

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(3) 26/20-21

**Paper for the House Committee meeting
of 16 October 2020**

**Questions scheduled for the
Legislative Council meeting of 21 October 2020**

Questions by:

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Question 1
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

2020 Legislative Council General Election

Hon HUI Chi-fung to ask:

On 31 July this year, the Government made, on grounds of the severe situation of the epidemic, the Emergency (Date of General Election) (Seventh Term of the Legislative Council) Regulation to stipulate that the 2020 Legislative Council (“LegCo”) General Election is to be held on 5 September next year instead of the original date. Besides, in response to a report submitted by the Chief Executive, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress made a decision at a session on 11 August this year that, after 30 September this year, the sixth term LegCo is to continue to discharge duties for not less than one year until the seventh term of office of LegCo begins. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has assessed if the casting of votes by members of the public on the LegCo election day is more conducive to the spread of the epidemic than their taking part in large-scale public events such as those held in celebration of Hong Kong’s return to China and the National Day; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the scientific justifications for that;
- (2) given that the findings of a public opinion survey have shown that 68% of the respondents consider that the Government should hold the LegCo General Election expeditiously, but the newly scheduled election date is more than 10 months away from now, whether the Government will go along with the wishes of the public by conducting the relevant election within four months; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) as some members of the public are worried that the Government will seek to reschedule, on different grounds, the election time and again in the future, thereby transforming the current-term LegCo into a “perpetual legislature”, whether the Government has assessed the possibility of the election being rescheduled again, and whether such a situation will undermine the recognition for LegCo?

Question 2
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Twelve Hong Kong people being detained on the Mainland

Hon KWONG Chun-yu to ask:

On 23 August this year, 12 Hong Kong people boarded a speedboat at the Po Toi O Pier in Sai Kung to leave the territory, who were subsequently intercepted in Mainland waters by Mainland coast guard officers. They are currently detained at the detention centre of the Yantian Branch of the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau for the alleged offence of crossing the boundary illegally. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows if that group of Hong Kong people, prior to choosing their legal representatives from the list of lawyers provided by the Mainland authorities, were aware (i) that their families had engaged Mainland lawyers on their behalf, and (ii) if they had the right to engage those Mainland lawyers not on the official list; whether it will relay to the lawyers engaged the requests of the families concerned that applications be made to the Mainland authorities for the minors and the chronically ill persons among that group of Hong Kong people to be granted release on bail pending trial;
- (2) as some press reports alleged that on the day when that group of Hong Kong people left the territory on a speedboat, the Government Flying Service deployed a fixed-wing aircraft to conduct surveillance on that speedboat in the air above Po Toi O, whether the Security Bureau and the Police had learnt of the departure plan of that group of Hong Kong people before the speedboat was intercepted by Mainland coast guard officers; and
- (3) whether it has studied if the situation that such group of Hong Kong people are barred from contacting their family members and the Mainland lawyers engaged by their families on their behalf will create a perception among Hong Kong people that the human rights of that group of Hong Kong people are not protected and that the law enforcement and administration of justice on the Mainland is a black box operation and running against the statement made by a State leader that “the more open the law enforcement and administration of justice regime is, the greater the authoritativeness and credibility it carries”; if it has studied and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether it will discuss with the Mainland authorities so

as to ensure that the human rights of that group of Hong Kong people are protected and that they have access to fair trial?

Question 3
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Mandatory Provident Fund system

Hon Paul TSE to ask:

Quite a number of members of the public who are in financial distress due to the epidemic have requested the Government to allow them to withdraw the accrued benefits in their Mandatory Provident Fund (“MPF”) accounts in order to address their imminent needs. Regarding MPF schemes, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has studied acceding to the aforesaid request, which is supported by the general public and the vast majority of Members of this Council, and whether this initiative will help alleviate the financial pressure on the Government in implementing the relief measures; if it has studied, of the outcome; if not, whether it can assess if the Government’s continued disregard for the public request will exacerbate public grievances and undermine public confidence in the Government’s governance;
- (2) as it is learnt that 30% of the investment portfolios of MPF funds comprise shares of HSBC Holdings, whether it has assessed the impact of the slump in the share price of HSBC Holdings in recent years on the total assets of MPF accounts; if it has assessed, of the details; if not, whether it can expeditiously make an assessment, and review whether requiring members of the public (especially those who are urgently waiting to buy a home and form a family, and who wish to bear a smaller burden of the down payment for their first home or mortgage payment) to make long-term mandatory contributions to the MPF schemes, which have been criticized for their low cost-effectiveness and even ridiculed by scholars as something that “may eventually become condolence money”, is tantamount to depriving them of the option to find an early solution to the retirement housing problem by making home purchase, thereby adding to their anxieties about retirement; and
- (3) as the federal government of Canada has, in order to encourage its nationals to save for retirement, offered tax concessions to participants in a “Registered Retirement Savings Plan” (such as the relevant tax-free savings may be used for first-time home purchase, taking out insurance and buying blue-chip shares), whether the Government has studied replacing the MPF system, which has been a subject of criticism, with a similar plan; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will expeditiously commence such a study?

