

## **OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Thursday, 14 December 2023**

**The Council continued to meet at Nine o'clock**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

THE PRESIDENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE PAUL TSE WAI-CHUN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL TIEN PUK-SUN, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN HO CHUN-YIN, B.B.S., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE MA FUNG-KWOK, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HAN-PAN, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KWOK WAI-KEUNG, J.P.

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

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

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE HOLDEN CHOW HO-DING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE SHIU KA-FAI, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE YUNG HOI-YAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN CHUN-YING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LUK CHUNG-HUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU KWOK-FAN, M.H., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG WING-SHUN, M.H., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE DOREEN KONG YUK-FOON

THE HONOURABLE CHU KWOK-KEUNG

THE HONOURABLE STANLEY LI SAI-WING, M.H., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE HOEY SIMON LEE, M.H., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ROBERT LEE WAI-WANG

THE HONOURABLE DOMINIC LEE TSZ-KING

IR THE HONOURABLE LEE CHUN-KEUNG, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE TIK CHI-YUEN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STANLEY NG CHAU-PEI, S.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE JOHNNY NG KIT-CHONG, M.H., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAU SIU-CHUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE CHOW MAN-KONG

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LAM TZIT-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE LAM CHUN-SING

THE HONOURABLE LAM SO-WAI

THE HONOURABLE NIXIE LAM LAM

DR THE HONOURABLE DENNIS LAM SHUN-CHIU, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAM SAN-KEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LAM SIU-LO, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DUNCAN CHIU

THE HONOURABLE YIU PAK-LEUNG, M.H., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE WENDY HONG WEN

THE HONOURABLE DENNIS LEUNG TSZ-WING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG MAN-KWONG, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD LEUNG HEI

THE HONOURABLE KENNETH LEUNG YUK-WAI, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUET-MING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE ROCK CHEN CHUNG-NIN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN PUI-LEUNG

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUNG, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE SUNNY TAN

THE HONOURABLE JUDY CHAN KAPUI, M.H., J.P.

IR THE HONOURABLE CHAN SIU-HUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HOI-YAN

THE HONOURABLE JOEPHY CHAN WING-YAN

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HOK-FUNG, M.H., J.P.

IR THE HONOURABLE GARY ZHANG XINYU

THE HONOURABLE LILLIAN KWOK LING-LAI

THE HONOURABLE BENSON LUK HON-MAN

DR THE HONOURABLE KENNEDY WONG YING-HO, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EDMUND WONG CHUN-SEK

THE HONOURABLE KINGSLEY WONG KWOK, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE YANG WING-KIT

REVD CANON THE HONOURABLE PETER DOUGLAS KOON HO-MING,  
B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TANG FEI, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE TANG KA-PIU, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAI TUNG-KWOK, G.B.S., I.D.S.M., J.P.

PROF THE HONOURABLE LAU CHI-PANG, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KENNETH FOK KAI-KONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LOUIS LOONG HON-BIU

DR THE HONOURABLE NGAN MAN-YU

THE HONOURABLE CARMEN KAN WAI-MUN

DR THE HONOURABLE TAN YUEHENG, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE SO CHEUNG-WING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE YIM KONG

THE HONOURABLE ADRIAN PEDRO HO KING-HONG

THE HONOURABLE SHANG HAILONG

PROF THE HONOURABLE CHAN WING-KWONG

PROF THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM WONG KAM-FAI, M.H.

**MEMBER ABSENT:**

THE HONOURABLE MAGGIE CHAN MAN-KI, M.H., J.P.

**PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:**

THE HONOURABLE LAM SAI-HUNG, G.B.S., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

THE HONOURABLE CHRIS SUN YUK-HAN, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

MR HO KAI-MING, J.P.  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

MR LIU CHUN-SAN, J.P.  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

DR LIBBY LEE HA-YUN, J.P.  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH

**CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:**

MS ANITA SIT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MS AMY YU, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MS MIRANDA HON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MR MATTHEW LOO, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

## GOVERNMENT BILLS

### Second Reading of Government Bills

#### Resumption of Second Reading Debate on Government Bill

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): This Council continues with the Second Reading debate on the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

Ir CHAN Siu-hung, please speak.

### TAXI-DRIVER-OFFENCE POINTS BILL

#### Resumption of debate on Second Reading which was moved on 12 July 2023

**IR CHAN SIU-HUNG** (in Cantonese): President, the policy intent of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”) aligns with that of the Road Traffic Legislation (Enhancing Personalized Point-to-point Transport Services) (Amendment) Bill 2023, which has been scrutinized earlier. Both of them aim to improve taxi services and further combat the malpractices of taxi drivers, especially a handful of black sheep in the trade, with a view to responding to the community’s strong aspiration for better taxi service quality and, in the long run, enhancing the overall image of the taxi industry. I am in support of them.

In recent years, the quality of taxi services has been deteriorating, with the prevalence of unscrupulous taxi drivers, commonly referred to as “black taxis”. There are frequent news reports about drivers refusing to accept a hire, overcharging and ripping off tourists, which often cause public outcry. Previously, YouTubers have uploaded real-life video clips of taxi drivers ripping off passengers to social media platforms from time to time. For example, earlier a tourist hailed a taxi in the street and the driver demanded \$200 for a ride from Central to Causeway Bay. This video clip went viral in the Mainland and around the world. “Black taxis” have become an antithesis of “the good stories of Hong Kong”, which is something our society does not wish to see. There is thus an urgent need to introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points (“TDOP”) System as a swift and vigorous means to further combat “black taxis”.

According to data from the annual reports of the Transport Complaints Unit under the Transport Advisory Committee, the number of complaints relating to taxi services remained at a high level of over 10 000 between 2014 and 2019. Despite a drop in taxi patronage over the past three years due to the pandemic, there were still around 5 000 to 8 000 complaints each year. I have studied the latest statistics for 2021 and 2022, and the majority of the some 8 000 complaints received were related to taxi driver malpractice. The complaints were mainly about refusing hire, improper driving behaviour and failure to take the most direct route. Among these cases, there was a 21% increase in the number of complaints about overcharging, which constitutes an offence under the TDOP System.

Taking an overall view of the complaints received by the Transport Department (“TD”) and the Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”), we can observe an upward trend in some malpractices including overcharging, refusing to accept a hire and driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, commonly known as “taking unnecessary detours”. Let us use the example of taking unnecessary detours, which has been repeatedly discussed during the deliberation of the Bill. TD and HKPF receive a combined total of nearly 2 000 complaints about this offence each year. Although it is already one of the 24 existing taxi-driver-related offences, considering the seriousness of repeated offences and the community’s strong aspiration for heavier penalties, the TDOP System has been introduced to strengthen the deterrent effect against malpractices of taxi drivers and enhance service quality.

President, to my understanding, there are views that the introduction of the TDOP System would result in double penalties because at present, there are already 24 taxi-driver-related offences under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation, with 11 of them being covered by the TDOP System. Therefore, the implementation of the new TDOP System would lead to double penalties. In my view, the TDOP System is designed to specifically target those taxi drivers who repeatedly commit malpractices. The purpose of including 11 more serious malpractices in the TDOP System is to impose severe penalties on a handful of black sheep in the trade, thereby serving as a deterrence. The law-abiding majority would not be affected by the TDOP System, and there is no question of double penalties. I hope that after the passage of the Bill, the Government will enhance communication and promotion with the industry, understand their concerns and convey clear information to enable the industry and the public to distinguish between the TDOP System and the existing offences.

This will clarify the original intent of the TDOP System and allay the concerns of the industry.

According to the design of the TDOP System, penalties are triggered when a taxi driver commits relevant offences. These offences will be divided into three layers based on their seriousness. More serious offences, such as overcharging, refusing to accept a hire and defacing a taximeter, will be assigned 10 points. Moderately serious offences, like soliciting and permitting any person other than the hirer to enter the taxi without the consent of the hirer, will be assigned five points. Less serious offences, such as refusing or neglecting to issue a receipt, will be assigned three points. A driver who incurs 8 or more, but less than 15 points within a two-year period will receive an advice of TDOP, which is intended as a warning to offenders. Any taxi driver who incurs 10 or more points is required to attend and complete a taxi service improvement course (“TSIC”), which presents an opportunity for rehabilitation. Upon completion of TSIC, three points will be deducted from the total number of points previously incurred by the driver, thus encouraging active participation in TSICs and in turn enhancing the overall quality of taxi services. Once a driver incurs 15 or more points, the driver will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time. This serves as a severe punishment for repeat offenders.

