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From : Clerk to the Legislative Council

To : All Members of the Legislative Council

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**Council meeting of 18 August 2021**

**Questions approved by the President**

I attach for Members' information the questions approved by the President to be asked at the above meeting.

(Lolita SHEK)  
for Clerk to the Legislative Council

Encl.

## 22 questions to be asked at the Council meeting of 18 August 2021

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Question 1  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Young people's minds being poisoned by terrorist ideologies

Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan to ask:

Last month, a university student union issued a statement expressing “gratitude” for and “paying tribute” to a suspect who had killed himself after attacking a police officer, and a young man was arrested for suspected hurling of flammable objects at the Government House. Moreover, the Police cracked a terrorist ring, seizing raw materials for explosives and plots for attacks as well as arresting a number of secondary school students. Some members of the public pointed out that the aforesaid incidents reflected that some young people's minds have been poisoned by terrorist ideologies. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has studied the means and tactics currently used by terrorists for infiltrating terrorist ideologies into schools and recruiting students to carry out terrorist activities, as well as the severity of such situation; if so, of the details;
- (2) of the new measures put in place by the Education Bureau and the Security Bureau to curb the infiltration of terrorist ideologies into schools, lest students' minds be poisoned; and
- (3) in respect of terrorists disseminating through the Internet unwholesome messages, such as those that glorify terrorism, in an attempt to recruit young people to carry out terrorist activities, of the new corresponding measures put in place by the Government?

Question 2  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Coping with natural disasters

Hon Tony TSE to ask:

From the 20th to the 21st of last month, Henan Province was hit by record-breaking severe rainstorms, which caused serious flooding. Some underground railway conduits and road tunnels in Zhengzhou City, the provincial capital, were inundated, resulting in a number of casualties and serious economic loss. Some members of the public are worried that natural disasters of similar magnitude caused by extreme weather may occur in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the early alert, contingency and rescue measures in place in Hong Kong for coping with various types of natural disasters (e.g. flooding caused by severe rainstorms);
- (2) of the requirements and guidelines formulated by the Government on the flood prevention measures for and the flood discharge capacity of underground facilities (including railways, road tunnels, pedestrian subways, basement shopping arcades and car parks), as well as those on the criteria for suspension of operation and the evacuation arrangements of such facilities during flooding; and
- (3) whether the Government will, in collaboration with the relevant organizations, review and improve the measures, requirements and guidelines mentioned in (1) and (2), with a view to reducing the casualties and economic loss caused by natural disasters?

Question 3  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Assessment and forecast of and coping with extreme weather

Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan to ask:

It has been reported that Zhengzhou City of Henan Province was hit by once-in-a-millennium rainstorms last month, resulting in the roads and underground railway conduits at a number of places being inundated and inflicting heavy casualties; and a number of European countries have also been devastated recently by floods of the century, which caused heavy casualties and economic losses. Regarding the Government's work on assessment and forecast of, and coping with, extreme weather, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the rainfall and frequency of rainstorms in Hong Kong in the past five years have shown an upward trend; if so, of the details;
- (2) whether the Hong Kong Observatory ("HKO") has plans to enhance its capability of forecasting extreme weather (especially severe rainstorms) so that HKO can issue alerts to members of the public as early as possible, and whether the relevant government departments will strengthen the liaison among themselves in order to make good preparations for coping with the disasters caused by extreme weather; whether it has assessed the trend of extreme weather occurring locally in future and the risks of underground facilities and coastal buildings being inundated; and
- (3) given that HKO will issue the Black Rainstorm Signal when it has recorded or expects very heavy rain with rainfall of or exceeding 70 millimetres in an hour, but the rainfall of the rainstorms hitting Zhengzhou City exceeded 200 millimetres in an hour, whether the existing public facilities in Hong Kong such as the public stormwater drainage systems can cope with rainstorms of the latter's magnitude; whether the Government will allocate additional resources to enhance the flood prevention capacity of public facilities and expedite the elimination of the existing four flooding blackspots in the territory?

