy Address announced that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. To this end, the Government will update the "Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan" in the middle of this year to set out more proactive strategies and measures to reduce carbon emissions. This year, the Budget proposes the following measures to further strengthen such efforts:

- earmark an additional \$1 billion to install more small-scale renewable energy systems in government buildings and infrastructure; and
- earmark \$150 million for a new "Green Welfare NGOs" programme to conduct energy audits, as well as install the more energy efficient variable-speed air-conditioners and light emitting diode (LED) lighting, at the premises of eligible welfare non-governmental organisations free of charge.

3. The Government will also set aside \$500 million to carry out enhancement works on facilities in some country parks, such as providing recreational elements; improving facilities in country parks; and enriching visitors' experience, enjoyment and awareness at the countryside.

4. To promote waste reduction and recycling, the Government announced the "Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035" on 8 February this year with the vision of "Waste Reduction • Resources Circulation • Zero Landfill". The Blueprint sets out a number of measures to enhance participation of the entire community on waste reduction, promote resources circulation and develop necessary waste management infrastructure, with a view to moving away from over-reliance on landfills in the long term.

Measures related to waste reduction include:

- inject an additional funding of \$1 billion to the Recycling Fund and extend its application period to 2027;
- set up more Recycling Stores and smart recycling facilities to enhance the coverage of the community recycling network;
- extend the outreaching services of the Green Outreach to all districts over the territory to strengthen on-site recycling support;
- continue to implement various producer responsibility schemes (PRSs), and we are consulting the public on the PRS on plastic beverage containers and carrying out a pilot scheme on reverse vending machines (RVMs) to collect plastic beverage containers; and
- continue to co-operate with the Bills Committee of the Legislative Council on the scrutiny work of the bill on municipal solid waste charging with a view to facilitating its early passage.

5. To promote new energy transport, we announced the first ever “Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles” last month, which sets out the vision of “Zero Carbon Emissions • Clean Air • Smart City”. The Roadmap elaborates our long-term policy objectives and plans on promoting the use of Electric Vehicles (EVs), with a view to attaining zero vehicular emissions before 2050. Key measures include no new registration of fuel-propelled private cars in 2035 or earlier, expanding the EV charging network and promoting its marketisation, training EV technicians and mechanics, formulating a PRS for retired EV batteries, etc. We will also continue to take forward the relevant work including:

- subsidise the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure at more than 60 000 parking spaces in existing private residential buildings through the \$2 billion EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme; and

- formulate trials for various electric public transport and commercial vehicles, such as a pilot scheme for electric public light buses; and a trial for electric ferries serving in-harbour routes which is expected to be launched in 2023.

6. We will also update the “Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong” in the middle of this year to set out challenges, targets and strategies to further improve the air quality of Hong Kong.

7. We anticipate that the measures abovementioned could create or support thousands of job opportunities in the next few years. The Budget also allocates additional resources to support green recovery. The measures include:

- provide about 900 additional temporary jobs in the realm of environmental protection, involving over \$100 million; and
- extend the rental reduction waiver for tenants of EcoPark, country park refreshment kiosks and Hong Kong Wetland Park for another six months.

8. My colleagues and I are happy to listen to Members’ views and respond to questions.

**Legislative Council
Special Finance Committee Meeting (Housing Session)
14 April 2021**

**Opening Remarks
by the Secretary for Transport and Housing**

Chairman,

1. The current-term Government is determined to resolve the housing problem. The Government strives to increase housing supply, enrich the housing ladder and, when new supply is not yet available, explore ways to optimise existing resources to support families waiting for public rental housing (PRH) and are inadequately housed.

Housing Supply

2. Identifying land actively to increase housing supply is the fundamental solution to Hong Kong's housing problem. The Government has all along been working together and spared no effort in this respect. According to the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2020, the Government has identified land for the provision of 316 000 public housing units to meet the demand for about 301 000 public housing units in the coming 10 years (i.e. 2021-22 to 2030-31). Such land supply mainly comes from reclamation in Tung Chung; the agricultural land and brownfield sites in New Development Areas including Kwu Tung North/Fanling North and Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen; a number of sites which have been rezoned for public housing development; part of the Fanling Golf Course site; and a number of brownfield clusters with housing development potential, the review of which has already been completed.
3. According to the forecast as at December 2020, the estimated total public housing production in the five-year period from 2020-21 onwards is about 101 400 units, comprising over 70 000 PRH and Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) units, and over 30 000 other subsidised sale flats. For private housing, it is estimated that the annual average completion of private residential

units in the five years from 2021 is over 18 000 units, representing an increase of about 5% over the average of the past five years.

4. To achieve the above estimated public housing production, government departments are pressing ahead and enhancing internal co-ordination, with a view to completing the necessary procedures for timely land production, for example, site formation, infrastructure construction, land resumption, etc. The Government will also work with the implementation agents, including the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Hong Kong Housing Society, to expedite the development process and optimise the development potential of each and every site where practicable.
5. In addition, with the support and facilitation of the Government, the Hong Kong Settlers Housing Corporation Limited and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) reached agreement on the co-operation framework in taking forward the redevelopment of Tai Hang Sai Estate in March this year. The collaboration project will improve the living conditions of current residents and the environment of the community. It will also provide over 3 300 units, doubling the existing 1 600 units, thereby benefiting more low to middle-income families.
6. Apart from increasing land supply by the Government, HA is committed to increasing public housing supply. For example, HA has announced the clearance of Shek Lei Interim Housing, which will be cleared by the end of 2022. Subject to the Town Planning Board's approval to relax planning restrictions, it is estimated that about 1 600 units can be provided upon redevelopment in 2028.

Housing Ladder

7. On enriching the housing ladder, HA has launched the Sale of Home Ownership Scheme Flats 2020, with applications closed in October 2020, to provide around 7 000 flats with selling prices set at 60% of the market prices. The first batch of around 2 100 flats in Diamond Hill under the Sale of Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme Flats 2020/21 (GSH 2020/21) are expected to be put up for sale in May this year. HA will also accelerate the sale of unsold flats in Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates in order to meet the home ownership

aspirations of PRH tenants. Around 800 recovered TPS flats will be put up for sale together with GSH flats under GSH 2020/21.

8. As for the Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents (SH) pilot projects, following URA's launch of the first SH pilot project, i.e. eResidence, in late 2018, the Government successfully sold by tender a private residential site at Anderson Road in May 2020 for implementation of the second SH pilot project. The Government will randomly select no less than 1 000 SH units from the residential units built by the developer. Separately, URA has decided to assign the redevelopment project adjacent to the eResidence as another SH project, which is expected to provide about 260 units for pre-sale in 2024.

Support to Families Living in Inadequate Housing

9. When the relevant housing supply is not yet available, the Government will continue to implement a series of measures to support those families waiting for PRH and are living in inadequate housing.
10. The current-term Government is strongly committed to facilitating the development of transitional housing with a view to providing transitional housing for people with pressing housing needs through better use of vacant land and premises. The Government's target is to provide a total of 15 000 transitional housing units within three years from 2020-21 to 2022-23. As at February 2021, we have identified land for the provision of about 14 000 transitional housing units by 2022-23. Of these, over 1 100 units have been completed; projects involving about 2 400 units are under construction and expected to be completed in 2021 and 2022; projects involving about 9 800 units have been activated; and projects involving about 550 units are under in-depth study.
11. In March of last year, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved a provision of \$5 billion to set up the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations (NGOs) (the Funding Scheme). A total of ten transitional housing projects have been approved under the Funding Scheme since its inception in June last year, involving a funding amount of about \$2.6 billion. We are grateful for the Panel on Housing's support in January this year on the injection of an

additional \$3.3 billion into the Funding Scheme. The relevant funding proposal has been included in the 2021-22 Budget.

12. Furthermore, the Commission on Poverty also approved a grant of \$95 million from the Community Care Fund for implementing a pilot scheme on using suitable rooms in hotels and guesthouses with relatively low occupancy rates as transitional housing through NGOs. It is estimated that some 800 transitional housing units can be provided. Apart from providing temporary relief to the industry, the pilot scheme can also help increase the supply of transitional housing within a short period of time to assist low-income families to meet their housing needs. The Task Force on Transitional Housing has organised online briefing sessions to provide details of the pilot scheme to interested participants from the hotel and guesthouse industry. The pilot scheme was open for applications on 1 April.
13. The Chief Executive announced in January last year that the Government would provide cash allowance on a trial basis to eligible General Applicant (GA) households who are not living in public housing, not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and have been waiting for PRH for more than three years, until these households are offered the first PRH allocation. In this connection, the Government will soon launch the three-year Cash Allowance Trial Scheme (the Scheme) to provide relief to grassroots families who have waited for PRH for a prolonged period of time. Having secured the support of the Panel on Housing for the proposed Scheme, the Housing Department is now making active preparations with the target of receiving applications in the middle of this year and disbursing cash allowance from July onwards. It is estimated that around 90 000 GA households may be eligible upon the launch of the Scheme. The total approved commitment for the non-recurrent expenditure for the disbursement of cash allowance under the Scheme is about \$8,130 million and the operational expenses are estimated to be about \$65 million in 2021-22. The above funding proposal has been included in the 2021-22 Budget.
14. As for the tenancy control on subdivided units (SDUs), we set up the Task Force for the Study on Tenancy Control of Subdivided Units (the Task Force) in April last year to advise the Government on whether tenancy control on SDUs should be implemented in Hong Kong and

the possible options. The Task Force has completed the study and submitted the report to the Government at the end of March this year. We are now actively considering the recommendations in the report and the views of the general public. Our target is to introduce the bill into LegCo for scrutiny as early as possible within the current legislative session.