I agree with the carrot and stick concept of the TDOP System. On one hand, it imposes heavier penalties on taxi drivers who repeatedly commit malpractices, with a view to strengthening the deterrent effect. On the other hand, it introduces TSICs and encourages taxi drivers to actively participate in them, which aim to enhance education and promotion and improve drivers’ driving attitude and behaviour. Although I have reservations about whether TSICs can genuinely help improve taxi services or drivers’ driving behaviour, they do provide drivers with an opportunity for rehabilitation. It is worthwhile to carry out a pilot implementation first and then evaluate its effectiveness.

President, next, I would like to talk about law enforcement, which is an issue in the Bill that has drawn much public attention. During the deliberation of the Bill, other members and I are very concerned about practical issues and challenges in law enforcement, including the collection and presentation of evidence and the need to clarify the definitions of the offences. Our concern is to prevent wrongful allegations or accusations against drivers or passengers. The taxi industry is also deeply concerned about inadvertently breaching the law.

The Government has all along reiterated that there are safeguards in place in the provisions, i.e. reasonable excuse. Taxi drivers will be convicted only if the offence is proved beyond reasonable doubt. Mere passenger complaints will not result in incurrence of points against them. Instead, points are only incurred after the Police have conducted investigations and collected evidence and the driver has been convicted by the court. However, in cases where parties present conflicting accounts of the incident and no evidence is available, it would be difficult to establish the facts. The passenger would encounter difficulties in presenting evidence, and law enforcement agencies and the court would face difficulties in gathering evidence. It would thus be impossible to safeguard the rights and interests of the parties involved.

Many members and I have suggested that the Government make good use of technology to address enforcement issues. For example, it may follow the example of Macao and take it upon itself to install a central cloud-based camera system inside all taxi compartments. The system would upload all recordings to the central cloud, and access to relevant images and data would be processed by the Government. In case of disputes between drivers and passengers, law enforcement officers may retrieve the relevant recordings for use as evidence, thereby preventing conflicts over enforcement. This not only safeguards the rights and interests of the parties involved, but also addresses passengers' concerns and doubts about privacy issues such as the use, retrieval, storage and destruction of recorded images. In Macao, the introduction of the Legal Regime for the Transport of Passengers by Light Hire Cars, commonly known as the New Taxi Law, in 2019 and the mandatory installation of the intelligent terminal system for taxis in 2020 have been effective in combating “black taxis”, significantly enhancing taxi services.

I have reviewed the traffic data provided by the Public Security Police Force of Macao. Between 2017 and 2019, the annual number of taxi-related cases in Macao including overcharging, refusing to accept a hire and other offences ranged from some 3 000 to 6 000. Following the mandatory installation of the intelligent terminal system for taxis in 2020, the number has dropped significantly for three consecutive years to around 100 cases each year. This measure has been highly effective in combating taxi-related offences. Despite a rise in the number of cases to 478 as of October 2023 following the resumption of normal economic activities, there remains a significant difference in the numbers of cases before and after the installation of the system. In my view, the Government should consider studying

the feasibility of installing a central cloud-based camera system in all taxis in Hong Kong.

During the deliberation of the Bill, the Government has replied that the suggestion to install such systems would involve complicated issues. For instance, operators would have to pay monthly fees for data services, routine maintenance and repairs, and so on, which would incur recurrent financial expenditure on the part of the taxi trade. I suggest that the Administration explore the feasibility of the relevant suggestion with the taxi trade and various stakeholders to reach consensus and actively consider introducing relevant measures.

In my view, the marginal installation costs would decrease with mass production. I also suggest that the Government first consider establishing a central platform that is open to drivers who are willing to participate. As more drivers join the platform over time, the Government may consider at an appropriate juncture whether to make the installation mandatory for all taxis. I have also suggested to the Government that with the implementation of a taxi fleet regime, a central cloud-based camera system should first be installed in fleet taxis on a trial basis to serve as a leading example within the trade. This would help encourage the installation of the system in non-fleet taxis.

President, the two bills relating to the TDOP System and enhancing personalized point-to-point transport services share the objective of enhancing the service quality of the taxi industry. These legislative measures aim to eradicate black sheep in the trade and respond to the public's aspiration for quality taxi services while enhancing the protection for passengers, drivers and other road users. I support the Bill.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

**MR FRANKIE YICK** (in Cantonese): President, as the saying goes, “there is a black sheep in every flock.” Undoubtedly, a handful of black sheep can be found among some 40 000 active taxi drivers.

Although the Police conduct sting operations from time to time to combat unscrupulous taxi drivers, commonly referred to as “black taxis”, their effectiveness as a deterrence is undermined by the lenient sentences typically

imposed by the court. Given the low costs and high profits involved, “black taxis” continue to thrive and some drivers are still willing to put themselves at risk.

When the taxi industry worked with the Government years ago to explore means to tackle “black taxis”, the focus was only on the first four more serious offences, including refusing to accept a hire, altering a taximeter and overcharging. However, after seven to eight years, the Government came up with 18 offences. Although the number of offences has been reduced to 11 upon consideration of the feedback from the industry, the proposal has still drawn a strong backlash from drivers. Under the proposed Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”), drivers who incur 15 points within a two-year period will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time. This has frightened many drivers and led to a wave of drivers quitting at one point. The industry is concerned that the formal implementation of the TDOP System will exacerbate the problem of driver shortages and make it even more difficult to attract new blood to join the industry.

As the incurrence of points will ultimately depend on the evidence collected by the Police and the final decision of the court, law-abiding drivers should not be affected. Nevertheless, there is already legislation in place governing drivers, so the introduction of the TDOP System would constitute double penalties. The implementation of multiple regulatory regimes has indeed added to the psychological pressure on drivers. Since drivers of other commercial vehicles are not required to comply with the same stringent requirements, it is natural for taxi drivers to switch to other public transport sectors where they are placed under little pressure. Some even remark that many taxi drivers have switched to driving illegal “white licence cars”.

Besides, it is understandable that the taxi industry strongly opposes the TDOP System to be implemented by the Government. The industry has been impacted by illegal online hailing of “white licence cars” for nearly a decade. However, the Government has made perfunctory efforts to address this issue and has even been perceived as encouraging such operations, which have continuously eroded the business of the taxi industry, posing significant operational difficulties for them. Meanwhile, the Government has implemented numerous regulatory regimes on the taxi industry. At present, the industry is already facing a severe shortage of drivers. Earlier, there was a proposal to require drivers over the age of 65 to undergo annual medical examinations, leading to the wastage of a number of elderly drivers. I believe the introduction of the new TDOP System would

exacerbate the wastage of drivers and ultimately worsen the situation of “taxis lacking drivers”.

Members of the taxi industry definitely want to dissociate themselves from “black taxis”. They take the view that severe penalties should be imposed on drivers who deliberately deceive passengers through malpractices such as overcharging and altering a taximeter. Once found guilty by the court, drivers should even be permanently disqualified from driving taxis so that such bad elements would be removed from the industry.

According to past records, the court seldom imposes the maximum penalty and usually just hands down a fine of several thousand dollars, which has no deterrent effect at all. However, strangely enough, the executive authorities have never appealed to the court for heavier penalties to serve as a deterrence to others. Since the maximum penalty under the existing laws and regulations is sufficient to eradicate “black taxis”, there is really no need to introduce an additional TDOP System, which would only instil fear and anxiety into the entire taxi industry.

The Government should consider afresh the introduction of the TDOP System only if the imposition of severe penalties fails to ameliorate the problems. Though drivers will only incur points after being convicted by the court, the lack of clear explanations raises concerns among drivers that the system would be misinterpreted and abused by the public, which is understandable. Therefore, any future implementation of the TDOP System must be accompanied by the mandatory installation of video cameras and global positioning system (“GPS”) in the taxi compartments, so that the video and audio recordings can serve as corroborative evidence in dispute cases. The concerns of law-abiding drivers over the TDOP System can be allayed only if drivers’ interests are safeguarded and the risk of false accusations by passengers is minimized.

In order to prevent privacy intrusion, video cameras may be positioned in a way that avoids directly capturing passengers. Previously, I have raised relevant enquiries with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, and have been informed that despite providing rather personalized transport services, taxis are part of the public transport system. If the cameras are not focused on individuals and clear guidelines are established for the use of closed-circuit television system, including installation and management of the system, reminders to data subjects, and retention and use of personal data, the installation of camera systems inside taxis will not pose any issue or violation of the privacy law.

Therefore, it is my hope that the Government's future implementation of the TDOP System must be accompanied by the mandatory installation of video cameras and GPS, with camera data being uploaded to the cloud and managed by the Government.