Question 4  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Air-conditioning system of Tai Wai Market

Hon YUNG Hoi-yan to ask:

Tai Wai Market reopened in October last year upon completion of the works for retrofitting an air-conditioning system. However, quite a number of the tenants of the market have relayed that there has been no improvement in respect of air stuffiness in the market. They have pointed out that the cooling capacity of the air-conditioning system is insufficient and the system breaks down from time to time. In addition, the air curtains at the entrances/exits of the market are often turned off, resulting in cool air flowing away. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number and main causes of the breakdowns of the air-conditioning system of Tai Wai Market since its commissioning, and whether any design problem of the system was involved in such causes; the measures in place to reduce the frequency of the system breaking down;
- (2) of the details of the follow-up actions taken in respect of the insufficient cooling capacity of the air-conditioning system, including the government departments and manpower involved, as well as the progress made so far; and
- (3) whether measures are in place to improve the functions and reliability of the air-conditioning system; if so, of the details, including the estimated expenditure and implementation timetable; whether it will adopt some tenants' suggestion of retrofitting automatic sliding glass doors at the entrances/exits of the market, with a view to reducing the flowing away of cool air?

Question 5  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Curbing young people's participation in gambling

Hon CHAN Hak-kan to ask:

As revealed by the findings of a survey, nearly 20% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in football betting and, among them, nearly 20% had not reached the legal gambling age (i.e. 18 years of age). On curbing young people's participation in gambling, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of law enforcement operations mounted by the Police for combating illegal gambling in each of the past three years; the total amount of cash seized, as well as the number of persons arrested (with a breakdown by whether they were bettors or bookmakers, and whether or not they had come of age), in such operations;
- (2) as there are comments that many young people are currently addicted to gambling and the main cause thereof is that the Hong Kong Jockey Club offers betting activities with a wide variety of bet types, whether the Government will study solutions to young people's addiction to gambling, such as reducing bet types and raising the legal gambling age to 21; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) given that the Government established the Ping Wo Fund in 2003 to finance non-governmental organizations in taking measures to prevent and mitigate gambling-related problems, of the expenditure of the Fund, the number of requests for assistance received (with a breakdown by whether or not the assistance seekers had come of age), as well as the number of assistance seekers who had successfully quit gambling but soon relapsed, in each of the past three years?

Question 6  
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Land resources of public markets

Hon CHAN Han-pan to ask:

It has been reported that the spaces of disused staff quarters in certain public markets (e.g. the quarters with an area of over 4 600 square feet in Tsuen Wan Market) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (“FEHD”) have been left vacant or converted into storage for many years. Moreover, the spaces in Tsuen King Circuit Market, which was closed in March 2018, have henceforth been used as storage or left vacant. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of disused quarters located in the markets under FEHD, and set out by name of market the relevant information, including their addresses, floor areas, for how long they had been disused and current uses;
- (2) when the Government will decide on the long-term use of the space of the disused quarters in Tsuen Wan Market and that of the closed Tsuen King Circuit Market; and
- (3) whether it conducted in the past three years, and will conduct in the coming three years, tender exercises to let out the spaces of disused quarters inside markets and the closed markets to non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) at a nominal rent for use as offices or activity venues; if it did or will conduct tender exercises, of the details (including whether selective tender or open tender was or will be adopted, as well as the reasons for that and the timetable); if not, whether it will allocate such land resources to interested NGOs (e.g. grassroots associations) in order to make good use of such land resources; if so, of the relevant application procedure as well as the terms and conditions; if not, the reasons for that?



Question 7  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Support for athletes

Hon Kenneth LAU to ask:

Regarding the support for athletes, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) given that due to expiry of the contract with his sponsor, an athlete representing Hong Kong wore a jersey not printed with the regional flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“regional flag”) to compete in his first match in the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games (“TOG”), and that some other athletes were found to be wearing jerseys printed with a wrong version of the regional flag, whether the Government will (i) request the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (“SF&OC”) to coordinate matters on the sponsorship of the competition sportswear for athletes representing Hong Kong as well as the printing of the regional flag on such sportswear, and (ii) review if the current support for athletes during their participation in competitions is adequate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it will allocate additional funding to increase the direct financial support for serving (particularly full-time) athletes, so that they can focus on training and competitions without worrying about their future;
- (3) whether it has reviewed if the existing measures in support of the dual career development of athletes are adequate, and assessed the effectiveness of the measures;
- (4) of the respective numbers of applications received, approved, rejected and being processed by the Government under the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme in each of the past three years and since January this year; if there were rejected applications, of the reasons for that; whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the Programme;
- (5) whether it has reviewed if the current career support for retired athletes is adequate, and of the new measures in place to assist retired athletes in taking up employment; and

- (6) given that the Hong Kong Sports Institute and SF&OC set up an Elite Training Science & Technology Support Centre in Tokyo during TOG to provide support services such as strength and conditioning as well as sports nutrition for Hong Kong athletes participating in the competitions, whether the Government will allocate additional resources to facilitate these organizations in setting up such centres during other international competitions, thereby helping athletes deliver their best performance; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 8  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Support for elderly persons with swallowing difficulties

Hon KWOK Wai-keung to ask:

It is learnt that the number of elderly persons (i.e. persons aged 65 or above) in Hong Kong with swallowing difficulties has risen continuously in recent years due to an ageing population and, consequently, the demand for meal service suitable for them (including soft meals) has surged. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the number of elderly persons in each of the past five years who were assessed as having swallowing difficulties, and the current number of elderly persons with swallowing difficulties;
- (2) given that the Government allocated a funding of \$75 million in the last financial year to provide subsidized residential care homes (“RCHs”) for the elderly and community care service units for the elderly with resources to provide soft meals to elderly persons with swallowing difficulties, of the following details of such measure: (i) the effectiveness, (ii) the number of elderly beneficiaries, (iii) the number of soft meals distributed, and (iv) the average cost of each set of soft meals and the amount of subsidy therefor; whether it has plans to extend the coverage of the measure to include those RCHs for the elderly participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme and RCHs for persons with disabilities; if so, of the details;
- (3) whether it knows the number of elderly persons ageing in place in each of the past three years who needed to have soft meals, with a breakdown by the type of community care services for the elderly which they received;
- (4) as it is learnt that currently the major difficulty in promoting soft meals lies in the high costs of such meals, which are hardly affordable for many elderly persons, whether the Government will consider strengthening the support for the research and development of soft meals through the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care, with a view to reducing the production cost of soft meals; and
- (5) whether the Government will, in the long run, provide new services for elderly persons with swallowing difficulties, and of the new measures in place to encourage them to accept soft meals?

Question 9  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

“Relaunch Hong Kong” publicity campaign

Hon Mrs Regina IP to ask:

The Government announced on 29 June 2020 that it had awarded a one-year public relations contract valued at US\$6,289,215 to Consulum FZ LLC (“Consulum”), a global strategy and communications consultancy firm, for providing services under the theme of “Relaunch Hong Kong”. According to the contract, Consulum was required to develop for the theme (i) a communications strategy as well as (ii) a marketing and advertising plan to highlight Hong Kong’s economic recovery and help rebuild confidence in Hong Kong as a place to invest, do business, work and live. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the details of the communications strategy as well as the marketing and advertising plan developed by Consulum, and the implementation progress of that plan;
- (2) whether it has formulated performance indicators for the various tasks under the theme; if so, of the details and whether such indicators have been met; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) of a breakdown of the estimated expenditure on the various tasks under the theme; and
- (4) given that the aforesaid contract expired in June this year, whether the Government has plans to award new contracts for the follow-up plans for the theme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 10  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Inadequate housing

Hon Vincent CHENG to ask:

Under the Bedspace Apartments Ordinance (Cap. 447), a bedspace apartment (commonly known as a “caged home”) means (i) any flat, or (ii) where the partitioning wall or walls between two or more adjoining flats in a building has or have been demolished, such two or more adjoining flats, in which there are 12 or more bedspaces used or intended to be used as sleeping accommodation under rental agreements. Any person who has not been issued with a certificate of exemption or a valid licence by the Bedspace Apartments Authority (i.e. the Secretary for Home Affairs) shall not operate, keep, manage or otherwise control a bedspace apartment. However, a grass-roots concern group has pointed out that as many as 5 000 people are estimated to be living in illegally operated bedspace apartments at present. On the other hand, the Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council said last month that it is hoped that by the time the country’s second centenary goal is achieved, Hong Kong has bid farewell to subdivided units (“SDUs”) and caged homes. Regarding inadequate housing, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number of bedspace apartments in Hong Kong and the number of bedspaces provided in such apartments, with a breakdown by (i) the legality of the bedspace apartments and (ii) District Council (“DC”) district;
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective current numbers of cubicle apartments and SDUs in Hong Kong, with a breakdown by DC district; and
- (3) of the latest definition adopted for “SDU”?

Question 11  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Development of Hong Kong into a smart city

Hon YIU Si-wing to ask:

The Government launched a three-year Multi-functional Smart Lampposts Pilot Scheme (“Pilot Scheme”) in 2019 to promote the development of Hong Kong into a smart city and support the construction of the fifth generation wireless network. Under the Pilot Scheme, the Government will install in phases some 400 smart lampposts in four districts across the territory with higher pedestrian and traffic flows. Regarding the development of Hong Kong into a smart city, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the latest progress and achievements of the Pilot Scheme, as well as the up-to-date total expenditure and the current balance of the funding concerned;
- (2) whether it will expand the Pilot Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it will continue to update the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong, and launch more facilitation measures to enable members of the public to better feel the benefits brought to their daily lives by Hong Kong being a smart city as well as innovation and technology; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 12  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme

Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan to ask:

The Government has, since the 2014-2015 academic year, implemented the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (“MUSSS”) to provide subsidies for Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate studies on the Mainland, thereby ensuring that none of them will be deprived of post-secondary education opportunity because of a lack of means. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on MUSSS for the 2020-2021 academic year: (i) the number of applicants, (ii) the respective numbers of students who passed the means test and were granted a subsidy (“means-tested subsidy”) and those who were granted a non-means-tested subsidy, with a breakdown by the Mainland institutions in which the applicants studied, (iii) the amount of subsidies disbursed, and (iv) the respective numbers of students who were granted half-rate and full-rate means-tested subsidies;
- (2) of the respective numbers of students admitted to Mainland institutions through (i) the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions (“the Admission Scheme”) and (ii) the School Principal Nomination Scheme (“SPNS”) under the Admission Scheme who were granted subsidies in each academic year since the launch of MUSSS;
- (3) of the staffing establishment of the government officers responsible for implementing MUSSS, the average time taken for vetting and approving each application, and the month in which the subsidies are disbursed in general;
- (4) as I have learnt that MUSSS has been scheduled not to be open for applications for the 2021-2022 academic year until mid-August this year, which is a delay of more than two months when compared with the previous two years, of the reasons for that; and
- (5) given that classes of Mainland institutions generally commence in early September, whether the Government will expeditiously vet and approve applications for MUSSS, with a view to disbursing the subsidies in time before the students depart for the Mainland to pursue their studies; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 13  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Development of “Smart Government”

Hon Wilson OR to ask:

In the Hong Kong Smart City Blueprint 2.0 (“Blueprint 2.0”) released in December last year, the Government put forth 130 initiatives to further enhance and expand existing city management work and services. On promoting the development of “Smart Government”, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on the “iAM Smart” platform launched by the Government in December 2020: (i) the current numbers of persons who have registered respectively as “iAM Smart” and “iAM Smart+” users, with a breakdown by age group (each group covering 10 years of age), and (ii) the up-to-date number of person-times using government services through that platform and the percentage of such number in the total number of user-times of government services in the same period, with a breakdown by government department; if the relevant statistics are unavailable, of the reasons for that;
- (2) as the Blueprint 2.0 has put forth the use of a new big data analytics platform to enable government departments to transmit and share real-time data among themselves as well as the adoption of public cloud services to enable government departments to deliver efficient and agile e-services, of the details of the relevant plans; and
- (3) as some members of the public have criticized that some government departments’ current practice of still receiving and sending documents mainly by fax is outdated and error-prone, and fax images have low resolutions, whether the Government will require the relevant departments to gradually switch to receiving and sending documents by paperless means such as email, with a view to enhancing the work efficiency of government departments and dovetailing with the objective of promoting the development of Smart Government?