Concluding remarks

15. Chairman, I am pleased to answer policy-related questions from Members, while the Controlling Officers and my other colleagues will respond to those questions relating to implementation matters and the use of financial resources. Thank you.

-ENDS-

**Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing
at the LegCo Special Finance Committee Meeting (Transport)
on 14 April 2021**

Honourable Chairperson,

Today, I would like to brief Members on our work on land, marine and air transport.

2. Railways system has been the backbone of Hong Kong's public transport. The remaining works of the Shatin to Central Link is in full swing, with the "Kai Tak to Hung Hom Section" expected to commission by the third quarter this year. As regards the "Hung Hom to Admiralty Section", the Highways Department ("HyD") and the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") are actively studying and implementing possible delay recovery measures, with a view to commissioning this section as soon as possible. On the other hand, the Government invited MTRCL to commence the detailed planning and design for the Tung Chung Line ("TCL") Extension, Tuen Mun South ("TMS") Extension and Northern Link last year. Amongst them, the environmental impact assessments for TCL Extension and TMS Extension have commenced. We will continue the planning of other new railway projects recommended under the Railway Development Strategy 2014 and announce the way forward of the projects in due course. In addition, the Government proposes to establish the Railways Department in the 2022-23 financial year to strengthen its supervision of railway planning and project delivery as well as regulation of railway safety.

3. In respect of major road infrastructures, the Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Tunnel was commissioned on 27 December last year, reducing the journey time between TMS and the Hong Kong International Airport by about 20 minutes. The construction works of Route 6 are in full swing. Upon its commissioning in 2026, the journey time between Tseung Kwan O Town Centre and Yau Ma Tei Interchange is estimated to be substantially reduced from about 65 minutes now to about 12 minutes. Meanwhile, we are also pressing ahead with the construction of the Cross Bay Link, which is scheduled for completion next year.

4. In response to the progressive development in North-west New Territories, the overall transport layout of the area would be enhanced. We would continue with the funding application for the investigation stage of Route 11 (section between Yuen Long and North Lantau). Besides, we would commission the relevant studies for Tsing Yi – Lantau Link, Widening of Yuen Long Highway (section between Lam Tei and Tong Yan San Tsuen) and Tuen Mun Bypass in parallel through block allocation, with a target to commission the entire group of major roads progressively as early as possible. On the other hand, the Government has also been closely monitoring the traffic need in New Territories East with a view to implementing relevant road projects in a timely manner. We plan to gazette the scheme of the Trunk Road T4 project in the first half this year, so that the works can make an early start to help relieve the traffic in the Sha Tin district.

5. As regards the planning of large scale transport infrastructure in the long-term, HyD and the Transport Department (“TD”) commenced the “Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030” in December last year to explore the layout of railway and major road infrastructure, and conduct preliminary engineering and technical assessments for their alignments and supporting facilities, so as to ensure that the planning of major transport infrastructure will complement or even reserve capacity to meet the overall long-term development needs of Hong Kong.

6. In terms of public transport, with a view to alleviating the fare burden of commuters, we have extended the temporary measure to relax the monthly threshold of the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme from \$400 to \$200 to 31 December this year. The monthly subsidy cap has also been temporarily increased from \$400 to \$500 from 1 April to 31 December this year. It is estimated that around 3.8 million people will benefit each month.

7. On the use of roads, the problem of traffic congestion in Hong Kong has persisted for years, and has shown a tendency of deterioration. Over the years, the Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to alleviate traffic congestion, including enhancing traffic infrastructure, expanding and enhancing public transport system as well as managing road use. Relevant measures include the construction of additional roads, the provision of more parking spaces, the expansion of existing roads, the study

on congestion charging and electronic road pricing, etc. Meanwhile, we observe that over the past ten years, the number of vehicles has been on a continuous rise. Within this period, the number of private cars (“PCs”), which account for over 70% of the total vehicle fleet, has substantially increased by almost 40%, affecting the effectiveness of our measures in alleviating congestion. Therefore, it was announced in the 2021-22 Budget that the first registration tax and vehicle licence fees for PCs would be increased by 15% and 30% respectively, in order to curb PC growth and alleviate traffic congestion. To implement the proposal, the Revenue (First Registration Tax and Licence Fees for Motor Vehicles) Bill 2021 (“the Bill”) has been introduced into the Legislative Council (“LegCo”). I would like to thank the Bills Committee for completing their scrutiny work within a short period of time. We plan to move the motion in early June to resume the Second Reading debate of the Bill to facilitate its passage as early as possible for the full implementation of the proposal.

8. To maximise the efficiency of limited road space, the Government will progressively take forward various “Smart Mobility” initiatives. For the implementation of Free-flow Tolling System at government tolled tunnels and the Tsing Sha Control Area (“TSCA”), the Government introduced the relevant bill into the LegCo on 24 March and is undertaking a range of preparatory work, with a view to rolling out the system gradually starting from end next year in order to enable motorists to pay tolls more efficiently using toll tags. Other smart mobility initiatives, including the installation of new generation on-street parking meters and the implementation of automated parking system pilot projects, have been taken forward continuously as planned.

9. In addition, the Government announced last year that around \$1 billion had been earmarked for the Smart Traffic Fund (“the Fund”). I am glad that the Fund has started to accept applications from 31 March this year, and is well received by the community. I look forward to seeing organisations and enterprises supported by the Fund to conduct research and application of innovation and technology to bring greater convenience to commuters, enhance the efficiency of road network or space and improve driving safety.

10. The Government has all along been promoting the opening-up of the operating data by public transport operators to facilitate commuting and trip planning of the public. As of late March this year, other than basic

information for passengers, the real-time arrival information of some public transport modes has been disseminated through “HKeMobility” and the Public Sector Information Portal (data.gov.hk), including all franchised buses, tramways, selected MTR lines and about 70 green minibus (“GMB”) routes. TD plans to disseminate the real-time arrival information of all 600 or so GMB routes within next year.

11. As for the maritime industry, to enhance the strengths of Hong Kong as the maritime centre, the Government amended the laws last year to offer tax concessions to the ship leasing and marine insurance businesses. In addition, the Government has commissioned a dedicated task force comprising industry members under the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board to study the tax concession proposals with a view to attracting more shipping commercial principals (such as ship managers, ship brokers and ship agents, etc.), thereby sustaining the effective development of the high value-added maritime services sector.

12. As for the logistics industry, the Government continues to actively promote the development of modern logistics, consolidate and enhance Hong Kong’s position as a regional logistics hub. Besides, to encourage the logistics industry to enhance efficiency and productivity through technology application, the Government launched the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Third-party Logistics Service Providers (“the Pilot Scheme”) amounting to \$300 million in October last year. The Pilot Scheme is implemented on a 1:1 matching basis, providing subsidy amounting to \$1 million in total to each qualified third-party logistics service provider. As at now, we have approved a total of about \$21 million to 29 logistics service providers.

13. As far as aviation is concerned, the recently announced National 14th Five-Year Plan has reaffirmed the support to enhancing Hong Kong’s role as international aviation hub. As such, the Government will continue to support Airport Authority Hong Kong (“AAHK”) in proactively taking forward projects that will transform the Hong Kong International Airport into an Airport City, including the Airport City Link project and such proposals as constructing automated car parks and the Hong Kong International Aviation Academy campus and student dormitories on the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. The Government will also support AAHK in continuing to develop intermodal passenger and cargo transshipment services, expanding high-value air cargo logistics, as well as injecting equity in the

Zhuhai Airport on the basis of market principles for achieving greater synergy between the two airports, with a view to consolidating Hong Kong International Airport's status as an international aviation hub. In addition, AAHK continues to actively implement the Three-Runway System project. As at end March, the reclamation works are over 90% completed, and the works in relation to the runway pavement and relevant facilities are progressing in full swing. AAHK maintains its target to commission the Third Runway in next year and the Three-Runway System in 2024.

14. Honourable Chairperson, My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer questions from Members. Thank you.

Transport and Housing Bureau
April 2021

**Speaking Note of the Secretary for Home Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
of the Legislative Council on 14 April 2021**

Mr Chairman,

I would like to brief Members about the key areas of our work on home affairs in 2021-22.

Arts and Culture

2. The 2020 Policy Address provided that the Government will support the development of Arts Technology (Arts Tech). In this connection, an interdepartmental task force has met in February to discuss strategies and measures to promote Arts Tech while a total of \$100 million has also been earmarked for the funds and programmes under the purview of relevant policy bureaux for the promotion of Arts Tech. The East Kowloon Cultural Centre under construction is expected to commission in the second half of 2023 to provide an Arts Tech incubation platform for local artists.

3. The West Kowloon Cultural District is Hong Kong's most important investment in cultural infrastructure. It will be home to the M+ Museum and the Hong Kong Palace Museum, which are expected to open in end 2021 and mid-2022 respectively. The two world-class museums will emerge, together with the expanded Hong Kong Museum of Art, as new cultural landmarks along the Victoria Harbourfront.