The installation of video cameras inside taxi compartments is not a novel idea. As Ir CHAN Siu-hung has just remarked, the Macao Government has installed a central cloud-based camera system in all taxi compartments so that the recordings can serve as corroborative evidence in case of disputes between drivers and passengers. The Macao Government takes responsibility for managing the video recordings, and only provides them to law enforcement agencies when necessary. Today, Macao taxis have successfully regained passengers' confidence. Thus, if the installation of video cameras in taxis is implemented in Hong Kong, I think the Government should follow the example of Macao and allocate provisions for the installation of standardized video cameras in all taxis in Hong Kong, with a view to minimizing the problem of varying quality. Similarly, the Government should take responsibility for managing the video recordings to prevent drivers from uploading them to social media platforms again.

At present, taxi owners can request rentee-drivers to apply to the Police for a Certificate of Conviction for Traffic Records, so that they can take into account the driver's fine and driving-offence points records in deciding whether to rent their taxi to the driver. Therefore, the Government should consider establishing a centralized database of taxi drivers, that is a so-called blacklist, as suggested by some Members during the deliberation of the Bills Committee. This would prevent taxi owners from renting their taxis to lawbreakers and giving them chances to commit taxi-driver-related offences.

With these remarks, President, I oppose the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

**DR SO CHEUNG-WING** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. “The quality of taxi services in Hong Kong is poor” has become a common perception among service users. I believe that many members of the public and tourists have encountered instances of malpractice in the taxi trade, including drivers not taking the most direct practicable route, overcharging, refusing hires and refusing cross-harbour trips, as well as receiving unprofessional treatment such as poor attitude and reckless driving.

Taxi service remains one of the major areas of complaints received by the Transport Complaints Unit under the Transport Advisory Committee from 2018 to 2022. From 2018 to 2019, more than 10 000 complaints about taxi services were received each year. The number of complaints received only dropped during the epidemic. However, with the subsiding epidemic situation and the resumption of normal travel, nearly 7 600 complaints relating to taxis were received in 2022, accounting for almost 50% of all cases on public transport services. Between 2018 and 2022, the average number of convictions with regard to taxi-driver-related offences was around 258 per year. This reflects that there is still much room for improvement in the quality of taxi services in Hong Kong, and that there is a strong public demand for enhancing their quality.

Therefore, I support the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”). The Government seeks to enhance the deterrent effect on taxi drivers’ malpractices through a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”), so as to improve the service quality of the taxi trade. The relevant measures serve as a clear message to the community that the Government is determined to step up regulation and enhance the overall image of the taxi trade, which is undoubtedly a meaningful act that respects public interests.

Under the Bill, serious offences such as overcharging, refusing to accept a hire, refusing or neglecting to drive a taxi to the place indicated by the hirer, defacing or altering a taximeter will be assigned ten points; soliciting, driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route and permitting any person other than the hirer to enter the taxi without the consent of the hirer will be assigned five points; refusing to issue a receipt, not setting taximeter to recording position, and so on, will be assigned three points. If a person incurs 10 or more points within a two-year period, the Commissioner for Transport will require him/her to attend and complete a taxi service improvement course at the person’s own cost within a specified period of time; if the person concerned accumulates 15 offence points or more within a two-year period, he/she will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time.

A point of concern is that the TDOP System is tantamount to providing an exit mechanism in relation to taxi drivers’ driving entitlement, which helps enhance the overall deterrent effect on offending taxi drivers without affecting and harming law-abiding ones.

One of the difficulties in regulating the taxi trade in Hong Kong is that the existing 18 000 licences are permanent and freely tradable in the open market, making them a kind of private property. Consequently, the landscape of the trade is dominated by some 9 000 licence holders, and the Government has no way to introduce new conditions to the licences to step up regulation, nor can it revoke the licences from the license holders on the grounds of service quality.

In recent years, with the emergence of “white licence cars” on ride-hailing platforms such as Uber, coupled with the poor service quality and frequent occurrences of refusing hires and picking passengers during peak hours in the taxi trade, users have no alternative but to knowingly switch to “white licence cars”. This has contributed to the proliferation of illegal acts. This time around, the Government’s introduction of the TDOP System targeting offending taxi drivers and the increase in penalties for “white license cars” are believed to be conducive to enhancing the competitiveness of the taxi trade.

As for the point raised by some members of the trade that the TDOP System may lead to manpower wastage and discourage newcomers from joining, I believe that the clearer the standards and guidelines, the better it will be for the trade to attract new entrants. It will be a neglect of the safety and interests of the public if unsuitable individuals are allowed to remain as taxi drivers.

I suggest that in the course of implementing the relevant legislation, the Government should step up publicity so that passengers will be aware of their rights and the relevant penalties, especially the definition of “driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route” and the taking of evidence related to “refusing a hire”. President, this amendment exercise does hold positive significance in regulating taxi drivers’ professional conduct. However, in order to improve the landscape of the trade as a whole in the long run, I think it is necessary to clamp down on illegal “white licence cars”, putting an end to disorderly competition while at the same time, increasing the supply of similar transport modes through legitimate means to introduce lawful and reasonable competition, enacting rules that require operators to fully utilize technological means and tools for enhanced operational efficiency, and expanding channels to meet users’ service demands and foster a mutually binding commitment. Holistic policies and regulations should be put in place, so as to facilitate the goal of improving service quality and ensure the healthy and sustainable development of the trade.

President, I so submit.

**MR CHAU SIU-CHUNG** (in Cantonese): President, I have reservations about the implementation of the Taxi Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”). If an individual taxi driver has committed an improper or illegal act, he should certainly be punished accordingly, and I believe that no one will object to this. I agree that there have been some black sheep in the taxi trade in recent years, and these people should be severely punished. However, there are a total of 24 taxi-driver-related offences under Cap. 374A and Cap. 374D of the Laws of Hong Kong, five of which carry a maximum penalty of a fine at level 3, imprisonment for 6 months, and disqualification from driving a taxi. Given that the current legislation already incorporates stringent regulatory measures with a broader scope of offences compared to those outlined in the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill, I honestly do not see any urgent need to implement the TDOP System for imposing dual sanctions.

If we think that the deterrent effect of the existing legislation is insufficient, we should address the issue by prioritizing enhanced law enforcement, increased inspections and educational initiatives, such as stepping up undercover operations and educational campaigns targeting taxi dealers, owners and drivers. These are all desirable directions, and it may not be necessary to add a duplicated penalty system. I believe we have all noticed that taxi drivers are ageing very seriously and the younger generation is not willing to join the trade. At present, the income of taxi drivers is lower than the average wage of the transport sector. In 2021, the average income of taxi drivers was about \$18,000, while the average wage in the transport sector was about \$22,000 during the same period. In addition, as the working environment is already undesirable or unattractive, the introduction of the TDOP System will further aggravate the situation, making it even more challenging for the trade to attract new entrants. If the supply of service is also inadequate, how can the quality of service be improved?

Taxi drivers are faced with competition from “white licence cars” and other modes of transport, and the pressure on their business is immense due to ever-increasing rentals and gas prices. Even if the flagfall fare is increased, the rent will rise accordingly in the blink of an eye, and the fare increase will only benefit the drivers to a limited extent. In the long run, if the fundamental issue of taxi drivers’ remuneration package is not addressed, any attempts to enhance the quality of service of the industry through such mechanisms as increasing penalties would only be futile.

In recent years, there have been voices in the taxi trade suggesting that the behaviour of taxi drivers would be regulated more effectively if taxi companies could establish an employment relationship with them. In this way, the drivers will have a regular income, and they will take the initiative to improve the quality of their service for fear of being fired if their customers complain about their suspected illegal behaviour. I have yet to see any strong motivation on the part of the Government to push the trade to do this. Implementing the TDOP System is definitely not a socially effective approach to enhance the quality of taxi service.

President, I so submit.

**MS DOREEN KONG** (in Cantonese): President, taxi service has aroused public concern for many years. Unfortunately, the Government has all along failed to examine the causes of the problem and show its determination to solve it. As a result, the entire taxi industry is completely out of shape as there is a lack of new entrants, the livelihood of taxi drivers has been seriously affected by ride-hailing service and the epidemic, and passengers (especially tourists) are overcharged by unscrupulous taxi drivers, commonly referred to as “black taxis”. The lack of technological support for taxis has resulted in the majority of taxis not being equipped with electronic maps and electronic payment systems.

The taxi industry is facing the challenge of an ageing workforce, and taxi drivers had endured three years of hardship amid the epidemic. At the peak of the epidemic, the taxi industry also made efforts to participate in the work to combat the epidemic. It had been three tough years. Instead of squaring up to and regulating ride-hailing service, we took the first opportunity to introduce the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”).