Question 4
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Signalling systems of railways

Hon Michael TIEN to ask:

In May this year, three abnormal incidents happened during the testing of the new signalling system of the East Rail Line (“EAL”). The investigation report released by the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) in mid-August indicated that such incidents were unrelated to the operation and safety of the signalling system. It was uncovered by a media report on 11 September that an incident of a train “taking the wrong route” happened during the testing of the signalling system, but MTRCL had not made public the incident all along. MTRCL subsequently announced the suspension of its plan, originally scheduled for 12 September, of the commissioning of the new signalling system for EAL and the gradual introduction of new trains to EAL. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows if the successive emergence of problems in the signalling system during the testing was a result of the supplier of system software failing to cope with the excessive requirements on data collection set by MTRCL for the system, which are higher than those set in general by the railway operators in various places; whether MTRCL has reviewed if its practice of setting the aforesaid special requirements has brought additional risks to the system;
- (2) given that while the incident of a train “taking the wrong route” reportedly happened as early as in May, the signalling system could still obtain approval from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (“EMSD”) in August, whether the Government has examined if there are loopholes in the vetting and approval mechanism, as well as whether it involved deliberate concealment of the problem from EMSD; how the Government will improve the vetting and approval mechanism and hold the persons concerned responsible; and
- (3) how the Government will urge MTRCL to make concrete improvements to its mechanism of vetting and approval for and overseeing the implementation of works contracts; whether it knows if MTRCL will change the practice of procuring tailor-made software for the signalling system?

Question 5
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Problem of bullying in schools

Hon KWOK Wai-keung to ask:

It has been reported that since the eruption in June last year of the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, quite a number of children of police officers have been bullied by their classmates or teachers in schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the numbers of requests for assistance, complaints and reports received by the Police and the Education Bureau (“EDB”) respectively since June last year in respect of police officers’ children being bullied in schools;
- (2) of the measures currently in place to curb the acts of bullying in schools (including teachers bullying students) and ensure that the bullied students are provided appropriate support and counselling services; and
- (3) whether it has plans to make new regulations or set up new mechanisms to combat acts of bullying in schools, e.g. requiring schools to (i) notify, within a specified timeframe, EDB of all the reports received, (ii) set up a dedicated telephone hotline for parents and students to report bullying cases, and (iii) formulate school-based anti-bullying policies (stipulating the discipline and guidance arrangements for the persons concerned, the measures for preventing bullying in schools, the procedure and timeframe for investigating bullying cases, etc.); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 6
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Professional conduct of teachers

Hon Elizabeth QUAT to ask:

From June last year to August this year, the Education Bureau (“EDB”) received 247 complaints against teachers, some of whom were alleged to have disseminated hate remarks and advocated violence on social media, used biased and inappropriate teaching materials for teaching, as well as committed unlawful acts. EDB has so far issued reprimand letters, written warnings, written advice and verbal reminders to 21, 12, 19 and 18 teachers respectively, as well as cancelled one teacher’s registration. Some parents of students consider that such punishments lack deterrent effect, and are worried that under the influence of certain teachers, their children may become biased and radical in thinking, and then participate in unlawful activities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether EDB will review the complaint-handling and punishment mechanisms concerning teachers, so as to make such mechanisms more transparent and ensure that the punishments are proportionate to the gravity of the misconduct; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) given that the relevant authorities in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia will, upon commencement of investigations or hearings on the complaints against teachers, make public details of the cases, such as the names of the teachers concerned and the schools for which they work, whether EDB will follow such a practice; if so, when this will be implemented; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (3) of the punishment imposed on that primary school teacher who distorted historical facts when teaching the history of Opium War earlier on; whether EDB will expeditiously improve the mechanisms for monitoring teaching materials and teaching quality, including requiring schools to submit all school-based teaching materials to EDB for filing and setting up a mechanism for stakeholders to report inappropriate teaching materials; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 7
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Prevention of cruelty to animals