Sports

Kai Tak Sports Park

4. For the Kai Tak Sports Park occupying a site of about 28 hectares, the "design, build and operate" contract already commenced in February 2019. The piling works of the project have largely been completed while the substructure, basement and superstructure works are underway. Given the current construction progress, we envisage that the Sports Park will be completed in the second half of 2023.

Transformation of public play spaces and installation of novel outdoor fitness equipment

5. The Government has launched a five-year plan to transform more than 170 public play spaces under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) across the territory to inject more innovative and fun elements into them. Moreover, in response to the keen public demand for fitness equipment, the LCSD will introduce more novel outdoor fitness equipment suitable for younger users on a pilot basis.

Five-year plan for upgrading football pitches

6. Football has long been a popular sport among the public. An amount of \$318 million has been earmarked for the implementation of a five-year plan for upgrading over 70 football pitches under the management of the LCSD, including substantially increasing the number of football pitches meeting international standards and expediting the replacement of artificial turf on football pitches. The LCSD is actively exploring with the relevant works departments on the technical feasibility of carrying out the improvement works and will draw up the implementation details having regard to various factors including the priority and estimated expenditure involved.

Five-year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities

7. Out of the 26 projects under the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities, 16 have already received funding approval. We hope that the Legislative Council will approve the funding for 4 other projects to be submitted within this legislative year as soon as possible.

Support measures for “M” Mark events

8. All “M” Mark events have been cancelled due to the pandemic since early last year. We have provided a special direct grant with a ceiling of \$2 million for each affected event to alleviate the financial burden of relevant “national sports associations”.

Youth Development

9. The list of funded organisations under 2 relevant schemes was announced in February this year, namely, the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area under the Youth Development Fund. A total of about \$135 million was granted under the 2 schemes for 30 non-governmental organisations to implement youth entrepreneurship projects or experiential programmes at entrepreneurial bases. It is estimated that subsidies will be provided for about 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs), with entrepreneurial services made available to about 4 000 young people and experiential projects to a first batch of about 700 young participants. The Home Affairs Bureau also maintains close collaboration with the Youth Development Commission to provide exchange and internship opportunities outside Hong Kong to young people in an effort to broaden their horizons while providing them with an exposure to the actual workplace environment. Subject to the development of the pandemic, we will continue to enhance and expand the schemes concerned in the future to better cater to the needs of young people.

10. My colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members. Thank you.

Special FC Meeting on 14 April 2021
Speaking Notes for
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

Foreword

- Chairman, I will briefly introduce our key tasks under the commerce, industry and tourism areas in the current financial year.
- The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (the Outline) supports the future development of Hong Kong in various important areas. On the economic and trade aspects, the Outline supports Hong Kong to enhance its status as a trading centre, to promote service industries for high-end and high value-added development, and to develop a regional intellectual property trading centre. It also supports Hong Kong to foster exchanges and cooperation with different countries and regions and to leverage its unique advantages.
- The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will actively take forward enhancement measures to improve Hong Kong's competitiveness. Particularly, we will continue to make good use of the advantages under the "One Country, Two Systems", seizing the business opportunities brought by the two engines of the national economic development, i.e. the Belt and Road Initiative and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and continue to promote Hong Kong's edges to contribute to our country's needs. Specifically, we would continue to establish closer economic and trade relations with different economies; to conclude free trade agreements and investment agreements; to strengthen our efforts in promoting Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services in the GBA cities and overseas markets, etc.
- Enjoying the advantages of "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong can further strengthen its "intermediary" role in the international circulation under our country's dual circulation development strategy. On the other hand, we can focus on the enormous business opportunities in the Mainland market under our country's domestic circulation. Taking the GBA as an entry point, we can support Hong

Kong enterprises to explore the domestic market in the Mainland and become a participant in domestic circulation. Playing this dual role well will bring continuous impetus to Hong Kong's economy and promote the long-term development of Hong Kong.

- We have introduced targeted measures covering our work under the commerce, industry and tourism areas in the current financial year. The main ones include:

Tourism

- The tourism industry bears the brunt of the negative impact arising from the social incidents and the epidemic of COVID-19 since the second half of 2019. Entering 2021, Hong Kong's tourism industry continued to be hard hit by the COVID-19 epidemic. In the first two months of 2021, overall visitor arrivals plunged by 99.7% year-on-year to only about 10 000. The Tourism Commission has been maintaining close communication with the tourism industry, and responded together with the industry to the challenges brought by the epidemic. The Government has, through four rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund, provided financial support to the tourism industry. Coupled with the other helping measures including the Travel Agents Incentive Scheme and the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme rolled out earlier, the cumulative commitment of the Government support amounts to close to \$2.6 billion in total.
- Guided by the principle of keeping health risks at bay and leveraging our much enhanced testing capacity and tracing ability, the Government is considering introducing more stringent testing and tracing requirements while encouraging vaccination in the travel sector. All these aim to allow more room for the tourism industry to operate upon the stabilisation of the epidemic.
- In 2021-22, the Government will earmark a total of \$934 million to enhance tourism resources, of which \$169 million will be allocated to the Tourism Commission to continue to take forward local cultural, heritage and creative tourism projects and to improve the facilities along hiking trails to develop more green tourism resources, thereby offering leisure and travel experience with rich historical and cultural elements to both locals and visitors.

- Also, the Government will allocate \$765 million in 2021-22 to support the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) in reviving the tourism industry. HKTB has formulated short and medium-to-long term strategies having regard to the market situations of Hong Kong and various source markets. In addition to boosting local ambience before resumption of cross-boundary or border travel, HKTB will continue to maintain Hong Kong's international exposure. In the long run, HKTB will reinvent Hong Kong's tourism image to capture high-yield visitor segments.

Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Support Measures

- The current-term Government has injected \$3.5 billion into the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales. We propose a further injection of \$1.5 billion, thereby increasing the funding ceiling per enterprise from \$4 million to \$6 million; and extending the geographical coverage from currently 20 economies to 37 economies with which Hong Kong has signed Free Trade Agreements and/or Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements.
- The current-term Government has injected \$2 billion into the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF). We propose enhancing the EMF, from covering exhibitions specifically aiming at markets outside Hong Kong to also including those targeting the local market and virtual exhibitions, and relaxing the eligibility criteria to cover non-SMEs, for a period of two years.
- Within the current-term Government, a total funding of around \$2.17 billion has been approved under the two Funds. We believe the above-mentioned enhancements can provide SMEs with abundant resources to conduct market promotion and develop markets outside Hong Kong, which in turn will accelerate the recovery of Hong Kong's economy.
- In addition, to assist enterprises affected by the epidemic, we launched the Special 100% Guarantee Product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme last year to provide low-interest loans to SMEs. This product has been well-received by businesses. As at end March 2021, about \$48 billion of loans were approved.

- As the epidemic has been lingering on, we have enhanced the Special 100% Guarantee Product, including extending the application period by about eight months to end December 2021; further increasing the maximum loan amount per enterprise from the total amount of employee wages and rents for 12 months to that for 18 months; with the ceiling increasing from \$5 million to \$6 million. In addition, having considered the repayment pressure faced by SMEs, the maximum repayment period would be extended from five years to eight years; while the maximum duration of principal moratorium would be extended from 12 months to 18 months, thereby relieving the burden on SMEs. The enhancement measures came into effect in end March.

Subvention for the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (TDC)

- To further assist Hong Kong companies to operate in the business environment which is affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government will provide an additional subvention of a total of \$375 million to TDC from 2021-22 to 2023-24, including \$301 million in three years to subsidise TDC to develop virtual platforms to enhance its capability to organise online events and to proceed with digitalisation; and \$74 million in 2021-22 to subsidise TDC to promote Hong Kong's strengths in the development of the GBA and promote Hong Kong's healthcare products and services. Taking into account the additional subvention, the Government will provide a total subvention of about \$634.1 million to TDC in 2021-22 which represents a 1.6% increase as compared with last year. The Government will continue to work closely with TDC to help SMEs find new business prospects, innovate and transform.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- Hong Kong strives to further regional economic cooperation, and has been actively pursuing the expansion of the network of Free Trade Agreements. The successful signing and implementation of RCEP is an important milestone for regional economic integration and will facilitate free and open trade and increase investment in the region, providing impetus for regional cooperation and driving force for post-pandemic economic recovery. We are actively engaging individual RCEP participating economies for commencement of

discussions on Hong Kong's accession in order to enable Hong Kong to join RCEP as soon as possible after its entry into force, thereby further enhancing Hong Kong's trade and economic connections with the trading partners in the region.

Expansion of overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETO) Network

- To strengthen Hong Kong's economic and trade relations with other places, the HKSAR Government has been actively expanding the network of ETO to enhance external promotion and exchanges. We have successfully concluded our discussions with the United Arab Emirates government on the establishment of the Dubai ETO, and we are now actively pursuing the preparatory work in setting up the ETO, which is expected to start discharging its duties before the end of this year. The Dubai ETO is our first ETO in the Middle East region, which will seek new business opportunities for Hong Kong in the region.