In terms of punishing the bad elements, I have repeatedly pointed out at the Bills Committee meetings that the existing Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) and Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374D) have already imposed penalties on 24 taxi-driver-related offences, including not using the most direct practicable route, refusal to hire and overcharging. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$10,000 at level 3, and 18 of these offences are punishable by a maximum penalty of imprisonment for 6 months. Heavier penalties have been imposed for the four most serious offences under the Regulations, including refusal to accept a hire,

overcharging and defacing of taximeters, in a separate piece of legislation passed yesterday. The fact that we have not been able to rectify the behaviour of these black sheep over the years is not because we do not have the relevant legislation, but because we do not have the determination or the power to continue to crack down on them and enforce the law. The prevalence of “black taxis” near Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui and the Peak Tram Lower Terminus on Garden Road have become part of the cityscape of Hong Kong, but have we ever made any substantial efforts to combat them?

In respect of the Bill, I am most concerned about the offence of not using the most direct practicable route.

According to the Bill, the Government has selected 11 out of the 24 offences currently regulated by law to formulate the TDOP System, which is old wine in a new bottle and an overlapping system. Under the new TDOP System, a driver who is accused of not using the most direct practicable route three times within two years will incur 15 points, be disqualified from driving a taxi, and have his driving licence suspended for at least three months. At the meeting, the Bureau did not explain clearly how to resolve the difficulty in proving the charge of not using the most direct practicable route and how to prevent the situation where the driver and the passenger are at loggerheads with each other.

I am absolutely concerned about the quality of the taxi trade, but we also need to deal with the problem accurately and fairly. For serious offences such as overcharging and refusal to accept a hire, law-abiding taxi drivers generally agree that the bad guys should be brought to justice, but there is a general concern among taxi drivers about not using the most direct practicable route. If a taxi driver who, because of communication problems and road conditions, is accused of not using the most direct practicable route incurs points three times, he will already be disqualified from driving a taxi. What protection is there for taxi drivers who are the breadwinner of their families? Does it mean that taxi drivers have to take the initiative to ask passengers about their preferred route every time they get on board?

At the meetings of the Bills Committee, I have repeatedly suggested that not using the most direct practicable route should be removed from the TDOP System because of the difficulty in adducing evidence and the foreseeable problem of enforcement. Unfortunately, the Bureau has not accepted the suggestion. I would really like the officials to tell us which countries and cities in the world have, in addition to putting in place laws that fine drivers and put them in jail, further

introduced another law to penalize taxi drivers with the incurrence of offence points. I have tried to conduct a simple study, but I do not see any country that has a similar law to beat taxi drivers with another stick besides the existing ones. Are all taxi drivers in Hong Kong the worst, or have we always been lax in enforcing the law against “black taxis”? The Chief Executive always says that we need to tell the good stories of Hong Kong. I think that implementing the TDOP System alongside with the existing penalty mechanism for the 24 taxi-driver-related offences will create a very bad image of Hong Kong and have detrimental effects on law-abiding taxi drivers and the reputation of our recovering tourism industry.

President, the law is rigid, but how to enforce it is the key. It is over-egging the pudding to add a new TDOP System to the existing legislation, as it will neither tackle a handful of “black taxis” nor facilitate the proper enforcement of the existing legislation. Instead, one more piece of legislation and a seemingly new TDOP System are introduced for taxi drivers who struggle to make ends meet. Taxi drivers find it unfair because law-breaking ride-hailing vehicles are not properly regulated under the existing legislation, while the dying taxi trade is instead being burdened with the additional TDOP System. For the above reasons, I will not support this Bill.

President, I so submit.

**MR TONY TSE** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. President, taxi services in Hong Kong have been plagued not only by problems with the regime, but also by a handful of black sheep who rip off passengers. These drivers are commonly referred to as “black taxis”. The Road Traffic Legislation (Enhancing Personalized Point-to-point Transport Services) (Amendment) Bill 2023, which has just been passed after the Third Reading, seeks to introduce a taxi fleet regime in order to promote competition and operational flexibility within the industry, thereby enhancing the overall quality and competitiveness of taxi services. The Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”), on which the Second Reading debate now resumes, aims to introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) so as to further combat “black taxis”, thus enhancing the overall quality and image of taxi drivers in Hong Kong.

The Bill proposes to specify 11 taxi-driver-related offences as scheduled offences under the legislation. These offences include overcharging, refusing to

accept a hire, driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, and tampering with a taximeter. Once found guilty of these offences, taxi drivers will be assigned 3, 5 or a maximum of 10 points by the Commissioner for Transport (“the Commissioner”) based on the seriousness of the offences. If a driver incurs 15 points within a two-year period, the Commissioner must apply to a magistrate for disqualifying the driver from driving a taxi for a period ranging from three to six months. However, drivers who have incurred points can have some points deducted by attending taxi service improvement courses. This arrangement is similar to the existing driving-offence points system for ordinary motorists.

Some taxi drivers consider that, at present, they are already subject to appropriate legal sanctions for committing certain scheduled offences. If a case is of a serious nature, the court currently has the power to order an outright disqualification against them. Why is there a need to introduce an additional TDOP System and disqualification mechanism on top of the existing penalties, which would subject them to double penalties? As far as the reasons are concerned, the main one is that the issue of “black taxis” in Hong Kong is really serious. However, when sentencing, the court often just considers the circumstances of individual cases and defendants, and the typical sentences are perceived as rather lenient. For example, offenders are just handed fines, while imprisonment or an outright disqualification is seldom imposed.

Over time, some unscrupulous taxi drivers may regard fines as their daily operating cost and continue to illegally rip off passengers, counting on their luck. This not only has a negative impact on good, law-abiding drivers, but also hampers the development of the industry. We may also take a look from another perspective. If taxi drivers abide by the law, they will not need to worry about the TDOP System and disqualification mechanism at all. That is why I support the principles of the present legislative exercise.

However, many taxi drivers have relayed that sometimes there are grey areas regarding some of the scheduled offences, such as refusing to accept a hire, driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, and failing to drive to the destination specified by the passenger. They are worried that the introduction of the TDOP System will lead to more disputes and complaints between drivers and passengers, and innocent taxi drivers may incur points or even get disqualified as a result.

As the Government has repeatedly emphasized, prosecutions will be instituted against drivers suspected of committing those offences only when law enforcement agencies have conducted thorough investigations to gather sufficient evidence for a conviction, rather than whenever a complaint is lodged. The Commissioner will only initiate the process of recording points and disqualifying the taxi driver in question after the court has found the driver guilty. During the process, drivers who are convicted and incur points also have the right to appeal. Even in the final stage, they may apply to a magistrate for exemption from disqualification. There are already legal and institutional safeguards in place.

However, in order to reduce disputes and unfounded complaints, I suggest that the Government provide some guidelines and examples to the taxi industry. Public education and promotion should be conducted before and during the implementation of the TDOP System to explain what conduct constitutes the offence of refusing to accept a hire or driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, as well as how drivers should respond to traffic congestion or unreasonable passenger requests such as pick-ups and drop-offs at restricted zones. I hope the Government will consider these suggestions.

The Government may also draw reference from the practices of some regions and make good use of cyber technologies. It may mandate the installation of a central cloud-based camera system inside taxi compartments to safeguard the rights and interests of passengers and drivers, thereby further allaying the concerns of passengers, tourists, drivers, taxi owners and even the relevant insurance companies.

President, the forthcoming taxi fleet services will allow passengers to book taxi services and legally negotiate fares through the operators' online platforms. Among other things, drivers will be allowed to charge not according to taximeters and provide other value-added services. The Government hopes that the introduction of competition will enhance the overall standards of the industry, including non-fleet taxis. However, some non-fleet taxi drivers take the view that the Government wants to let them fend for themselves and phase out naturally, apparently without giving them much consideration. One of their demands is for the Government to establish a common online hailing platform for all non-fleet taxis and clamp down on illegal online hailing platforms, thus creating a fairer environment for them to compete with fleet taxis.

There can be further discussions on whether establishing a government-run online hailing platform is the most suitable and effective approach. However, I agree with what the Secretary said yesterday about conducting an in-depth study on this matter. Besides, regarding the various online taxi hailing platforms in the market, I think the Government should not sit on its hands. For instance, it should at least provide official authorization so that passengers, especially tourists, can differentiate platforms that offer legitimate services from those associated with “black taxis” or illegal “white licence cars”.

Furthermore, in order to prevent a recurrence of the situation where numerous tourists queue up for hours at the cruise terminal without being able to catch a taxi, should taxi drivers be allowed to collect surcharges when picking up passengers in certain designated areas? I hope the Government can seriously consider all these suggestions instead of relying solely on punitive approaches such as the TDOP System and disqualification. In my view, appropriate incentives should be provided to encourage the industry to enhance its service quality and attract more new blood to join it.

With these remarks, President, I support the Second and Third Readings of the Bill.