Hon CHAN Hak-kan to ask:

It has been reported that in February this year, 30 animals were suspected to have been thrown from height in Sham Tseng which left 18 of those animals dead and 12 injured, and in another case of suspected cruelty to animals, one animal was found dead and one injured. Last month, the Department of Justice (“DoJ”) decided not to institute prosecutions against the suspects of these two cases on grounds of insufficient evidence. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of reported cases of suspected cruelty to animals received in each of the past three years and, among such cases, the respective numbers of those in respect of which DoJ (i) instituted prosecutions and (ii) decided not to institute prosecutions, as well as the reasons for that;
- (2) of the punishments imposed on the person(s) convicted of cruelty to animals in each case since January 2019 (set out in a table by case number); the number of cases in respect of which DoJ lodged an appeal against the punishments imposed, and the details of those cases;
- (3) whether it knows if the court has drawn up any sentencing guidelines for offences on cruelty to animals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) as some concern groups on animal rights have pointed out that the fact that prosecutions were not instituted against the suspects in a number of cases of suspected cruelty to animals has undermined the deterrent effect of the relevant legislation, of the new measures put in place by the Government to combat such crimes; and
- (5) whether the Police will strengthen its training for police officers on collection of evidence in respect of cases of suspected cruelty to animals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 8
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Immigration figures

Dr Hon Pierre CHAN to ask:

Will the Government inform this Council of the following immigration figures since May this year:

- (1) the respective monthly numbers of inbound and outbound passenger trips made by (i) Hong Kong residents, (ii) Mainland visitors and (iii) visitors from other countries/places at each boundary control point;
- (2) the monthly numbers of Mainland residents coming to Hong Kong on Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as “One-way Permits”) for settlement, with a breakdown by the original places of their household registration;
- (3) the monthly numbers of persons arriving at each boundary control point who were exempted from compulsory quarantine under the relevant regulations (including the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E)) but were issued with a Notification of Medical Surveillance; and
- (4) the respective monthly numbers of person-times of Mainland, Macao and Taiwan residents who were exempted from compulsory quarantine upon arrival, with a breakdown by reason?

Question 9
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Support for psoriasis patients

Hon Elizabeth QUAT to ask:

It has been reported that in 2019, there were over 20 000 psoriasis patients in Hong Kong, with around 5 000 of them in moderate or severe conditions. Since June 2018, Chai Wan Social Hygiene Clinic of the Department of Health (“DH”) has been providing biologic therapy service for severe psoriasis patients. As at February 2020, DH identified only 74 severe psoriasis patients who might be suitable for receiving the biologic therapy and, among such patients, only 32 had started receiving the therapy and another nine were waiting for the treatment. Regarding the support for psoriasis patients, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will relax the criteria adopted for screening patients for receiving the biologic therapy so that more patients in moderate or severe conditions will be eligible for the treatment, and allocate additional resources to enable eligible patients to receive such treatment as early as possible; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) given that dermatologists adopt a scoring method known in abbreviated form as PASI for assessing the conditions of psoriasis patients, with PASIA75 (i.e. representing an improvement of 75% in the skin conditions of patients as compared with the baseline) as the treatment target, whether the authorities will consider, at the request of patients, prescribing other medicines which are more effective when patients are unable to achieve PASIA75 within a short period of time after receiving treatment by taking oral medication, so as to shorten the duration of treatment for such patients; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) given the huge medical expenses for treating psoriasis, whether the Government will consider providing patients or taxpayers who support such patients with a tax allowance for medical expenses; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) as some medical professionals have pointed out that at present, a number of drugs have specific curative effects on psoriasis, but they have not been listed as Self-financed Items with Safety Net in the Drug Formulary of the Hospital Authority (“HA”), whether the Government will request HA to (i) do so expeditiously, and (ii) provide such drugs for patients who have tried different drugs

but failed to get satisfactory medical results; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 10
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Online teaching and learning

Hon KWOK Wai-keung to ask:

Earlier on, the findings of a study conducted by a university have indicated that there are huge divides in digital competence performance and family support among secondary and primary school students. Of the students participating in the study, about 10% have no access to desktop or laptop computers or tablets; and among those who have access to such computer devices, over 40% have to share the use of such equipment with other family members. There are comments that during the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic in the last school year, online learning became the only channel of teaching and learning for schools, which has highlighted the existence of digital divides among various classes, and the right to learning of students from grass-roots families has been undermined by their lack of digital devices and relevant learning resources. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the difficulties and pressure faced by students from grass-roots families and their families when such students undertake online learning; whether it has received relevant requests for assistance, and whether it has assessed the impact of schools switching to online teaching on the learning progress of such students, including whether they lagged behind others in terms of learning progress; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the extent to which they lagged behind others, and the ways to help them catch up with the progress;
- (2) of the (i) details, (ii) state of implementation and (iii) number of beneficiary households since January this year of the existing measures to support students from grass-roots families in undertaking online learning; whether it has plans to devise new measures to provide more students from grass-roots families with adequate mobile computer devices and software as well as stable Internet access services to meet the growing needs for online learning; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) whether it will consider proactively liaising with non-profit-making organizations and providing them with relevant resources and related support to develop for students more online learning resources and activities that are free of charge; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

- (4) given the new normal of increasing popularity of online teaching and learning and the impact of the epidemic on the academia, whether it has plans to devise a long-term information technology education policy and provide schools with online teaching and learning strategies, curriculum guides as well as relevant teaching and learning resources; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 11
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Development of central bank digital currency

Hon CHAN Chun-ying to ask:

As shown in a survey report released by the Bank for International Settlements in January this year, more than 80% of the 66 central banks across the globe indicated that they had engaged in work related to central bank digital currency (“CBDC”) in 2018. It has been reported that the Central Bank of Lithuania issued in July this year a CBDC known as the LB Coin, which is the first of its kind worldwide. Furthermore, the People’s Bank of China is now taking the lead in the research and development of digital Renminbi (“RMB”), and announced in April this year the roll-out of related trials in four Mainland cities. The aforesaid situations have shown that developing CBDC has become an irreversible trend. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the progress and other details of the various research projects related to CBDC undertaken by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority;
- (2) whether the authorities have carried out any assessment on the opportunities that the development of digital RMB may bring about for Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) given that Hong Kong is a global offshore RMB business hub, whether the authorities have any plan to strive for the designation of Hong Kong as the first trial city outside the Mainland for digital RMB; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 12
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Development of primary healthcare

Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan to ask:

The Government established in November 2017 the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development to formulate a blueprint for the sustainable development of primary healthcare services for Hong Kong. Moreover, the Government set up in September 2019 in the Kwai Tsing (“K&T”) District the first District Health Centre (“DHC”) in Hong Kong. Regarding the development of primary healthcare, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the expected time for announcing the aforesaid blueprint, and whether it will draw up a timetable for providing comprehensive primary healthcare services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it has set the main service targets for various DHCs; if so, of the details (including the age groups and social strata to which they belong);
- (3) of the updated number of members of K&T DHC, with a breakdown of the number by age group, and the respective to-date numbers of members who have been (i) provided with basic health risk assessment, (ii) referred to DHC Network Medical Practitioners upon having been identified with risk factors for diabetes mellitus or hypertension, and (iii) referred to the Chronic Disease Management Programmes upon having been confirmed to have suffered from diabetes mellitus or hypertension, by K&T DHC (set out in a table);
- (4) given that the Government has commissioned The Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct the “Monitoring and Evaluation Study of Kwai Tsing District Health Centre”, of the time as expected by the Government for making public the outcome of the study and the follow-up actions it has planned to take, including whether it will, in the light of the outcome of the study, adjust the operation mode of all DHCs and the requirements on DHC operators; and
- (5) whether, in order to develop primary healthcare, the Government (i) further developed the Electronic Health Record Sharing System, (ii) reviewed the manpower planning for primary healthcare, and (iii) expedited the implementation of public-private partnership and

medical-social collaboration, in this year; if so, of the details of the relevant work and the progress made?