Taking forward the Belt and Road Initiative

- During the period of the 14th Five-Year Plan, our country will work faster to create a new pattern of development that focuses on domestic circulation and features positive interplay between domestic circulation and international circulation. This will present tremendous opportunities for Hong Kong. In 2021-22, we will continue to leverage Hong Kong's unique position as a gateway, a springboard and an intermediary to capture the opportunities brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative for Hong Kong's enterprises and professional services sector. We will act as an important platform under the country's dual circulation strategy, thereby promoting and contributing to high-quality Belt and Road development. The HKSAR Government will make continuous efforts to create exchange and business matching opportunities for the trade, including launching the Mainland Enterprises Partnership Exchange and Interface Programme; promoting matching of interested Hong Kong enterprises with selected Economic and Trade Co-operation Zones in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on a pilot basis; co-organising with TDC the annual Belt and Road Summit within this year; and organising business and professional overseas missions when the epidemic stabilises, etc.

Conclusion

- The above are my main points. Chairman, my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer questions from Members.

**Speaking Notes for
the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development at
the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 14 April 2021**

Introduction

- Mr. Chairman, I will briefly introduce our key tasks under the communications and creative industries portfolios in the current financial year.
- On economic development, the "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" (the 14th Five-Year Plan) continues to support Hong Kong to enhance its status as an international financial, transportation and trade centre, etc., promote Hong Kong's service industries for high-end and high value-added development, develop Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub and a hub for arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world, and support the future development of Hong Kong in various important areas.
- Meanwhile, the twin engines of the country's economic development, namely the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) development is important to Hong Kong's development, Hong Kong will continue to make the best use of the advantages under the "one country, two systems" principle to tap into the business opportunities.
- In the current financial year, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will actively press ahead with measures to bolster Hong Kong's competitiveness in relevant sectors, and to introduce targeted measures on our work under the communications and creative industries portfolios. The main ones include:

Telecommunications and Broadcasting

- On telecommunications, in line with the 14th Five-Year Plan's support for Hong Kong to promote high-end and high value-added services, the Government is proactively promoting 5G development.
- During past year just after the launch of 5G services, in spite of the epidemic and challenging economic environment, major telecommunications operators continue to proactively invest in 5G infrastructure. 5G network coverage is now over 90%, covering major shopping centres and more than 50 MTR stations. The coverage of individual operators in core business districts even reached 99%.
- We have launched the 5G subsidy scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to encourage the early adoption of 5G by various sectors through offering financial incentives and promote 5G applications and popularization. We have received positive feedbacks and already approved 78 innovative applications in different aspects such as construction, estate and facility management, transportation, medical and healthcare, as well as environmental protection, etc., opening up vast value-adding potential for various services and applications.
- This year we will also supply more 5G spectrum, facilitate operators to install base stations, subsidise the extension of fibre-based broadband to villages.
- On broadcasting, Hong Kong has successfully implemented full digital TV broadcast at the end of last year. This year, we will proceed with the migration of TV broadcast transmission frequencies. Six digital TV programme channels will use new transmission frequencies from 1 December, thereby vacating spectrum for high value-added mobile telecommunications services including 5G. The Office of the Communications Authority has finalised technical arrangements in collaboration with TV broadcasters and stakeholders, allowing sufficient time for channel migration to be carried out in phases, and launched a series of publicity programmes.

Creative Industries

- For creative industries, we have been joining hands with the sector in conducting various projects (such as delegation visits, exhibition activities, etc.) to strengthen exchanges and collaborations with the Mainland and Belt and Road countries/regions, with a view to assisting the trade in exploring business opportunities. We will continue the work on this front. Meanwhile, as the pandemic has inevitably resulted in constraints on physical exchanges, we will also proactively encourage and support the trade in making good use of various virtual means to conduct online exchanges, showcasing and promoting Hong Kong's creative products and services as well as strengthening exchanges and collaborations with the trade thereat and developing businesses.
- In order to continue the Government's support to the creative industries, which become a driving force of our economic development, we propose to inject \$1 billion into the CreateSmart Initiative (CSI).
- The new injection will enhance our support to relevant projects according to the three strategic foci of the CSI, i.e. nurturing talent and facilitating start-ups, exploring markets, and promoting Hong Kong as Asia's creative capital and fostering a creative atmosphere in the community.
- With the far-reaching changes that the pandemic has brought to the local and international trade practices and environment in the past year, we would use the new injection to assist the creative sectors in adapting to the digitisation trend and the challenges arising from the use of various virtual means to carry out online exchanges and business activities, developing their unique competitive edge and seizing opportunities in emerging markets, such as those offered by the Greater Bay Area, Belt and Road Initiative and ASEAN markets.

- The pandemic has presented a major challenge to the film industry. We announced in July 2020 that around \$260 million under the Film Development Fund (FDF) would be earmarked to implement five major measures. Among them, the short-term advanced professional training courses conducted by the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers and the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild respectively have been completed and benefitted around 2 200 industry practitioners. There are also positive responses from the sector regarding the launch of other measures (including the Directors' Succession Scheme, relaxation measures under the Film Production Financing Scheme, the Scriptwriting Incubation Programme and the enhanced First Feature Film Initiative). The sector considers that these support measures are practical and sustainable, and help increase the number of high-quality local film productions and nurture more film professionals, thereby benefitting both the sector and practitioners of various film disciplines.
- In the coming year, we will continue to liaise closely with the sector and make good use of the FDF to promote the long-term development of the local film industry through nurturing talent, enhancing local production, expanding markets and building audience.

Review of the Broadcasting Ordinance and the Telecommunications Ordinance

- Regarding the Review of the Broadcasting Regulatory Framework, the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 came into effect on 5 February 2021. The Communications Authority has revised the relevant codes of practice and guidelines to give effect to a series of relaxation measures to facilitate the sustainable development of the broadcasting industry.
- As for the Review of the Telecommunications Regulatory Framework, we propose to streamline the regulatory and licensing procedures under the Telecommunications Ordinance (Cap 106) to promote the development of 5G and Internet of Things technologies as well as to enhance the protection of underground telecommunications facilities. We plan to consult the Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (ITB Panel) in April on the amendment bill and the related legislative proposals.

Conclusion

- Mr. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. Members are welcome to raise questions.

~ End ~

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 15 April 2021**

Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food and Health Bureau is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local agriculture and fisheries industry.

2. In the 2021-22 Estimates, about \$10.78 billion is earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of “Environment and Food”, representing an increase of about \$470 million (4.6%) over the previous year and accounting for 2.1% of recurrent government expenditure.

Public Markets

3. The new public market projects have made good progress in the past year. The Skylight Market of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in Tin Shui Wai was commissioned at the end of last year. We conducted local consultations on the sites for the new public markets in Tseung Kwan O and the Kwu Tung North New Development Area, and preliminary planning is now under way. Furthermore, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) has recently approved funding of about \$250 million for the overhaul of Aberdeen Market, the pioneering project of the Market Modernisation Programme (MMP). The works are scheduled to commence in the third quarter of this year. We will continue to take forward the new public market projects and expedite the implementation of the MMP.

Environmental Hygiene and Pest Control

4. In order to maintain environmental hygiene and fight against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, FEHD has substantially increased the resources for street cleansing work and will make continuous efforts to strengthen the cleansing of facilities including public markets,

public toilets and refuse collection points etc. and step up enforcement actions against public cleanliness offences such as littering. In 2021-22, FEHD's estimated expenditure on environmental hygiene and related services is about \$5.9 billion.

5. As for rodent control, various departments will carry out targeted rodent prevention, cleansing and disinfestation work in the venues under their purview. To strengthen interdepartmental coordination, FEHD and the Housing Department have set up a joint working group to formulate and implement more effective rodent control measures and provide relevant facilities in public housing estates. This year, the Housing Authority will select around 80 priority public housing estates for implementing more intensive rodent control measures and conducting promotional and education work. Moreover, FEHD has earmarked about \$260 million for implementing rodent control measures. It will enhance the effectiveness of surveillance, prevention and disinfestation work by various measures including deploying useful tools such as thermal camera monitoring systems at suitable locations, increasing the number of rodent survey locations and enhancing the transparency of the Rodent Infestation Rate.

Food Safety

6. In regard to food safety, the Centre for Food and Safety (CFS) of FEHD is rolling out new information technology systems to provide various online services for the industry and enhance CFS's capability in risk assessment, food safety control and management of food safety incidents. The related work is expected to be completed by early 2024. Furthermore, the public consultation on strengthening regulation of harmful substances in food has ended. We will update the relevant Panel on the outcome of the consultation and table the amendment regulation before LegCo later. The amendment regulation is expected to come into force by the end of 2023.

Animal Welfare

7. To further safeguard animal welfare, the Government has proposed to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) by introducing a positive "duty of care" on persons responsible for animals, as well as enhancing the provisions of preventing animal cruelty and enforcement powers. The amendments include the introduction of an

indictable offence and raising the penalties. We are pressing ahead with the drafting of the bill so as to introduce it to the LegCo as soon as possible.

New Agriculture Policy

8. On agriculture, the works of the Agri-Park Phase 1 have commenced, and are expected to be completed in stages from late 2021 to 2023. The Agri-Park will be managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) on the advice of the Agricultural Park Advisory Committee, which is expected to commence operation in mid-2021. In addition, the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) has approved direct funding of about \$110 million for farmers to acquire farming equipment.