**MR CHAN PUI-LEUNG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. President, in response to the strong community aspiration for improving taxi service and increasing penalties for malpractices and offences on the part of taxi drivers, the Government proposes to introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points (“TDOP”) System. I can see the need to increase the penalties, and I support the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

However, some may think that the TDOP System cannot fully enhance the service quality of taxi drivers. On the one hand, the taxi trade finds the offences unclear, which will result in difficulties in adducing evidence and thus disputes in the course of implementation. On the other hand, the Government has emphasized that points will only be incurred after investigation by law enforcement agencies and conviction by the court, and complaints alone will not attract points.

In reality, from suspecting a driver of committing a relevant offence to the completion of the police investigation, conviction by the court, and eventually the incurrence of points, it takes time. In the meantime, the unscrupulous drivers are

still allowed to drive. Only if they have accumulated 15 offence points or more within a two-year period that they will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time. Throughout the process, those black sheep remain in the team of taxi drivers and the trade continues to have its overall image tarnished by the small number of unscrupulous drivers. That is why some people remain sceptical about the effectiveness of the TDOP System.

I have asked the Administration at a meeting of the Bills Committee whether it will, with the consent of taxi drivers, allow taxi operators to access the TDOP Register so as to prevent even just a handful of unscrupulous drivers from entering the taxi trade, thereby ensuring the overall quality of taxi service. The Administration has responded that due to privacy considerations, the TDOP Register will only be available to the data subject, and any other person who wishes to access the information will have to obtain the data subject's consent. That said, taxi owners can request rentee drivers to provide the relevant record before rental. As the data subject holds a dominant position, it will not be easy for taxi companies to obtain the driving history and records of rentee drivers and assess their suitability accordingly.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate my proposal to the Government. I urge the Government to consolidate the data of the Transport Department and the Police and collate particulars of taxi drivers in conjunction with the taxi trade to set up a central database on rentee taxi drivers, which provides detailed information on all taxi drivers including their age, driving experience, involvement in traffic accidents and records of poor conduct, for easy reference by taxi owners, companies and administrators when they rent out taxis, thereby reducing potential risks. This will also enable insurance companies to conduct more accurate risk assessments based on the information and determine the appropriate premiums. By establishing a central database on rentee taxi drivers, taxi operators and other stakeholders will be able to identify drivers with poor driving records. Only by eliminating unscrupulous drivers at the root can the overall image of the taxi trade be enhanced and the overall quality of taxi service be improved.

In addition, stakeholders (including the taxi trade) generally support the installation of driving recorders and surveillance devices in taxi compartments and believe that it can safeguard the interests of both drivers and passengers. The relevant data and video clips should be automatically uploaded and stored in a cloud system managed by the Government, which can only be accessed by authorized persons. As such, the recordings can be used as evidence in the event

of an accident or dispute. In this connection, I support the mandatory installation of cameras in all taxis, which I believe can shortly enhance the operation, safety and quality of taxi service and thus reduce related traffic accidents. Since insurance companies can make reference to the relevant data, the insurance premiums for taxis can also be lowered.

With the consensus of various stakeholders, I strongly advise the Government to adopt the proposals and not to turn them down with all kinds of excuses.

President, I so submit.

**MR YIM KONG** (in Cantonese): President, the development of the taxi trade and the professional conduct of taxi drivers have a bearing on the sustainable development of Hong Kong's tourism industry, as well as the international image of Hong Kong as Asia's world city. Currently, Hong Kong's tourism industry is under recovery with a multitude of tourists visiting from home and abroad. In the first 10 months of this year alone, more than 26.78 million visitors came to Hong Kong; the number is still growing at an average of over 8% per month. As a result, the demand for taxi services grows accordingly. Therefore, there is an actual need to strengthen regulation on the trade as well as the professional conduct of taxi drivers through legislation.

Admittedly, there are black sheep who overcharge fares or adopt a poor service attitude in daily operations. While taxi associations have been advising and educating the drivers, it is indeed necessary to strengthen regulation by enacting relevant laws and regulations and increasing penalties through a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”).

President, while offence points are marked, merit points should also be allotted. While introducing the TDOP System, we should actively consider rewarding merit points to good drivers with commendable behaviours, who have contributed to building a positive image of Hong Kong through their professional service. For instance, there are taxi drivers and owners who take the initiative to install electronic payment systems for the convenience of passengers, promoting the trade's adaptation to the needs arising from social development; there are drivers who actively provide emergency transport services in the event of inclement weather; there are drivers who passionately help others by returning lost property

items to passengers, or lend a helping hand to pedestrians in need of emergency assistance; there are also drivers who received commendations from passengers or outstanding service awards for the trade. All these drivers deserve merit points. We should actively consider establishing a mechanism providing both penalties and rewards to motivate taxi drivers to improve and adhere to professional conduct, and establish good practices and habits across the local taxi trade, thereby polishing the image of Hong Kong as an international metropolis.

In addition, the Government should actively consider setting up more taxi pick-up points in areas that experience high tourist footfall or are in close proximity to tourist attractions. It is also suggested that the Government should adopt a lenient approach towards taxi drivers who have committed minor road traffic offences near the attractions during non-peak hours to facilitate their picking up of passengers and provide more convenience for tourists to take taxis.

President, with these remarks, I support the passage of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

**REVD CANON PETER DOUGLAS KOON** (in Cantonese): President, indisputably, the quality of taxi service is deteriorating. Refusal of hire, not taking the most direct practicable route, overcharging and poor attitude are commonly seen on the part of taxi drivers. According to information from the Transport Department, in the first nine months of this year, there is a monthly average of over 400 traffic accidents—400 cases—involving taxis, accounting for nearly 20% of all traffic accidents in Hong Kong during the same period. According to the records, from 2018 to 2022, there was an average of about 4 000 traffic accidents per year involving taxis, implying that some taxi drivers adopt a poor driving attitude. There is definitely a need to rectify the situation and restore the image.

The Government has often stressed the importance of telling the good stories of Hong Kong so as to attract investors and visitors from all over the world. However, poor taxi service has badly tarnished Hong Kong's image as a modern and international metropolis. Taxis are often the first mode of transport taken by visitors in Hong Kong. Since their travel experience is closely linked to taxi services, we can often see visitors' complaints on social media platforms about their bitter experiences in this regard, including taxi drivers displaying a bad attitude, refusing to accept hires or cross-harbour trips by making all kinds of

excuses such as shift-changing; there are even drivers who overcharge or alter the taximeter, which is outrageous. Therefore, I fully support the introduction of a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System to record the malpractices and punish the black sheep, thereby securing a certain level of service quality for passengers.

Furthermore, I believe the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill is just the start of reforming the taxi service. There is still a lot of work to be done to bring an overhaul to the ecosystem of the trade. Even though taxis and drivers are currently licensed by the Government and the fare levels are subject to the approval of the Chief Executive in Council, compared with other transport services, the taxi industry is still less regulated and supported. Many representatives of the taxi trade have complained that the fares are too low to catch up with inflation and fuel price increases, which in turn results in a reduction in drivers' income, discourages new blood from joining the industry and forms a vicious cycle. Therefore, I hope that the Government will consider introducing a tiered fare system for taxi services, allowing surcharges for certain types of service (e.g. night shifts) as in the case of overseas countries, or introducing fixed fares for long-haul services such as trips to the airport. There are actually numerous ways to raise taxi fares and thus attract new blood to join the trade.

We can draw references from other countries and regions. Taking Macao and the Mainland as examples, the quality of their taxi services was extremely disappointing in the early years. The vehicles were dilapidated, unscrupulous drivers were rampant, and even personal safety was a concern. Nevertheless, after drastic reforms by introducing big data management, allowing the operation of fleets by conglomerates and utilizing new technologies such as electronic payment and smart surveillance, their taxi or car hiring services have shown significant improvement. As a result, more passengers are willing to pay a higher fare to take taxis, and their city image has been uplifted.

President, taxis are not just a means of transport; more importantly, they represent the image of Hong Kong. All in all, I hope that after the Bill is smoothly passed today, the taxi trade will develop sustainably and healthily to address the public aspiration for better taxi services. I also hope that the Government will put more effort into supporting the taxi trade so that this mode of transport, which is essential for the daily commuting of citizens and tourists, can give better play to its function.

President, I so submit.

**MR ADRIAN PEDRO HO** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. I support the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill proposed by the Government.

The quality of taxi service has come under public criticism in recent years. It is no longer news that some black sheep among taxi drivers select passengers, refuse hire, overcharge, treat passengers impolitely or drive with a bad attitude. Countless messages and videos of related incidents appear on the Internet every day. Therefore, it is a timely move to introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) in respect of the scheduled offences so that a taxi driver who has incurred 15 points within a two-year period will have his/her taxi driving licence suspended. It will be conducive to enhancing the quality of taxi service.