Question 13
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Data protection for the Electronic Health Record Sharing System

Hon Charles Peter MOK to ask:

Last month, the Chief Executive proposed that The University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (“HKUSZH”) be commissioned to provide follow-up consultation service for the following persons: Hong Kong residents who take up long-term residence in Guangdong Province and had scheduled, before the outbreak of the epidemic, follow-up appointments by the specialist outpatient clinics or general outpatient clinics of the Hospital Authority (“HA”). It has been reported that HKUSZH is discussing with HA the arrangements for Mainland healthcare personnel to access the patient information contained in the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (known in abbreviated form as “eHRSS”) (“the access arrangements”). Some members of the public are worried that, in the light of the differences in the regulatory regimes on privacy between the Mainland and Hong Kong, the privacy of patients and their sensitive personal data cannot be protected effectively under the access arrangements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the latest progress of the aforesaid discussion and the modus operandi of the access arrangements; whether it will, in relation to the access arrangements, (i) engage independent third parties to conduct privacy and information security risk assessments and audits, (ii) conduct public consultation and submit to this Council the outcome of the consultation, and (iii) introduce new information security measures for eHRSS;
- (2) of the reasons why the current design of eHRSS does not provide options for patients to specify on their own that certain categories of their personal data are not to be uploaded to the system; whether the authorities will make available a “safe deposit box” feature under the access arrangements to allow patients to impose restrictions on the access to and disclosure of their data; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (3) as the Government has made an undertaking to this Council that the protection afforded to the personal data contained in eHRSS would not be less than that stipulated in the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) for personal data, of the measures in place to maintain the undertaking under the access arrangements, so as to ensure that the patient information of Hong Kong residents is

protected against loss and unauthorized or accidental access, use, retention, erasure or disclosure to a third party?

Question 14
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Assisting a Hong Kong person imprisoned in the Philippines

Hon Paul TSE to ask:

On the 18th of last month, the family members of Mr TANG Lung-wai, a Hong Kong permanent resident who has been imprisoned for more than two decades in the Philippines allegedly due to a wrongful conviction, were informed that the appeal of Mr TANG had been dismissed by the Supreme Court of the Philippines. It is learnt that the Government has obtained a copy of the judgment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the Government, upon receipt of the judgment, has assessed what follow-up actions need to be taken for helping Mr TANG seek justice; if it has assessed, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether the Chief Executive will, following her letter to the President of the Philippines on 2 January 2019 urging the Philippine side to seriously take heed of the progress of Mr TANG's appeal case, contact the Philippine side personally or urge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to contact it so as to provide further assistance to Mr TANG;
- (3) whether the Government will set saving and bringing people back to Hong Kong as its primary goal and urge the Philippine side to grant parole or pardon to Mr TANG as soon as possible, or make a transfer request to the Philippine side in accordance with the transfer of sentenced persons agreement signed between the two governments, so that Mr TANG can return to Hong Kong as soon as possible;
- (4) whether the Government or the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines ("the Embassy") has sent its staff to visit or contact Mr TANG since the beginning of this year; if so, of the number of visits paid or contacts made, the recent situation and health condition of Mr TANG, and the assistance rendered to him; if not, the reasons for that;
- (5) as it has been reported that the Philippines has been severely hit by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, and the number of infection cases there is the highest among the countries in Southeast Asia, whether the Government or the Embassy has sent its staff to gain an understanding of the epidemic prevention work in the

prison in which Mr TANG is held, and whether any assistance in epidemic prevention needs to be provided to him; if so, of the details; if not, whether immediate actions will be taken to gain an understanding with the local authority; and

- (6) given that Mr TANG earlier registered, through his elder brother, for the Government's \$10,000 cash grants to Hong Kong permanent residents under the Cash Payout Scheme, but his registration was rejected by the Scheme's Secretariat on the grounds that the form submitted was inappropriate, and he was told that he would be informed separately when the appropriate form became available, and I have also written to the Financial Secretary twice requesting him to follow up on the matter and enquiring about the latest progress of the preparation of the relevant form, when the \$10,000 cash grant is expected to be disbursed to Mr TANG?