Fisheries Development

9. As for fisheries, the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF) has approved over \$170 million. The funded projects are to support aquaculture and capture fisheries, and subsidise the trade to participate in the development of deep-sea mariculture in the Greater Bay Area over the next few years so as to help Hong Kong mobile fishermen switch to sustainable aquaculture.

10. The steel truss mariculture demonstration farm established by AFCD came into operation at the end of 2020 as a training platform for the trade. Besides, to promote the development of aquaculture, we issued eight new marine fish culture licences in mid-2020 and are currently conducting environmental impact assessments for designating new fish culture zones.

11. Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members.

**Speaking Note for the Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 15 April 2021**

Health

Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2021-22, the estimated recurrent government expenditure on healthcare is \$95.9 billion¹, which accounts for 18.5% of the Government's total recurrent expenditure. From 2018-19 to 2021-22, the recurrent provision on healthcare has recorded a cumulative growth of 32%.

2. New and additional resources available in this financial year are mainly used for various enhanced or newly introduced public healthcare services, including:

On the support for the Hospital Authority (HA), the Government will continue to increase progressively the recurrent provision for the HA on a triennium basis having regard to population growth rates and demographic changes. In 2021-22, a recurrent subvention of \$80.7 billion will be provided to the HA, representing an increase of nearly 30% over the provision in 2018-19. The HA will utilise the funding to enhance its services, including:

- (i) opening around 300 additional public hospital beds and providing additional operating theatres sessions;
- (ii) enhancing endoscopy and diagnostic radiological services;
- (iii) increasing the quota for general out-patient clinics and specialist out-patient clinic attendances; and

¹ An increase of about \$7 billion or 7.9% as compared with the previous year.

- (iv) enhancing cancer diagnosis and treatment services, including extending the service hours of radiotherapy, recruiting additional Cancer Case Managers, and piloting one-stop diagnostic service in hospital clusters through enhanced co-ordination among specialties to streamline and expedite the diagnosis process.

3. In 2021-22, an additional provision of about \$2.7 billion will be provided to the Department of Health (DH) for implementing various measures to combat COVID-19, including operating quarantine centres, implementing health quarantine arrangements at control points and enhancing the testing capacity. In the coming year, the DH will continue to strengthen the existing public health services and introduce new services, including:

- (i) enhancing various vaccination schemes, such as the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme and the Childhood Immunisation Programme; and
- (ii) introducing risk-based breast cancer screening service for eligible women.

“Anti-epidemic Fund” – Enhancing Support to the HA in Combating the Epidemic

4. The Government has earlier allocated \$4.7 billion from the Anti-epidemic Fund to support the HA in tackling the epidemic and ensuring sufficient support and protection for frontline healthcare staff. To further support the HA in combating the winter surge and the fourth wave of the epidemic, the Government has also allocated an additional funding of \$3,044 million for the HA to establish and operate the Community Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, and to sustain its anti-epidemic efforts. The two facilities commenced services by phases in August last year and end February this year respectively.

Healthcare Facilities

5. The HA will press ahead with the implementation of the projects under the First Ten-year Hospital Development Plan (HDP) and the planning of the Second Ten-year HDP. We plan to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC) for three projects² under the First Ten-year HDP in the current legislative session and look forward to Members' support. The HA will review the design of hospital projects under the two Ten-year HDPs taking into account the experience in combating COVID-19 and incorporate required provisions for two to three general wards in each selected hospital to be readily converted into Tier-2 isolation wards in epidemic situation.

6. To enhance the capacity for the training of healthcare profession, the Government has earmarked around \$20 billion to upgrade and increase the teaching facilities of The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Around \$1.9 billion were allocated to the three universities in the past two financial years for carrying out some of their short-term and medium-term projects. The Government will submit funding applications for another two projects, totalling some \$160 million, to the FC in the current legislative session, and will continue to follow up with the three universities on the remaining medium and long-term projects, with a view to further upgrading and increasing their healthcare teaching facilities.

Primary Healthcare

7. The Government will continue to vigorously promote district-based primary healthcare services, with a view to enhancing the public's capability in self health management and providing community support for chronic patients. Following the commencement of service of the first District Health Centre (DHC) in Kwai Tsing District in 2019, we are preparing for the setting up of DHCs in Sham Shui Po and five other districts, which are expected to commence operation within this year and the next.

² The three projects include the New Acute Hospital at Kai Tak Development Area; Expansion of North District Hospital – site formation and foundation works; and Expansion of Lai King Building in Princess Margaret Hospital – site formation and foundation works.

8. Last year, the Government allocated around \$600 million to subsidise the establishment of smaller interim “DHC Expresses” in the remaining 11 districts by non-governmental organisations, with a view to expediting the provision of primary healthcare services at the district level. All “DHC Expresses” are expected to start operation in the fourth quarter of this year.

Mental Health Services

9. The Government has earmarked around \$156 million for further strengthening mental health services, including enhancing child and adolescent psychiatric, community psychiatric and psychogeriatric services of the HA, so as to address the escalating demand for psychiatric services across different age groups in both hospital and community settings. Besides, the Advisory Committee on Mental Health will continue to co-ordinate and follow up with relevant bureaux/departments for taking forward measures for the enhancement of mental health services.

Development of Chinese Medicine

10. The Government has incorporated Chinese medicine (CM) into the healthcare system of Hong Kong and allocated more recurrent resources to develop CM services.

11. The assessment of tenders for the operation of the Chinese Medicine Hospital (CMH) is underway in parallel with that for the works project. We plan to seek funding approval from the FC for the preparation for the commissioning, the development of information technology systems and the works project for the CMH in the middle of this year. The service deed for the operation of the CMH and the contract for the construction works will be awarded upon funding approval.

12. The Government will also establish a permanent Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI), to be managed by DH, adjacent to the CMH. The GCMTI will specialise in the testing of and scientific research on CM drugs, with a view to setting reference standards for the safety, quality and testing methods of CM drugs, and empowering the CM drug industry through transfer of technology to strengthen quality control of CM drugs and their products.

13. The Architectural Services Department commenced the tendering procedures for the design and construction of the CMH and the GCMTI in October last year. The projects are tentatively scheduled to commence in the second quarter of this year for completion in about four years' time.

14. We will continue to further promote the development of CM in Hong Kong through various measures, including continuous provision of Government-subsidised CM out-patient services at the district level through the 18 district CM clinics administered by the HA; further provision of in-patient services with Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine treatment in HA hospitals; and provision of funding through the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund for the CM sector to, inter alia, nurture talent, conduct scientific research and promote CM.

15. Chairman, my colleagues and I are now happy to answer questions from Members.

**Speaking Notes of the Secretary for Innovation and Technology
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 15 April 2020 (Wednesday)**

Chairman, Members,

Promoting development of innovation and technology is one of the work priorities of the current-term Government. Since the current-term Government took office, we have been launching and implementing a series of measures along the eight major areas set forth for further perfecting the innovation and technology (“I&T”) ecosystem in Hong Kong. Up till now, we have already committed over \$110 billion to support the development of I&T. The Financial Secretary, as announced in his 2021-22 Budget (“the Budget”), has continued to consolidate and strengthen the relevant measures, especially in nurturing and bringing together talents, promoting research and development (“R&D”) and supporting tech start-ups, etc. I will give a brief overview of the relevant enhanced key measures in the Budget as follows.

2. With regard to nurturing and bringing together talent, In order to let the next generation learn about and grasp the benefits of I&T, we will extend the IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools Programme to publicly-funded primary schools to enhance students' interests and knowledge in information technology. In addition, we will also regularise the STEM Internship Scheme, under which subsidies are provided for students who study science and technology in local universities to enroll in short-term I&T related internships, so as to encourage them to gain full-time job experience related to I&T and to enlarge the pool of I&T talent in Hong Kong.

3. Concerning the promotion of R&D, the Budget has announced to inject in total \$9,500 million to the Innovation and Technology Fund (“ITF”) two years in a row to sustain its 17 funding schemes as well as the work of over 50 R&D laboratories in the next three years. All along, the ITF has been financing projects that contribute to the I&T upgrading in our manufacturing and services industries, thereby promoting the long-term development of Hong Kong.

4. As for supporting tech start-ups, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (“HKSTPC”) and Cyberport will inject \$350 million and \$200 million into the Corporate Venture Fund and Cyberport Macro Fund respectively and extend their scope to cover Series B and later stage investments. The HKSTPC and Cyberport will co-invest in their tech start-ups with immense potential with other private and public investors.

5. In the coming year, apart from implementing the initiatives and proposals put forward in the Budget, our key tasks include the following five categories –

- Firstly, we will continue taking forward I&T infrastructure projects. We are pressing ahead with the development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Loop. The first batch of facilities is expected to be completed in phases from 2024 to 2027. In the short and medium term, we have previously announced the Phase 2 of the Hong Kong Science Park Expansion and Cyberport 5 development mainly for the operation of R&D and tech enterprises and incubating tech startups. The preparatory work for the expansion programmes are in good progress. Also, the InnoCell at the Science Park has now commenced operation, providing local and overseas I&T talents with spaces for smart living and creative collaboration.
- Secondly, we are preparing to launch the Global STEM Professorship Scheme in the first half of this year to support universities in attracting world-renowned I&T scholars and their teams to Hong Kong to participate in teaching and research.
- Thirdly, we will continue to implement the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme to encourage enterprises to employ Hong Kong university graduates so that the latter can undertake I&T-related work in Hong Kong and another city in GBA. It was received with an overwhelming response with over 1 100 I&T places so far, exceeding our target of 700 places.