I believe that apart from introducing the TDOP System, the Government should also be more proactive in terms of law enforcement. It has been proactively enforcing the traffic ordinance by conducting decoy operations against certain misbehaviours, such as taxi drivers putting down their for-hire flags, selecting passengers or overcharging, as well as passengers not wearing seatbelts on public light buses. Therefore, the Government should also consider deploying plainclothes officers more proactively to monitor taxi services at different times, and prosecute and allot points to any persons found to have committed the various scheduled offences. As such, the TDOP System can bring out a greater deterrent effect.

In addition, the Government proposes that drivers who have incurred 10 points must attend taxi service improvement courses at their own expense. I believe the threshold should be tightened to 8 points so that drivers will be more vigilant; and the existing driving-offence points system should also be brought in line with it. I understand some taxi drivers might face extra pressure under the TDOP System. However, drivers of all commercial vehicles, or even private cars, have some legal liabilities as long as they drive on the road. While some might regard it as some kind of pressure, taxi drivers, driving their taxis to serve passengers, are indeed duty-bound to also protect the safety and interests of their passengers. As long as taxi drivers uphold a responsible attitude and do their part, they will never breach the law or incur any points. Since the TDOP System only targets the offenders, the majority of taxi drivers who are law-abiding can put their minds at ease.

Thank you, President.

**DR TAN YUEHENG** (in Putonghua): Thank you, President. The taxi industry in Hong Kong has been plagued by numerous issues in recent years, such as shrinking business turnovers, reduction in investments and the lack of newcomers in the industry. Moreover, due to the retrograde service quality, commuters prefer to take other modes of public transport or online ride-hailing services, resulting in a vicious cycle. Apart from that, some taxi drivers who act out of character and even violate the laws and regulations have put the entire trade in a negative light, eventually jeopardizing the interests of both the trade and the general public and tarnishing the image of Hong Kong.

Therefore, I am delighted to see the Legislative Council scrutinizing Bills in relation to the taxi trade, and I support the passage of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”), which proposes to enhance the penalties and deterrent effect and vigorously combat malpractices. It is hoped that the establishment of a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) will bring a fresh outlook to the taxi trade and in turn foster the development of car hiring services in Hong Kong in a more desirable direction.

To expedite the improvement of taxi service, upon the introduction of the TDOP System and a taxi fleet regime, the Government should step up efforts on the following fronts.

First, implement the law enforcement work of the TDOP System. While the Bill takes the right and justifiable direction, it is only through refining the practical details and strengthening efforts in law enforcement, evidence collection, investigation and adjudication that the measures can be effectively implemented and yield results.

Currently, the difficulties in adducing evidence remain a pain point of law enforcement against taxi malpractices. The Government should collect views from different parties and explore the installation of cameras in taxi compartments across the trade. The footage captured can be directly uploaded to a cloud system for encryption and storage. In the event of receiving complaints, law enforcement agencies can, in accordance with procedures, request the records as substantial evidence for the handling of complaints and law enforcement. Besides, law enforcement agencies should promptly follow up on complaints and streamline the processes of investigation and evidence collection so as to prevent cases from being left unsettled due to cumbersome procedures.

Second, step up explanatory work and publicity regarding the TDOP System. For the taxi trade, the Government should set out clear definitions of the relevant offences and clearly explain to taxi drivers the ambiguous items in detail so as to allay their concerns, clarify uncertainties about the relevant ordinances and prevent them from inadvertently breaching the law.

As for the general public, the Government should also strengthen the publicity of the TDOP System and encourage people to monitor the daily operation of taxi services. It may consider mandating the display of information about channels for lodging complaints in a conspicuous position in all taxi compartments, or requiring the information and drivers' identity plate number to be printed on taxi receipts. The aim is to make it easier for passengers to lodge complaints and facilitate the process, which will be crucial to the effective enforcement of the relevant ordinances.

Third, promptly address the issue of “white licence cars” and create a level playing field for healthy competition. The Government should no longer be ambiguous about the issue. In particular, it should never allow “white licence cars” to operate illegally at low costs while strengthening the regulation of the taxi trade. The Government and the trade should work together to formulate a legal framework in due course to allow emerging online ride-hailing services to operate under laws and regulations. For instance, online hailed cars and drivers should only be allowed to carry out business upon registration and issuance of an operator's certificate by the relevant department. In addition, relevant legislation should be introduced to regulate shared mobility platforms in terms of labour protection, users' information security, pricing, as well as payment and clearing. The Government should also promote bilaterally the platformization of traditional taxi services, so that traditional taxis and online hailed cars can complement each other and engage in healthy competition. This can facilitate the effective implementation of smart mobility and enhance the quality of point-to-point transport services, thereby benefiting the public at large.

President, I so submit.

**MR LUK CHUNG-HUNG** (in Cantonese): President, the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill under discussion today is, in fact, somewhat of a continuation of the Road Traffic Legislation (Enhancing Personalized Point-to-point Transport

Services) (Amendment) Bill 2023 discussed yesterday. Therefore, both bills have been scrutinized by the same Bills Committee, of which I am a member.

First of all, on behalf of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (“FTU”) and the Motor Transport Workers General Union (Taxi Driver Branch), I express unequivocal support for the Government’s vigorous efforts to combat “black taxis”, rigorous law enforcement by the Police, and the amendments moved by the Government yesterday to enhance penalties under the relevant provisions, especially for four serious offences. These offences are overcharging, refusal to accept a hire, refusal to follow instructions, and damaging a taximeter. Heavier penalties and a two-tier penalty system should be put in place for these malpractices. Some people may not have heard of the two-tier penalty system. Under this system, first-time offenders of these serious offences are liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and 6-month imprisonment, while repeat offenders are subject to a fine of \$25,000 and 12 months’ imprisonment.

As a matter of fact, there is a genuine consensus among the public in Hong Kong on the need to vigorously combat unscrupulous taxi drivers, commonly referred to as “black taxis”, and the industry will never condone these black sheep. They are the culprits who have undermined the reputation of the industry, tarnished the international image of Hong Kong and caused great inconvenience and frustration to commuters. They must be eradicated to foster a more respectable and virtuous environment within the taxi industry. I believe everyone in this Council supports this cause, and the question lies in determining the best approach.

President, I abstained from voting on the bill relating to personalized point-to-point transport services yesterday. I suppose Members know the reasons behind our abstention. We consider it unfortunate that the legislative amendments concerning the taxi fleet regime fail to enhance employment relationships, fail to completely solve problems related to the rent-seeking economy, and fail to achieve lean management through employment relationships. It falls short of creating the win-win-win situation we had hoped for. That is why we abstained from voting. However, we have expressed clear support for the amendments aimed at enhancing penalties. We hope that members of the media and Hong Kong people are aware of FTU’s clear stance.

However, is the introduction of a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) a good approach? Apart from listening to the views of the public and the industry, we have engaged in extensive internal discussions and

come to the view that this may not be the most effective approach. Why do we think so? Drivers are most afraid of accumulating a certain number of offence points that would lead to their disqualification for a period of time. First of all, President, I would like to explain to the television audience that currently, there are five offences that can result in the disqualification of taxi drivers upon conviction by the court. These so-called “five offences” include overcharging; wilfully refusing or neglecting to accept a hire from a hirer, that is, refusing hire; refusing or neglecting to drive the taxi to any place indicated by a hirer, for example, if the passenger indicates location A but the driver drives to location B; driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route, that is, taking unnecessary detours; and refusing or neglecting to carry the number of passengers required by the hirer, for instance, if the taxi can clearly accommodate five passengers but the driver refuses to carry five passengers. Committing any of these offences can result in disqualification.

President, various pieces of legislation in Hong Kong contain penalty provisions. However, the problem is that the court is sometimes really too lenient in sentencing. This was also the case in the past, contributing to the incidents that occurred in Hong Kong in 2019. The excessively lenient sentences previously imposed by the court emboldened lawbreakers to act more audaciously. Many issues in Hong Kong, including fraud cases, can also be attributed to the court’s overly lenient sentencing.

My second point pertains to law enforcement issues. I am not suggesting that the number, frequency or intensity of law enforcement operations is inadequate. Rather, the Police have really been too lenient in enforcing the law in the past. President, you know that I have always been a supporter of the Police and I support them in strictly enforcing the law. However, some locations are clearly notorious for “black taxis”. It is well known that during certain hours in Lan Kwai Fong, it is impossible to hire a taxi at regular fares. This fact is known to everyone in our city, and relevant information can also be found on Xiaohongshu and YouTube. Is there anyone who goes there for drinks and fun but does not know it is impossible to hire a taxi at regular fares in that area? If the Police carry out sting operations there every day, I guarantee they will achieve fruitful results. Inadequate law enforcement by the Police is widely recognized as one of the reasons why “black taxis” have become more audacious. Therefore, instead of introducing an additional TDOP System, it is better to strengthen law enforcement alongside the legislative amendments that were passed yesterday to enhance penalties. I believe these measures would serve as an adequate deterrent to lawbreakers and the black sheep in the trade.