Question 14  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Persons exempted from compulsory quarantine

Hon CHAN Chun-ying to ask:

To prevent the importation of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”), the Government has been implementing stringent inbound prevention and control measures, including requiring inbound travellers to undergo virus testing upon arrival in Hong Kong, undergo compulsory quarantine at designated places, and undergo repeated virus testing during the quarantine period. Under the law, the Chief Secretary for Administration may exempt certain categories of persons from the compulsory quarantine, and may impose conditions for the exemption, including imposing restrictions on activity areas. It has been reported that earlier on, three children of a staff member of a foreign consulate in Hong Kong were exempted from compulsory quarantine upon arrival in Hong Kong, and were subsequently confirmed to have contracted COVID-19. The authorities learnt, after investigation, that they had gone out and visited a number of places during the self-isolation period, thereby breaching the exemption conditions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total number of persons exempted from compulsory quarantine since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic and, among them, the number of those who were confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 during the self-isolation period;
- (2) whether it has studied how many overseas countries/regions currently exempt personnel of foreign embassies/consulates and their immediate family members from closed-loop compulsory quarantine; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will conduct such a study; and
- (3) how the Government currently monitors the compliance with the exemption conditions by persons exempted from compulsory quarantine, and what follow-up actions it has taken against those who breached the exemption conditions, including whether it has instituted prosecutions (if so, of the details and the number of prosecutions)?

Question 15  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Recruitment arrangements for short-term jobs for the tourism industry

Hon Paul TSE to ask:

At the end of March, the Government announced that it had accepted a proposal from members of the tourism industry and would spend \$150 million for creating some 2 000 short-term jobs for hiring practitioners of the tourism industry, who would carry out administrative support work at 24 community vaccination centres for a period of five months starting from 1 May. The Government entrusted a new company, set up by the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (“TIC”) and a number of other organizations of the industry, to undertake the recruitment work concerned. Some persons who are familiar with the operation of TIC and the tourism industry have pointed out that the company, despite having been allocated \$2 million as administrative fee by the Government, has inappropriately collected a fee from the wage of each recruited person. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) under the circumstances that TIC has not only kept comprehensive information on the Outbound Tour Escort Directory and the Tourist Guide Directory, but also possessed the relevant recruitment and administrative experience and that TIC’s normal workload has substantially reduced and its outbound levy income has dropped drastically amid the epidemic, why the Government did not entrust TIC to undertake the aforesaid recruitment work so as to alleviate TIC’s financial difficulties and make good use of its idle manpower;
- (2) why the Government directly entrusted the company with the recruitment work without conducting an open tender exercise;
- (3) as it is learnt that the persons-in-charge of the company include senior personnel of TIC as well as owners of travel agents and their relatives, whether the Government had considered the issues of conflict of interest before it entrusted the company with the recruitment work; of the measures put in place to prevent the persons-in-charge of the company from reaping profits through jobbery; and
- (4) whether it has given the company permission to collect a fee from the wage of each recruited person; if so, of the reasons for that, and the amount that the company has been permitted to collect; if not, whether it will conduct follow-up investigation, including referring the case to law enforcement agencies for investigation?