Question 15
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Using the social media to mislead investors

Hon Tony TSE to ask:

Some members of the financial sector have pointed out that the acts of lawbreakers using the social media to disseminate misrepresented investment information with a view to misleading investors have been increasingly rampant in recent years. Such acts include the dissemination of false or misleading investment advice and inside information anonymously or by means of impersonation of well-known persons in the investment sector. Moreover, some key opinion leaders who constantly disseminate investment advice on the social media have been queried for their lack of relevant professional qualifications and knowledge, their bragging about their investment performance, as well as their failure to disclose interests in a timely manner. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the existing legislation that regulates the acts of using the social media to disseminate investment information; the legal liability to be borne by a person who uses the social media to disseminate false or misleading investment information or impersonates other people in disseminating such information;
- (2) of the number of complaints about the acts referred to in (1) which were received by the authorities in each of the past three years, as well as the follow-up actions taken; the respective numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted;
- (3) whether it will review the relevant legislation in order to step up efforts in combating the acts of using the social media to disseminate misrepresented investment information with a view to misleading investors; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (4) whether it will step up public education efforts to remind investors that they must not easily trust the investment information on the social media in order to avoid falling prey to investment scams?

Question 16
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Assistance for the unemployed

Hon Vincent CHENG to ask:

As Hong Kong's economy has been hard hit by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the unemployment rate has remained high and stood at 6% in recent months. The number of unemployed persons has reached 200 000-odd, representing an increase by more than 100 000 when compared with the figure six months ago. Some academics have pointed out that given the fluctuating epidemic situation and the fact that the Government has no intention to launch a new round of Employment Support Scheme, the unemployment rate may continue to rise. The Government has implemented a time-limited unemployment support scheme ("the support scheme") since 1 June this year, under which the asset limits of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") applicants who are able-bodied adults are temporarily relaxed. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) given that there is only a slight increase of 300-odd cases in the number of CSSA cases under the unemployment category recorded in August when compared with that recorded three months ago, which is far smaller than the increase in the number of unemployed persons in the same period, whether the Government has assessed the reasons for that; if so, of the details;
- (2) whether it conducted any survey and study in the past six months to look into the difficulties faced by the unemployed and the support they need; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will conduct relevant surveys and studies;
- (3) whether it will, in the long term, conduct studies on severance payment, long service payment and unemployment support measures, with a view to enhancing the support and protection for employees; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) as the Government has claimed that the establishment of a new unemployment assistance system would entail high costs and take a rather long time (nearly 18 months), and that such a system might create an effect that the unemployment rate lingers at 4% to 5%, of the basis for such claim; and

- (5) whether it will examine other options (e.g. enhancing the support scheme or the Mandatory Provident Fund system), so as to address the imminent needs of the unemployed; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 17
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Promotion of STEM education

Hon Jimmy NG to ask:

A Research Brief published in June this year by the Legislative Council Secretariat points out that although the Government has heavily invested resources in the promotion of education on subjects related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (“STEM education”), STEM development of Hong Kong is still falling behind other places and STEM education in Hong Kong has many problems (such as insufficient lesson time, insufficient support for teachers and a lack of clear teaching guidelines). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the Education Bureau (“EDB”) reviewed, in the past two years, the effectiveness of the efforts to promote STEM education; if so, of the outcome; of the new measures to be put in place in the coming two years to resolve the aforesaid problems and enhance STEM education;
- (2) of the details and the effectiveness of EDB’s collaborative work with commercial organizations and employers in the past two years on strengthening STEM education; whether the Government will set up an intermediary organization to assist graduates from STEM related university programmes in getting appointments for technology as well as research and development positions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) given that the Government has, under the “IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools” initiative, provided funding support for publicly funded secondary schools to upgrade their information technology equipment and facilities as well as to organize related extra-curricular activities (“ECAs”), of the implementation progress of this initiative (including the number and percentage of participating secondary schools, the types of equipment and facilities procured, as well as the details of such ECAs); and
- (4) given that some of the items (e.g. cassette tape players and computers with floppy disk drives) on the current Furniture and Equipment List for New Schools recommended to be procured are outdated, while some more advanced items (e.g. 3D printers and laser cutters) are not on the List, whether EDB will expeditiously update the List to dovetail with the promotion of STEM education by schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 18
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Twelve Hong Kong people alleged of crossing the boundary illegally

Hon James TO to ask:

On 23 August this year, 12 Hong Kong people boarded a speedboat at the Po Toi O Pier in Sai Kung to leave the territory, who were subsequently intercepted by Mainland coast guard officers. They are currently detained at the detention centre of the Yantian Branch of the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau for the alleged offence of crossing the boundary illegally. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as the Government indicated on 26 September that, according to the records on 23 August of (i) the Marine Department's Vessel Traffic Services System and (ii) the Marine Police's Digital Radar Security System, the speedboat boarded by the aforesaid people departed from Po Toi O Pier at around 7:00 am on that day, left Hong Kong waters and entered Mainland waters at around 7:30 am, and it was last detected by the Marine Police's system at around 8:00 am to be at 10.9 nautical mile outside the boundary of Hong Kong waters moving in the southeast direction, and as the Mainland authorities stated that a speedboat suspected of crossing the boundary illegally had been intercepted at around 9:00 am on that day, of the following information in respect of the time period from 7:00 am to 9:15 am on 23 August -