Furthermore, in the face of market changes, has the Bureau considered adopting new methods to address the issues? Currently, various information technologies can be applied to tackle them. Yet, why does Hong Kong always give the impression of falling behind in this regard? If we compare Hong Kong with the Mainland, it is evident that our motherland is much more advanced in various areas. Hong Kong also compares unfavourably with Singapore and Macao. In the past, there were “black taxis” in Macao. Apart from the fact that Macao taxis are really black in colour, there were indeed many unscrupulous drivers, as many people know. Nevertheless, the situation in Macao has improved a lot because their taxis are currently installed with global positioning system (“GPS”) and cameras, making it impossible to conceal improper conduct. In fact, can Hong Kong follow Macao’s approach in dealing with bad drivers? The Government may subsidize the industry to install GPS and dash cameras, and enact legislation to mandate their installation, preventing drivers from using any excuse for failing to install them. At present, there are thousands of such complaints each year, with the number exceeding 10 000 in a certain year. Yet, on average, there are only 516 successful prosecution cases each year. On many occasions, there is not sufficient evidence available, resulting in one person’s word against another’s. Instead of introducing the TDOP System, why not subsidize the industry to install dash cameras and GPS? In that event, a driver taking unnecessary detours would not be able to use the excuse of not remembering the route taken as there would be plenty of records. Therefore, I support the Government in making vigorous efforts to combat “black taxis” and illegal operations in order to resolve the relevant issues. In my view, however, it should exercise caution in selecting the most effective methods.

Drivers may incur up to 10 points under the TDOP System. Are there any side effects to this approach? Of course, some people would argue that there is no reason for Members to oppose or abstain from voting. However, President, let us consider taking unnecessary detours as an example. Sometimes, the driver and the passenger have different views. I frequently take a taxi from Tuen Mun to my home in Tin Shui Wai via either Yuen Long Highway or Castle Peak Road. The former route is faster but longer in distance, while the latter route has a few more traffic lights but covers a shorter distance. If a driver opts for Yuen Long Highway, does that mean the driver is taking an unnecessary detour? The driver might simply want to reach the destination faster, only to incur points due to poor communication with the passenger.

Another offence is permitting any person other than the hirer to enter the taxi without the consent of the hirer, i.e. “car pooling”, for which five points will be assigned. Regarding “car pooling”, perhaps the driver is trying to be helpful to the passengers. If the first passenger does not mind, the driver may pick up one or two additional passengers during the trip and all passengers can share the fare. The first passenger may find this a good arrangement because the fare would be cheaper. However, after getting off the taxi, the passenger might feel dissatisfied or passenger might be a weird person who gets angry for no reason and lodge a complaint. If the complaint is substantiated, the driver will incur five points. Of course, some drivers deserve to be punished, but it cannot be ruled out that some cases arise from misunderstandings. If drivers incur points as a result, they will be placed under additional pressure in an already very difficult operating environment.

Overall, regarding the TDOP System, firstly, we agree it is necessary to strengthen law enforcement and make greater efforts to combat violations of laws and regulations. Secondly, we have to exercise caution and consider whether the methods to be adopted are genuinely effective and whether the TDOP System is the best approach. Thirdly, we hope the Government can make good use of technology, employ targeted technological means and pursue high-quality development in combating violations of taxi-related laws and regulations. This will improve taxi services, enhance the image of Hong Kong and enhance people’s commuting experience, offering greater convenience to them.

Thank you, President.

**MR DENNIS LEUNG** (in Cantonese): President, first of all, I would like to express my feelings about scores. I either strive for 100 points or I pursue nothing, settling for 0 points.

There was a classic slogan in a previous announcement in the public interest: “Learning is more than scoring”. It is most appropriate to apply this slogan to taxi drivers, who are the focus of the present bill. That is to say, incurring points should not be the goal of taxi drivers. They should instead aim for providing better services. They should not only refrain from committing malpractices and incurring any points, but also strive to become exemplary taxi drivers, delivering quality services.

As our society continues to advance, knowledge is also being imparted continuously. In today's Hong Kong society, I suppose most people have received education—quality education indeed. People are supposed to know the laws and regulations in place. Different places have implemented different codes, standards and rules. However, to err is human. Sometimes people may want to take risks, or take a chance for the sake of convenience. However, all these actions constitute violations of laws and regulations.

Currently, drivers are subject to the driving-offence points system, which was put into operation on 25 August 1984. If drivers commit any offences covered by this system, they will not only be convicted by the court or become liable to the fixed penalty, but also incur points. When a specified number of points have been recorded, they will be liable to be disqualified from driving for a certain period. Taxi drivers are one type of drivers. By the same token, the offences committed by them should not be overlooked. Therefore, it is indeed necessary to establish the new system in question so as to ensure safety in society and safeguard the rights and interests of taxi passengers.

The Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) proposed by the Government mainly covers offences relevant to taxi service quality. These offences consist of 11 taxi-driver-related offences which carry higher penalties under the existing legislation, and do not involve the creation of any new offences. However, taxi drivers consider that the new TDOP System will subject them to double penalties, undermining their morale.

Of course, we understand that the Government aims to implement more effective measures to combat the black sheep in the taxi trade and enhance its overall image and service quality. It is fair to say that these measures will not have any impact on the law-abiding majority of taxi drivers. However, I hope the Government can understand and acknowledge that the new TDOP System will inevitably raise concerns among drivers. It should step up promotion and education efforts and, most importantly, ensure that taxi drivers have a clear understanding of the importance of abiding by the law and the necessity of safe driving.

The Administration has proposed to introduce a two-tier penalty system covering four offences of a more serious nature (i.e. defacing, damaging or altering a taximeter, overcharging, and two offences relating to refusal to accept a hire). For these four offences, the maximum fine and terms of imprisonment in the case

of first conviction will be maintained, i.e. a fine at level 3 (\$10,000) and six-month imprisonment. Nevertheless, if a taxi driver subsequently commits an offence again and is convicted, the maximum penalty will be increased to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and 12-month imprisonment. I agree with this arrangement, but most importantly, the court has to enforce the law effectively and avoid imposing too lenient sentences on repeat offenders of taxi-driver-related offences. Even with legislation in place, if the court's sentences lack a deterrent effect or impact on those drivers, they will be rendered useless, wasting the efforts previously made by the Legislative Council and the Government. Therefore, I hope the Government will pay attention to this matter and inform the court of these guidelines.

I would like to ask: What is the current core issue? It is the relationship between taxi drivers and taxi owners. The owners are only concerned with renting out their taxis and collecting rental fees. In fact, the conduct of rentee-drivers has nothing to do with the owners. The owners are not responsible for regulating the conduct of their taxi drivers because their business is to rent out their taxis and thereby generate income. On the other hand, drivers are solely concerned with carrying passengers and making a living. They have a natural inclination to get more business in order to cover their costs and earn profits. Therefore, both taxi owners and drivers adopt a result-oriented approach, focusing on making money without doing anything superfluous. The biggest problem is that a handful of taxi drivers choose to increase their income through illegal means, significantly undermining the public's impression of overall taxi services.

In my speech on the Road Traffic Legislation (Enhancing Personalized Point-to-point Transport Services) (Amendment) Bill 2023, I mentioned the following issues. Firstly, the licensing regime for taxis. The Government must study the future direction of the taxi industry. Secondly, the professional development of taxi drivers. The Government must conduct studies on labour policies concerning taxi drivers, including how smart devices can be utilized to regulate drivers and train a new generation of taxi drivers. Thirdly, online hailing services have already become the development direction for personalized and quality services in modern cities. The Government must establish afresh a set of new laws and regulations to meet the demands of Hong Kong people and visitors for taxi services. Fourthly, a convenient transport system is a key focus for the future development of Hong Kong. It is necessary to not only provide affordable and quality services, but also cater to people with different needs in Hong Kong, offering them access to diversified transport services.

President, time waits for no one. It is now or never. The Government must really act swiftly and work out solutions to address the current issues. The following are four urgent issues that require the Government's priority attention. Firstly, taxi service quality. Secondly, the convenience of taxi services. Thirdly, protection for the income of taxi drivers. Fourthly, the availability of different types of taxis.

President, I so submit.