- Fourthly, we will continue to foster re-industrialisation. The Advanced Manufacturing Centre and the Microelectronics Centre, being developed by the HKSTPC, will be completed in 2022 and 2023 respectively. At present, quite a number of enterprises have expressed interest in setting up establishments in the two centres.
- Fifthly, we will continue to promote Smart City development. In late 2020, the Government released the *Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong 2.0*, adding new impetus under six smart areas, and launched a one-stop personalised digital services platform, "iAM Smart", which have marked an important chapter in the Smart City development of Hong Kong.

6. The promotion of I&T development can add new impetus to Hong Kong's economy and enhance people's livelihood. It is of utmost importance to the long-term development of Hong Kong. I would like to thank Members again for the support and valuable comments all along on I&T development. I appeal for the continual support of Members and the public for the work of ITB.

7. Thank you, Chairman.

- End -

**Speaking Points of the Secretary for Development
at the Special Finance Committee Meeting (Planning and Lands)
on 15 April 2021 (Thursday)**

Chairman,

1. In 2021-22, the priority tasks on the Planning and Lands portfolio under the purview of the Development Bureau (DEVB) are:
 - (a) Land supply;
 - (b) Safety of drainage systems of buildings; and
 - (c) Building a liveable city.

Land Supply

2. We will continue to pursue the multi-pronged land supply strategy. At present, we are pressing ahead with the development of Tung Chung New Town Extension and Kwu Tung North/Fanling North, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and Yuen Long South New Development Areas (NDAs). The first batch of public housing units is targeted for gradual completion from 2024 to 2028.
3. Over the past few years, we have identified 210 sites with potential for housing development. Rezoning has been completed or commenced for 70 per cent of them. It is estimated that about 40 per cent of the public housing units to be completed in the next ten years will come from the rezoned sites.
4. For brownfield sites, we have promulgated the results of the second phase review on scattered brownfield sites. In the two-phase review, we have shortlisted a total of 12 brownfield clusters for higher density public housing development in the short to medium term. Taking into account these brownfield clusters, the NDAs, and other ongoing efforts to develop brownfield sites already announced, a total of over 860 hectares (ha) of brownfield sites would be gradually developed for

housing and other land uses, accounting for over 50 per cent of the total brownfield area in Hong Kong.

5. Furthermore, we will soon apply for funding from the Legislative Council (LegCo) for investigation and design of the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, and will commence as soon as possible a planning and engineering study for the remaining phase development of the New Territories North (NTN) (covering NTN New Town and Man Kam To Logistics Corridor).
6. Apart from implementing various land supply projects, we are committed to expediting land supply process by streamlining procedures. To this end, the Development Projects Facilitation Office was established under the Development Bureau in December 2020 to facilitate processing of planning, lease modification/land exchange and building plan applications, etc. for larger-scale private residential development projects (providing a flat yield of 500 or above) leading up to the commencement of works, with a view to ensuring effective processing of development applications.
7. Moreover, the remit of the steering group tasked with streamlining development control under DEVB has been expanded to cover approving departments other than those under DEVB, with a view to reviewing more comprehensively different aspects involved in the development approval process.

Safety of Drainage Systems of Buildings

8. In response to rising public concerns regarding defective drains amid the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, we have sought funding of \$1 billion through the Appropriation Bill 2021 to establish the “Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme”. We have consulted the Panel on Development earlier regarding the scheme. Subject to funding approval, we will launch the scheme in May this year. It is expected the funding scheme would benefit owners of over 3 000 old domestic buildings in repairing and/or upgrading the drainage systems of their buildings. The Buildings Department will issue a practice note within this month to promulgate various enhancements concerning drainage systems; the industry and owners are encouraged to adopt the new design standards in repair works.

Building a Liveable City

9. On building a liveable city, a major programme launched this year is the “Invigorating Island South” initiative, which aims at developing the Southern District into a better place to live, work and have fun. The Invigorating Island South Office under DEVB commenced operation in February. It is now actively listening to local views for formulating a work plan on the way ahead.
10. Besides, we will continue to pursue harbourfront enhancement with the earmarked funding of \$6.5 billion. We will adopt an incremental approach so that harbourfront sites may be opened as early as possible. We will also seek funding from LegCo for commencing the construction works of two major projects, namely the Boardwalk underneath the Island Eastern Corridor and the harbourfront park at Eastern Street North in Sai Ying Pun this year.
11. The above is a brief report. My respective Controlling Officers of the Planning and Lands Branch and relevant departments have provided answers to 228 written questions from Members accounting for the use of resources under their purview. We will be happy to respond to any further questions that Members may wish to raise. Thank you.

**Speaking Points of the Secretary for Development
for the Special Finance Committee Meeting (Works)
on 15 April 2021 (Thursday)**

Chairman,

- In the new financial year, we have several priority tasks under the Works portfolio.
- Firstly, regarding studies on works projects, those related to artificial islands in the Central Waters will commence in June this year, we having obtained the Finance Committee’s funding approval in December last year. The studies will take about three and a half years to complete. The target is to have the first population intake in 2034. Separately, through the Lantau Conservation Fund, we will promote conservation and pursue local improvement works in Lantau, including cultural conservation and projects to improve hiking trails and cycle tracks.
- Secondly, we will continue to invest in infrastructure to support economic development and create job opportunities. The Development Bureau is proactively implementing “Construction 2.0” to facilitate the professionalisation and revitalisation of the construction industry with a wider adoption of innovation and technology. Apart from promoting the use of Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) in public and private projects to accelerate work progress and enhance project effectiveness, we will implement an integrated digital platform in phases from this year onwards in order to enable the continuous monitoring of project performance and drive the digitalisation of public works. Moreover, to enhance the professional skills of mid-tier managers in the Government and raise their project delivery capabilities, we have earmarked \$6 million for providing systematic training to them in the next three years.

- Thirdly, concerning the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, apart from constructing a community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo, a temporary hospital and a number of quarantine camps to enhance Hong Kong's pandemic-combating capacity, we have joined hands with the construction industry to introduce a series of measures to support different stakeholders. These measures include launching a Covid-19 testing service scheme on construction sites, providing subsidies for small and medium-sized enterprises for meeting operating expenses, offering allowances to underemployed or temporarily unemployed construction workers attending training courses to upgrade their skills, and creating time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors for construction workers.
- Fourthly, we will continue to develop Kowloon East into Hong Kong's second core business district. Currently, we are amending the outline zoning plan that covers the development at the Kwun Tong Action Area. We will also implement improvements to pedestrian connectivity in the Kwun Tong and Kowloon Bay business areas in stages, and undertake works to revitalise the Tsui Ping River and improve Lam Wah Street Playground. Moreover, under the principle of "single site, multiple use", we will take forward the transformation of the open space at Sze Mei Street and Choi Hung Road Playground, so as to better utilise land resources and meet the community's needs.
- Fifthly, in taking forward various development projects, we will protect, conserve and revitalise historic and heritage buildings and sites through an appropriate and sustainable approach according to the actual situation for the public's benefit and enjoyment. In the coming year, we will continue to implement the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme; the revitalisation of three projects under Batch IV of the scheme will be completed for operation soon, and we will submit funding applications for projects under Batch V and assess applications under Batch VI.

- In addition, concerning the promotion of construction and engineering professional services, we have formulated new initiatives with the Guangdong Provincial Government to enable architectural and engineering consultants on the Government's approved lists and the relevant professionals to directly provide services in nine Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) after going through simple registration processes. We will continue to explore more facilitation measures with the Mainland Government to enhance business opportunities in the GBA for Hong Kong's construction and engineering sectors.
- We will be happy to answer any questions that Members may wish to raise.

**Speaking Notes of
Mr. Kevin Yeung Yun-hung, JP,
Secretary for Education
at the Special Meeting of the Legislative Council's Finance Committee
to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2021-22
on 16 April 2021**

Mr. Chairman,

The estimated total expenditure on education in 2021-22 is \$110.9 billion. Of this, the recurrent education expenditure increases by \$3.6 billion to \$100.7 billion, accounting for about one-fifth of the estimated total government recurrent expenditure. The recurrent expenditure on education has, over ten years (i.e. from 2012-13 to 2021-22 financial year), increased by 67% with an average growth rate of 5.8% per annum. This clearly demonstrates the Government's long-term commitment to invest in education.

2. We are committed to providing quality education through upholding the Led by Professionals principle, listening carefully to voices of the education sector and devoting substantial resources to education. Over the past three years, the government has allocated a total of over \$13.5 billion recurrent expenditure for the implementation of a series of improvement measures, covering education manpower, funding and hardware, to improve the quality of education. In 2021-22, we will take forward the following new measures.