- (a) the coordinates of the locations at sea of that speedboat recorded respectively by the two systems at every five minutes (set out in the table below), together with a navigational chart with grid lines to show the navigation route of the speedboat,

7:00 am to 9:15 am on 23 August 2020	Recorded coordinates of locations of the speedboat	
	(i)	(ii)
7:00 am		
7:05 am		
.....		
9:15 am		

- (b) the respective time at which the two systems last detected the location of the speedboat and, in respect of the speedboat at such junctures, its coordinates, speed and distance from the boundary of Hong Kong waters respectively as detected by the two systems,

- (c) the shortest distance between Po Toi O Pier and the boundary of Hong Kong waters,
 - (d) whether the coordinates of 21°54'00"N, 114°53'00"E is located on the high seas, and
 - (e) whether, during such time period, the vessels of the Marine Department and the Marine Police had patrolled near the waters concerned and detected the speedboat;
- (2) as it is learnt that on the morning of 23 August, the Government Flying Service (“GFS”) deployed aircraft(s) to execute an operation in the air above the waters concerned, of the starting time and ending time of that operation, the number and type(s) of aircraft(s) involved, whether any police officer boarded the aircraft(s) at that time, and whether the information obtained by GFS from the operation on that day has been passed to the Hong Kong Police;
- (3) whether it knows (i) the number and types of lawyers on the list of lawyers provided by the Mainland authorities to the 12 Hong Kong people, (ii) the names of the Mainland authorities which provided the list, (iii) the date on which the list was provided to such people, (iv) when such people completed the procedure of each choosing two lawyers, and (v) whether the families of such people have been informed of the relevant lawyers’ names and contact methods; if the families have not been provided with such information, how the Government will assist the families in obtaining such information;
- (4) whether it knows (i) if such people were informed that their families had, during their detention, engaged Mainland lawyers for them and attempted to make appointments for meeting them, and (ii) how the minors among such people had engaged Mainland lawyers according to Mainland laws, and how their basic rights will be protected by the Government and the Mainland authorities;
- (5) as it is learnt that some families sent letters, through the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department, to the Mainland authorities requesting them to notify the arrestees that their families had engaged Mainland lawyers on their behalf, whether it knows if the Mainland authorities gave such notification; if they did, of the date on which such notification was given, and whether the Mainland authorities have replied to the letters sent by those families; if they have replied, of the date of their reply; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (6) whether it knows the number of Hong Kong people serving sentences on the Mainland who applied, in the past three years, for medical parole and return to Hong Kong; the number of those whose applications were approved and the number of minors among them?

Question 19
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Coping with seasonal influenza and COVID-19 epidemic

Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki to ask:

While the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (commonly known as “Wuhan pneumonia”) (“COVID-19”) epidemic has not yet abated, the winter surge of influenza is approaching. This will undoubtedly aggravate the heavy burden on the healthcare system. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the separate quantities of injectable vaccines and nasal vaccines procured by the Department of Health (“DH”) respectively for (i) the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, (ii) the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) programme in respect of outreach to (a) kindergartens/kindergarten-cum-child care centres/child care centres (“kindergartens”) and (b) primary schools for schoolchildren’s vaccination under this programme, and (iii) the Government Vaccination Programme (including vaccination for residents of residential care homes (“RCHs”) for the elderly and persons with disabilities), as well as the respective average costs per dose of such vaccines; the rates of changes in the quantities of vaccines procured for this year as compared with those procured in the past three years;
- (2) of the new measures put in place by DH to increase the vaccination coverage rates; the respective numbers of kindergartens, primary schools and RCHs which have signed up for the outreach vaccination programmes and the respective numbers of participants involved, and whether it has assessed if the participation in such programmes has been affected by the COVID-19 epidemic; and
- (3) given that patients suffering from COVID-19 and those suffering from influenza develop very similar symptoms, whether it knows the measures put in place by the Hospital Authority to quickly differentiate between these two types of patients, so as to give them appropriate treatments and prevent cross-transmission?