Question 16  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

The public's Putonghua standard

Hon Starry LEE to ask:

There are views that proficiency in Putonghua helps young people integrate into the overall development of our country and seize the opportunities arising from the development of our country and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. In order to upgrade young people's Putonghua standard, there is a need for the Government to emphasize the importance of Putonghua at schools, as well as enhance the standard of Putonghua teaching and the atmosphere for learning Putonghua, so as to encourage more young people to learn Putonghua and upgrade their Putonghua standard. On upgrading the public's Putonghua standard, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) given that persons aspiring to be teachers of Putonghua are required to participate in the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers held by the authorities and attain a result of Level 3 or above in all papers of the assessment in order to meet the language proficiency requirement for teaching Putonghua, whether the Education Bureau will consider adding the following requirement: attaining a result of Grade 1 Level B or above in the Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi conducted by the State Language Work Committee; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) given that there were only 16.4% and 2.5% of primary and secondary schools respectively which fully used Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject in the 2015-2016 school year, whether the Government will encourage schools to use Putonghua to teach other subjects and provide more occasions for using Putonghua on campus, so that students can have more opportunities to use Putonghua and master a wider Putonghua vocabulary; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it will include Putonghua proficiency tests in civil service recruitment examinations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 17  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Double taxation relief for income  
from international operation of ships

Hon Frankie YICK to ask:

The authorities of the United States (“US”) announced in October last year that starting from 1 January 2021, they would terminate the Agreement Constituted by Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Hong Kong for Double Taxation Relief in respect of Income from International Operation of Ships (“the Agreement”) (Schedule to Cap. 112J) signed with Hong Kong. Following the termination of the Agreement, both the Governments of US and Hong Kong have ceased to grant tax exemption to the income derived from international operation of ships by shipping companies of the other side. Members of the shipping industry are concerned about the impacts of the termination of the Agreement on Hong Kong’s shipping industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows how the respective business performance (including that in terms of freight volume and total value of goods) of Hong Kong and US shipping companies after the termination of the Agreement compares with their performance before the termination of the Agreement;
- (2) given that the income derived by Hong Kong shipping companies from international operation of ships is no longer granted tax exemption by the US Government, whether the Government knows the consequential increase in the operating costs of such companies;
- (3) whether it knows among the Hong Kong and overseas shipping companies operating in Hong Kong immediately before the termination of the Agreement, the respective numbers and percentages of those which have now ceased or are planning to cease operation in Hong Kong;
- (4) whether it has assessed the impacts of the termination of the Agreement on Hong Kong’s shipping industry; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; whether it will explore with members of the shipping industry measures for mitigating such impacts; and

- (5) whether it will strive to sign with more economies (particularly the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which have achieved rapid economic development in recent years) agreements on double taxation relief that will benefit the shipping industry, so as to enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong's shipping industry; if so, of the relevant timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 18  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Bus services for commuting between  
Yuen Long and North Lantau

Hon Holden CHOW to ask:

Since 20 June this year, a number of franchised bus routes plying between Yuen Long (including Tin Shui Wai) and North Lantau (including the airport) have been diverted. They no longer pass through Tai Lam Tunnel (“TLT”) and instead run on Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel. Quite a number of residents in Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai who work at the airport have relayed that during peak hours, buses of such routes frequently encounter serious traffic congestion when they pass through Tuen Mun (particularly along the section of Tuen Mun Road (“TMR”) near Hung Kiu and that where TMR turns into Wong Chu Road), resulting in a longer rather than shorter journey time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the plans in place to improve the situation of serious traffic congestion occurring frequently on the aforesaid road sections during peak hours; and
- (2) whether it will, on the premise of not reducing the existing franchised bus services commuting between Yuen Long and North Lantau, consider increasing special departures during peak hours for bus routes passing through TLT?

Question 19  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Arts and Sport Development Fund

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok to ask:

Regarding the Arts and Sport Development Fund (“ASDF”), will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total amount of funding allocated in each of the past three financial years by the Home Affairs Bureau under the sports portion of ASDF to various national sports associations for supporting athletes’ preparation for and participation in major international multi-sport games, National Games, as well as competitions of various sports at World and Asian levels; and
- (2) whether it will inject funds into ASDF to strengthen the support provided for athletes participating in the aforesaid sport games and competitions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 20  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Recovery of legal costs by the Legal Aid Department

Hon Elizabeth QUAT to ask:

At present, a legal aid recipient is required to contribute towards the legal costs incurred for his/her case on the basis of his/her financial resources, i.e. to pay a contribution to the Legal Aid Department (“LAD”); LAD may also recover from the opponent the legal costs incurred (collectively referred to as “the arrears of legal costs”). It is learnt that in recent years, cases of LAD failing to recover such arrears have been on the rise, with millions of dollars involved annually. On the other hand, the Audit Commission (“Audit”) conducted in 2005 an audit on the recovery of legal costs by LAD, and pointed out that as LAD had allowed legal aid applicants to decide on their own whether to give consent to Audit’s access to their files, Audit had been unable to examine hundreds of selected files. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the details of the existing procedure for LAD to recover arrears of legal costs;
- (2) among the legal aid recipients in each of the past five years, of the number and percentage of those who indicated consent to Audit’s access to their files;
- (3) of (i) the number of cases in which LAD wrote off the arrears of legal costs and the total amount of money involved, and (ii) the respective numbers of such cases with and without sufficient and clear reasons for write-off, in each of the past five years (set out in a table);
- (4) of the number of occasions in each of the past five years on which LAD took actions or initiated court proceedings due to the opponents’ failure to pay periodic payments, judgment debts or legal costs, as well as the number of cases involved and the percentage of such cases in the total number of relevant cases;
- (5) given that LAD had, due to human negligence, overpaid a legal aid recipient by \$418,000 of the damages from the opponent without first deducting the contribution payable and henceforth failed to recover that amount, and LAD eventually wrote off over \$663,000 in 2017, of the improvement measures taken by LAD in the light of this case and the effectiveness of such measures; and
- (6) in respect of those opponents failing to pay arrears of legal costs, whether LAD will consider not granting them legal aid within a certain period of time; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?



Question 21  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Legal aid

Hon LUK Chung-hung to ask:

From June 2019 to February this year, the Director of Legal Aid (“the Director”) received 1 059 legal aid applications submitted in respect of criminal cases relating to incidents of opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, and granted legal aid to 82% of such applications. Besides, a woman who had been injured in her right eye at the scene of a demonstration for opposition to the proposed legislative amendments was granted legal aid for filing an application for judicial review (“JR”) in respect of the Police’s refusal to produce to her a search warrant for obtaining her medical records, but her application was dismissed by the Court of First Instance in December 2019. In January of the following year, she applied for legal aid for lodging an appeal against such judgement, but her application was refused by the Director. After appealing to the Registrar of the High Court (“the Registrar”) against the Director’s decision, she was granted legal aid. The woman reportedly left Hong Kong in September last year, and the Court of Appeal heard in February this year her appeal on the JR application. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total amount of legal aid expenditure incurred so far on the legal aid cases relating to incidents of opposition to the proposed legislative amendments, and the highest amount of legal aid expenditure involved for such cases;
- (2) whether it will consider amending the Legal Aid Ordinance (Cap. 91) to stipulate that where a person who had been granted legal aid has emigrated overseas or left Hong Kong for a certain period before the commencement of the hearing of the case concerned, the Director may revoke the relevant legal aid certificate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) given that the Registrar’s decision on an appeal lodged against an order or decision made by the Director shall be final, whether the Government knows if the Judiciary has stipulated the factors that the Registrar must consider when making such decision; if the Judiciary has, of the details; if not, whether the Judiciary will expeditiously make such stipulation?

Question 22  
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Renewal of identification documents of  
Hong Kong people stranded on the Mainland

Hon Mrs Regina IP to ask:

An organization supporting cross-boundary families has relayed to me that due to the epidemic, there are at present quite a number of Hong Kong people residing on the Mainland who cannot return to Hong Kong to have their Re-entry Permits and Documents of Identity for Visa Purposes (“Hong Kong identification documents”) renewed before such documents expired. As a result, they cannot have their Hong Kong and Macao Residents Entry and Exit Permits (commonly known as “Home Return Permits”) renewed on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the current number of Hong Kong people who are stranded on the Mainland due to the epidemic and holding Hong Kong identification documents which have expired; and
- (2) whether it has discussed with the Mainland authorities the formulation of special measures to assist such Hong Kong people, e.g. regarding the Hong Kong identification documents they are holding as valid supporting documents when vetting and approving their applications for renewal of Home Return Permits; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?