3. For basic education, we will further promote Applied Learning to make it a valued senior secondary elective subject. At the same time, while we will provide students with the subsidy and more diversified courses to broaden their studies and learning experience, so as to facilitate their diversified development, we will also implement the reform of senior secondary core subjects, provide training to teachers and prepare teaching resources to help teachers get hold of the new subject of Citizenship and Social Development. We will promote national security education in schools to cultivate among students a correct understanding of the concepts of national security through relevant subjects and learning activities inside and outside classrooms; we have already provided guidelines on school

administration and education as well as teacher training and resource materials to schools to facilitate school personnel and students to understand and comply with the National Security Law; we will also work with post-secondary institutions to promote national security education at the post-secondary level. The training requirements for newly appointed and serving teachers as well as teachers to be promoted, covering professional roles, values and conduct of teachers; education development at the local, national and international levels; national education and national security education, etc., will also be stepped up.

4. Furthermore, we will replace manual operated water taps with motion sensor operated ones for aided schools, and pay the examination fees for school candidates sitting for the 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.

5. The Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) / Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) will also provide funding of up to \$0.4 million to each subsidised primary school in the coming three school years, thereby rolling out a “Knowing More About IT Programme” to enhance students’ interests and knowledge in information technology and their applications through extra-curricular activities, so as to prepare them for integration into the knowledge-based economy and participation in the development of a digital society. The OGCIO will set up a one-stop support centre to provide assistance for primary schools.

6. As regards post-secondary education, the ITB and the Education Bureau will launch a “Global STEM Professorship Scheme” for a period of five years to enhance support for the University Grant Committee (UGC)-funded universities to attract up to 100 internationally renowned professors in STEM-related disciplines and their teams to work in Hong Kong so as to enable our universities to scale new heights in innovation and technology teaching and research activities.

7. For vocational and professional education, we will implement the Smart Technology Applications and Mobile Platform (STAMP) for Vocational Training Council (VTC) to further promote its provision of vocational and professional education and training (VPET). We have also commenced a review of sub-degree education and launched a pilot project on applied degrees in late-2020. Moreover, we will continue to implement the pilot scheme introduced in the 2020/21 academic year, under which an

external consultant has been engaged to provide one-stop professional service on VPET for teachers of selected secondary schools, in order to enhance the promotion of VPET in secondary education.

8. Mr. Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer further questions from Members. Thank you.

Education Bureau
16 April 2021

**Speaking Notes for the Secretary for Security
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee on 16 April 2021**

Chairman,

- In the draft Estimates for the new financial year, allocation under Security Bureau (SB)'s responsibility will be \$54.3 billion, accounting for 7.5% of the total government expenditure. The allocation is 5.6% less than last year.

Law and Order

- The Hong Kong National Security Law has considerably suppressed the acts of violent riots, Hong Kong independence and colluding with external forces that prevailed in 2019-20, and restored normal lives for Hong Kong's residents so that they can live without fear and threat to their safety. However, the violent riots have seriously tarnished the law and order and law-abiding awareness of Hong Kong.
- In the four decades or so before the violent riots, Hong Kong has witnessed a steady decrease in its crime figures. The downward trend, however, was disrupted and reversed by the violent riots. The number of crimes increased by 9% in 2019 and continued to increase by 7% in 2020. Crimes recording more significant increase include deception cases, blackmail, as well as vice, gambling activities, and drug-related offences (including serious drug, serious gambling and organised vice offences). We will therefore closely monitor the crime trend and take strict enforcement actions. We will also have to rebuild the law-abiding awareness through promotion and education, and inform the public about common criminal tactics so that they will be more vigilant. In this regard, the Government, the Police and different sectors in the society will have to work together to rebuild positive values and the law-abiding awareness of the society.
- While order in the community has broadly resumed, security risks still prevail. We need to be more vigilant particularly in the following areas:

- (a) people who endanger national security still leverage on the media, arts and culture, and publications etc. to continue to disseminate the idea of Hong Kong independence, and shamelessly fabricate heroic stories for those violating the law;
- (b) there are risks of local terrorism lurking in the community, and we have to beware of self-radicalised people pursuing “lone wolf” terrorist acts;
- (c) agents of foreign countries are still present and external forces are still exploiting every opportunity to interfere and damage the city.

We need to stay vigilant and equip ourselves with the ability to deal with contingencies any time.

Control Points

- The HKSAR Government will continue to closely collaborate with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to enhance the clearance capability of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen land boundary control points, which help facilitate the realisation of the “East in East out, West in West out” planning strategy. These measures include –
 - (a) The opening of the cargo clearance facilities of the Liantang Port/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point in August 2020; and
 - (b) Provision of round-the-clock cargo clearance service at the Shenzhen Bay Port starting from December 2020.
- Regarding the redevelopment of Huanggang Port Control Point and the implementation of co-location arrangement, on 24 March 2021 I moved a government motion at the Legislative Council (LegCo) supported by all attending Members for us to press ahead the corresponding work in collaboration with the Shenzhen Municipal Government. I would like to express my gratitude for your support.

Non-refoulement Claims

- Various measures of handling non-refoulement claims have achieved positive progress. The number of non-ethnic Chinese illegal immigrants has dropped by over 80% from the peak, and the number of new non-refoulement claims received has also dropped by about 80%. The number of appeals pending the Torture Claims Appeal Board's (TCAB) handling has also dropped significantly to around 1 600, which are expected to be completed within this year the soonest.
- To handle non-refoulement claims more effectively, we have earlier introduced the Immigration (Amendment) Bill 2020 (the Bill) with a view to further strengthening our measures and the legal basis. The Bills Committee has largely completed the scrutiny. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Bills Committee. Taking into account the Bills Committee's comments, we will introduce committee stage amendments to the Bill, including further specifying whether the person concerned is likely to pose a security risk to the community should be taken into consideration when assessing whether the detention period is reasonable and lawful. Subject to the agreement of the House Committee, we will resume 2nd Reading on 28 April this year.

Enhancing Fire Safety in Old Buildings

- In respect of enhancing fire safety in old buildings, the Government agrees that there is a need to consider empowering the Fire Services Department and the Buildings Department to carry out fire safety improvement works for owners of old buildings who are incapable of complying with the requirements of the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, and to recover the costs incurred from such owners upon completion of the works. SB will make reference to a similar mechanism under the prevailing Buildings Ordinance and take into account the experience of the Buildings Department in the work of building safety, and will do our best to resolve the legal and enforcement issues involved. It is expected that a public consultation will be launched in the second half of 2021 in order to formulate a suitable mechanism and amend the legislation to empower relevant departments to carry out the related work.

Anti-epidemic Work taken up by the Disciplined and Auxiliary Services

- In addition to the work mentioned above, the disciplined services and the two auxiliary forces have actively participated in the work of the Government in fighting the epidemic. In early days, they mainly assisted in increasing masks production in correctional institutions, setting up the quarantine centres, and assisting Hong Kong people stranded overseas to return home. Recently, we have been providing assistance in strengthening contact tracing, and stepping up enforcement actions against contravention of the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance. At the peak, over 3 000 officers from the disciplined services involved in the various anti-epidemic operations on a daily basis, especially during the time of the “restriction-testing declarations” operation.
- I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the colleagues from the disciplined and auxiliary services for their hard work.

Chairman, the representatives from Departments and I are pleased to answer questions from Members.

Thank you, Chairman.

Security Bureau
April 2021

**Speaking Notes for the Secretary for Labour and Welfare
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 16 April 2021**

Welfare and Women

Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2021-22, government recurrent spending on social welfare and women's interests is estimated to be \$105.7 billion, accounting for 20.4% of the total recurrent government expenditure of the year, coming first amongst all policy area groups. This amount has not included the supplementary provisions for Working Family Allowance (WFA) and Short-term food assistance approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (FC) on 26 March 2021¹. Compared with the revised estimate for 2020-21 of \$90.9 billion, there is an increase of about \$14.8 billion (16.2%) in recurrent spending on social welfare. This reflects the Government's commitment to supporting the disadvantaged. The Government will continue to provide and enhance our support to the disadvantaged, including the elderly, low-income families, children, persons with disabilities and those in need. Now, let me highlight how the Labour and Welfare Bureau will make use of these resources.

Elderly Care

2. The recurrent government expenditure on elderly services in 2021-22 is estimated to reach about \$14.2 billion, representing an increase of about 20% over the revised estimate of about \$11.9 billion in 2020-21 and an increase of about 85% over about \$7.7 billion in 2017-18. In 2021-22, the Government will provide an additional 1 887 subsidised residential care places for the elderly, including 111 places provided by contract homes and subsidised homes and 1 776 EA1 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, as well as 164 subsidised day care service places for the elderly. The Government has also allocated additional

¹ FC approved on 26 March the supplementary provisions for 2021-22 of \$795 million and \$280.4 million for WFA and Short-term food assistance respectively. Also, there is an increase in commitment of \$18.3 million for Short-term food assistance.

resources to an additional 1 500 service quotas under the Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases) in April 2021.

Short-term Food Assistance Service

3. The Government will make the Short-term Food Assistance Service Projects a permanent one from August 2021 upon completion of the existing service contracts. The Government has earmarked \$415 million to meet the recurrent expenditure. To help individuals and families temporarily affected by the pandemic, the Government will relax the asset limits of the service in June 2021 on a one-year time-limited basis by pitching the asset limits to those of the WFA Scheme, which will require a one-off additional expenditure of about \$430 million.