Question 20
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Work of the dedicated team to review
the governance and management of RTHK

Hon Charles Peter MOK to ask:

In the middle of this year, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development announced the establishment of a dedicated team to review the governance and management of Radio Television Hong Kong (“RTHK”). Some members of the public are concerned about whether the authorities will, through the dedicated team, require RTHK to practise self-censorship in personnel management and programme production, thus undermining editorial independence and the public’s right to know, affecting the public interest, and tarnishing Hong Kong’s image as a free and open society. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of meetings convened by the dedicated team to date since the commencement of its work in mid-July this year, as well as the agendas of and attendees at each of the meetings;
- (2) whether it will make public the work and minutes of meetings of the dedicated team; if so, when these will be made public; and
- (3) whether it will enhance the transparency of the work of the dedicated team (e.g. by seeking public views or holding online public hearings) to enable various stakeholders to monitor the work of the dedicated team and directly give their views to the dedicated team, so that the viewpoints of RTHK staff and listeners/audiences can be effectively reflected in the reports and recommendations submitted by the team; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 21
(For written reply)

(Translation)

A flight operation said to be
related to 12 Hong Kong people leaving the territory

Hon Jeremy TAM to ask:

At about 7:00 am on 23 August this year, 12 Hong Kong people boarded a vessel at Po Toi O Pier, Sai Kung to leave the territory by sea. The vessel was intercepted by officers of the Mainland coast guard after it had entered Mainland waters, and the 12 people were put under criminal detention. It has been reported that a fixed-wing aircraft (Registration: B-LVB; Model: Bombardier Challenger 605) of the Government Flying Service (“GFS”) set off from Chek Lap Kok at 4:19 am on that day and flew to the Sai Kung area. After hovering in the air above Po Toi O for about three hours from 4:30 am, the aircraft flew to the south-easterly waters at 7:30 am. Some members of the public have suspected that the flight operation was related to the covert monitoring conducted by the Hong Kong Police Force on the activities of the aforesaid people. In response to the relevant media enquiries, GFS indicated that it would not make public the details of the operation. However, in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on 6 November last year, the Government had provided, upon request, information about the flight operations conducted by GFS. In this connection, will the Government, according to the precedent, provide this Council with the following information about the aforesaid flight operation:

- (i) the government department(s) that requested for the deployment of the aircraft,
- (ii) the date and time when GFS received the request,
- (iii) whether the operation was of a routine or an emergency nature,
- (iv) the number of members on board, the government department(s) and rank(s) to which they belonged, as well as the duties assigned to them,
- (v) the nature of the duties (e.g. search, rescue and tracking) performed by the members on board in the air above Po Toi O, as well as the details, and
- (vi) the nature of the duties (e.g. search, rescue and tracking) performed by the members on board in the air above the south-easterly waters after they had left the air above Po Toi O, as well as the details;

if it cannot provide such information, of the reasons for that?

Question 22
(For written reply)

Extending the jury system to the District Court

Hon Dennis KWOK to ask:

The issue of whether the jury system should be extended to the District Court has been discussed repeatedly over the years. In June 2015, the Department of Justice provided, at the request of the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services of this Council, information on the estimated overall resource implications if jury trials were to be introduced in the District Court. Such resource implications included the construction of a new purpose-built court building with suitable and adequate facilities in support of jury trials at the District Court level. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following figures, in each of the past two years and in this year (up to 30 September), in respect of trials of indictable offences heard in the (i) Magistrates' Courts, (ii) District Court and (iii) Court of First Instance, as well as the respective total numbers of criminal trials:

Court level	Number of trials of indictable offences						Total number of criminal trials		
	Conducted in English			Conducted in Chinese					
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
(i)									
(ii)									
(iii)									

- (2) whether it knows the respective current numbers of persons on the list of jurors who speak (i) Chinese only, (ii) English only, and (iii) both Chinese and English;
- (3) whether the authorities plan to extend the jury system to the District Court; if so, of the work plan; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) of the estimated additional number of jurors needed for extending the jury system to the District Court; and
- (5) as the Judiciary has accepted using a portion of the Caroline Hill Road site for the development of a new District Court Complex, whether the authorities have planned for facilities required for enabling jury trials therein; if not, of the reasons for that?