Cash Assistance

4. Having regard to the protracted coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and the employment condition, the Government launched the time-limited 'Special Scheme of Assistance to the Unemployed' under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to implement two measures, namely (i) relaxing the asset limits for able-bodied persons by 100% for one year from 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2021; and (ii) disregarding the cash value of insurance policies of able-bodied CSSA applicants as assets for six months from 1 April to 30 September 2021 during the grace period of one year. The FC approved a one-off commitment of \$3,520 million to meet the relevant expenditure.

5. Separately, notwithstanding that the WFA Scheme must be based on the employment and working hour requirements applicable to its applicant households, the FC approved on 26 March 2021 the substantial reduction of the WFA basic working hour requirement for non-single-parent households by half (i.e. from 144 hours per month to 72 hours per month) for a one-year period, so as to assist households facing under-employment as a result of the pandemic. It is crudely estimated that some 24 000 additional households will benefit, involving an additional expenditure of \$954 million. Meanwhile, the Government will abolish the Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (I-WITS) Scheme to redeploy resources for implementing the time-limited substantial reduction of WFA working hour requirements and handling the continued surge in WFA applications. The above measures will be implemented concurrently

in June 2021.

6. Furthermore, the Financial Secretary has proposed in the 2021-22 Budget to provide an extra allowance to social security recipients equal to half a month of payment, which will involve an additional expenditure of about \$2,382 million and is expected to benefit about 1.51 million persons. Similar arrangements will apply to recipients of WFA and I-WITS. It is expected that some 70 000 WFA households and 20 000 I-WITS recipients will benefit from this initiative, involving an additional expenditure of about \$121 million.

7. The various time-limited and one-off cash assistance measures mentioned above involve an additional expenditure of about \$7,000 million.

Supporting Pre-school Children with Special Needs

8. To provide early support for pre-school children with special needs, the number of places for on-site pre-school rehabilitation services has been increased by 1 000 to 8 000 in this school year and is expected to further increase to 10 000 in 2022/23 school year.

Women's Development

9. In 2021-22, the Government has earmarked around \$41.2 million to promote women's interests and support the work of Women's Commission (WoC). These include the provision for assisting WoC in implementing the "Capacity Building Mileage Programme", and implementing the "Funding Scheme for Women's Development" under which women's groups may implement programmes that are conducive to women's development.

Lotteries Fund

10. The revenue for the Lotteries Fund has dropped substantially due to the pandemic. In view of this, the Government will make an injection of \$1.1 billion² into the Lotteries Fund, so as to ensure that development projects in respect of much-needed social welfare services premises (particularly major facilities for elderly and rehabilitation services) can

² It is not included in the recurrent spending of \$105.7 billion mentioned in paragraph 1.

proceed as scheduled, and that the feasibility studies and detailed design work for such projects will not be affected. The Government will brief the Panel on Welfare Services on the injection proposal, and will then submit the relevant funding proposal to the FC.

11. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. Members are welcome to raise questions.

– End –

**Speaking Notes for the Secretary for Labour and Welfare
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 16 April 2021**

Labour

Chairman and Honourable Members,

Recurrent spending on labour and manpower development in 2021-22 is estimated to be \$2,990 million, representing an increase of \$750 million (33.2%) over the revised estimate of \$2,250 million last year. It accounts for 0.6% of the total recurrent government expenditure. I will briefly highlight the key areas of work in respect of labour and manpower development in the coming year.

Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme

2. To encourage and assist young people to leverage the opportunities for career advancement in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), the Government launched the GBA Youth Employment Scheme on 8 January this year. The scheme provides 2 000 places remunerated at no less than \$18,000 per month for university graduates to work in the Mainland cities of GBA. As of 7 April, 275 enterprises have offered a total of 2 005 job vacancies for the scheme, including 940 general posts and 1 065 innovation and technology posts, for eligible graduates to apply.

Racial Diversity Employment Programme

3. The Labour Department (LD) launched the Racial Diversity Employment Programme in November last year, commissioning non-governmental organisations to strengthen employment support for ethnic minority job seekers. As of 31 March, 307 ethnic minority job seekers have participated in the programme.

Increasing Progressively the Number of Statutory Holidays

4. The Government introduced the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2021 into the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 17 March this year to increase progressively the number of statutory holidays (SHs) under the Employment Ordinance (EO) from 12 days until it reaches 17 days, so that it is on par with the number of general holidays other than Sundays. The Bill is currently under LegCo's scrutiny. Subject to smooth passage of the Bill, the Government aims to designate the first additional SH in 2022.

Abolishing the “Offsetting” of Severance Payment and Long Service Payment by Employers’ Mandatory Contributions under the Mandatory Provident Fund System

5. The Government continues to press ahead with the preparatory work for the abolition of the arrangement of “offsetting” severance payment and long service payment with employers’ mandatory contributions under the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) System, including drafting the bills and thrashing out the implementation details of the support measures. The Government plans to introduce the bills into LegCo in the 2021-22 legislative year, and implement the abolition of the “offsetting” arrangement in tandem with the full implementation of the eMPF Platform of the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority in 2025.

Extending Statutory Maternity Leave and Implementing the Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme

6. The statutory maternity leave (ML) has been increased from 10 weeks to 14 weeks with effect from 11 December last year. With reference to the 2019 statistics, it is estimated that about 27 000 female employees will benefit from the extension of ML every year. Employers may apply to the Government for full reimbursement of the additional ML pay effected in accordance with EO, subject to a cap of \$80,000 per employee. After all-out efforts of LD, the new Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme started receiving reimbursement applications from employers on 1 April this year.

Streamlining Licence Renewal Process for Employment Agencies and Rolling Out E-Service System

7. To support the Government's objectives of facilitating business and developing a Smart City, LD streamlined the licence renewal process for employment agencies (EAs) in January this year on the basis that its regulatory and enforcement work would not be affected. Also, LD will roll out "e-Services for EAs" in early 2022 to allow EAs to submit licence applications and check their application status easily and conveniently, etc. It is estimated that about 3 300 EAs will benefit.

Enhancing Occupational Safety and Health

8. The Government attaches great importance to occupational safety and health (OSH) of employees and keeps close tabs on the OSH risk levels of various industries and their changes. Adopting the risk-based principle, LD formulates and adjusts the strategies of inspection and enforcement, publicity and promotion, as well as education and training in a timely manner in order to foster the OSH culture and enhance OSH performance.

9. As the number of fatal industrial accidents in the construction industry and its accident rate per 1 000 workers have been the highest of all industries, apart from strengthening the impact of our regular enforcement inspections, LD will continue to undertake a series of targeted measures to improve the OSH performance of the industry. These measures include conducting Special Enforcement Operations targeting high-risk processes, such as work-at-height, lifting operations and electrical work, etc.; conducting comprehensive and in-depth surprise inspections of construction sites involving high-risk processes or with poor safety performance; and stepping up participation in site safety management committee meetings of public work projects so that LD will be apprised of their latest risk situation, and will give advice and adjust the inspection strategy accordingly.

10. Besides, LD plans to refine the statutory notification mechanism of construction works to cover those with shorter durations or engaging fewer workers but involving a relatively high risk, so as to facilitate LD in conducting targeted safety inspections early.

11. LD will continue to launch large-scale promotional programmes and produce “Work Safety Alerts” in the form of animation videos to enhance OSH awareness of industry stakeholders.

12. In respect of OSH education, LD is reviewing the operation code and guidance notes of the “Approval Conditions for Operating Mandatory Safety Training Courses” to enhance the quality of these safety training programmes.

Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work

13. LD is preparing for the launch of a three-year Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work (Pilot Programme) targeting injured employees in the construction industry. The Pilot Programme will be funded mainly by the Government, while employers are to shoulder part of the rehabilitation treatment expenses to fulfill their statutory responsibility under the Employees’ Compensation Ordinance. The total non-recurrent expenditure of the Pilot Programme is estimated to be around \$434 million.

14. LD has consulted various stakeholders on the design framework of the Pilot Programme, including the LegCo Panel on Manpower, the Labour Advisory Board, as well as rehabilitation professional bodies, relevant employer and employee groups, etc. The Government is drawing up the service protocols and operational details of the Pilot Programme. Subject to the time required for the preparatory work, the Government targets to launch the Pilot Programme as soon as possible in 2022.

Training Support for Employees

15. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) launched the “Love Upgrading Special Scheme” (“Special Scheme”) in October 2019 to provide training and allowance for trainees affected by the economic situation; since then 40 000 training places have been provided. Following the completion of the third tranche of the “Special Scheme” in June 2021, ERB will launch the fourth tranche in July 2021 for six months until the end of this year, benefiting an additional 20 000 trainees. ERB will continue to provide more training options under the “Special Scheme” and more online courses for trainees to engage in distance learning during the epidemic.

Continuing Education

16. To cater for advancement in technology and changes in learning mode, the Government plans to recognise online courses under the Continuing Education Fund, and is formulating a framework to provide learners with more diversified ways of continuing learning whilst ensuring effective supervision over the quality of courses and teaching. The Government has consulted the sector with a view to promulgation in September 2021.

17. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. Members are welcome to raise questions.

– End –