**MR CHAN HAN-PAN** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. President, it is better to regulate the taxi industry than to leave it unregulated because taxi services are already riddled with problems and often subject to criticism. I believe any further criticism directed at the industry will raise doubts about its ability to continue to survive. There is a phenomenon known as a “downward spiral”, where the more serious the complaints are, the more the taxi industry shrinks. Thus, it is very important to establish a new regulatory system to bring about changes in the ecosystem of the taxi industry, thereby enhancing the reputation of the entire industry.

The present legislative proposal aims to introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) that targets taxi drivers who frequently and repeatedly commit offences and addresses certain malpractices of the black sheep in the trade. Implementing targeted measures helps differentiate between these black sheep and excellent taxi drivers. My speech will primarily focus on two aspects.

First of all, regarding black sheep, I believe it is not the hope of the taxi industry that the Government tolerates them or adopts ineffective measures against them. I also believe none of the Members present today would take the view that they should be condoned or treated leniently. I hope the Government will make bold efforts to combat them.

According to statistics reported in newspapers, there were 9 798 traffic complaints in the first quarter of 2023. Among them, 8 680 complaints were related to public transport services, with taxis accounting for 2 476 complaints. Compared to the first quarter of the previous year (2022), in which 1 003 complaints were received, this represented an increase of 1.4 times. Among these complaints, 1 059 complaints concerned the performance of taxi drivers. As for the reason for the increase, perhaps people are dissatisfied with taxi service quality,

or they even intentionally take a ride to personally experience the services after discussing them over a meal. As a result of their experiences, the number of complaints has risen. The purpose of the TDOP System is to deter repeat offenders and even maintain a record of such drivers.

Under the proposed TDOP System, taxi drivers may incur 10 points for certain serious malpractices. This is actually tantamount to being issued a traffic ticket. Not only are they issued a traffic ticket, but they also incur points. After two years, they can start with a clean slate. A driver who has incurred a certain number of points will be required to attend a driving improvement course, and upon completion, some points can be deducted.

Firstly, will the TDOP System have any deterrent effect? This is a significant issue. If legislation is enacted but cannot be enforced, it will be virtually non-existent and certainly lack a deterrent effect. Regarding the implementation of the TDOP System, I was pleased to hear yesterday that the Secretary would consider introducing assistance devices. In my view, there are a few crucial issues for consideration. Law enforcement is important, and therefore, dash cameras are indeed essential equipment. I have often indicated on various occasions, including Bills Committee meetings and private exchanges with officials, that merely conducting sting operations is not particularly effective due to the Police's manpower constraints. At present, it is very difficult to rely solely on law enforcement by the Police. That is why taxis must be equipped with around-the-clock "police" monitoring, just in case.

Dash cameras must serve three functions. Firstly, GPS (global positioning system) tracking, as the TDOP System under the proposed legislation covers driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route. Secondly, video recording, which supports the recording of the actual circumstances in case of unusual conditions on the road. Thirdly, audio recording, so that dash cameras may not be able to capture faces but can still record conversations when drivers refuse to accept a hire. These recordings should be tamper-proof within the compartments, and should be uploaded to the cloud. Access to these recordings should be limited to specified persons rather than open to everyone. That way, the privacy of the passengers can be protected and the security of relevant data can be safeguarded to a certain extent, which I think is important.

Of course, all these involve money. People often say that it hurts to talk about money, but we can delve into the details of cost sharing methods in due

course. Given the current difficult operating conditions of the taxi industry, I consider it appropriate for the Government to establish transport funds to provide some subsidies for them. Taxis are assets worth millions of dollars, and having video cameras while they are on the road provides adequate protection for such assets. Paying a small monthly management fee for this purpose also seems very reasonable to me. I believe this arrangement will not generate a significant backlash.

Besides, during the deliberation of the Bills Committee, the taxi industry has also submitted a letter requesting the Government to mandate the installation of dash cameras in all taxis. Some people say that since this measure has not been put into implementation yet, the industry certainly expresses support for the measure before its implementation, but there may be a backlash from the industry after it is implemented. In fact, before the implementation of the TDOP System, some people have expressed concern about potential backlash from the industry. However, since implementing the relevant measures is in the public interest and beneficial for everyone, I believe the taxi industry will also support them. I hope the Government will expeditiously include the relevant measures in its agenda and aim to formulate them as soon as possible next year.

Some people have raised doubts about the effectiveness of assigning points to taxi drivers who commit offences. In their view, the register of points is only kept in the Government's database and inaccessible to the public. Even if those drivers are punished, no one will be aware of it, rendering the system meaningless. As a matter of fact, those taxi drivers may seek to join a taxi fleet which probably has its own requirements. In such cases, the Government should grant specified persons access to the register of points under certain circumstances. Taxi fleets may want to employ a particular taxi driver and, therefore, need to find out whether the driver has incurred any points or has been disqualified under the TDOP System. The Government must grant them access to the register or else the TDOP System would be virtually non-existent.

I hope that employers or taxi companies will be granted access to the register of points so that they can determine whether a driver is reliable. If they rent out a taxi to a driver who then gets involved in a traffic accident, their insurance policy will be affected. Furthermore, if their taxi is rented out but subsequently detained, rendering it unable to generate any business, it will also cause significant trouble to them. Therefore, I hope that the register of points can be accessed to a certain extent by relevant persons, thereby fulfilling its intended purpose.

However, punishment alone is not sufficient. In my view, it is more important for the Government and the industry to work together to launch an incentive system. We need to foster a positive social atmosphere. If passengers wish to commend certain outstanding drivers who provide exceptional services, the Government should establish channels for them to express their appreciation. The Government should not only establish channels for passengers to lodge complaints, but also provide avenues for them to express their appreciation. As I have mentioned earlier, the Government may annually present awards to drivers who have received praises, or offer prizes such as an iPhone or the latest model of Huawei phone. This would be a positive measure. In my opinion, it would be fairer for the Government to adopt a carrot and stick approach by implementing the TDOP System and an incentive system simultaneously.

Some taxi driver associations have relayed to me that some drivers are worried that the introduction of the TDOP System and the installation of dash cameras will put them under greater psychological pressure. I wish to reassure all taxi drivers. As the saying goes, “a clean hand wants no washing”. The installation of dash cameras serves to protect the interests of both passengers and drivers. When disputes arise, if a driver cannot defend himself with his words, what evidence can he present? In case of passenger complaints, which party does the judge believe? In the absence of records or data, drivers will lose the case. Therefore, dash cameras can actually safeguard the interests of both parties, and so can the TDOP System.

I hope that all members of the taxi industry can work together to build a bigger, stronger and better market for taxi services, thereby enhancing the public's experience in taking a taxi, which I think is very important. Therefore, we, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, support the system.

President, I so submit.

**IR LEE CHUN-KEUNG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. The Liberal Party has always been supportive of vigorously combating unscrupulous taxi drivers (commonly referred to as “black taxis”) and online-hailed “white licence cars”. As many colleagues have said, we should never tolerate the problem of “black taxis”, especially at tourist attractions such as the Peak and Tsim Sha Tsui. In fact, I wonder why the Police do not conduct more decoy operations against

“black taxis” in the vicinity of the Peak Tram Terminus and Tsim Sha Tsui, even though taxi drivers blatantly negotiate fares with passengers instead of charging according to the meter.

Actually, are there that many “black taxis” in reality? I have taken taxis numerous times, and all the drivers I encountered were nice. According to trade practitioners, out of over 40 000 taxi drivers, only around a hundred of them are unscrupulous, accounting for about 0.3% to 0.4%. Is it necessary for the Government to regulate the whole industry by law just for the sake of a few black sheep? Yes, indeed. As a matter of fact, the Road Traffic Ordinance already provides for 24 taxi-driver-related offences and the respective penalties, including fines and imprisonment.

Nonetheless, the Government still proposes a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) today. Why do we need a TDOP System? It is just adding the incurrence of points under the same penalty levels. If we were to ask someone who is considering joining the transport sector, would he/she prefer to drive a taxi or a goods vehicle? The answer is probably the latter, because driving a taxi comes with concerns about fines, imprisonment, and now even the incurrence of points. So, will that discourage many drivers from renting taxis for business? For this reason, the trade is deeply worried that once the TDOP System is implemented, it will trigger a “wave of withdrawal” and aggravate other problems, such as the lack of young drivers and the drainage of existing drivers, and in effect encourage taxi drivers to switch to the “white licence car” business.

(THE PRESIDENT’S DEPUTY, MS STARRY LEE, took the Chair)

For now, taxi drivers, or the taxi trade, need to revive. In particular, since the epidemic has subsided and we aim to attract visitors, it is crucial to provide excellent taxi services that ensure visitors reach their destinations comfortably and feel welcomed. Hence, instead of “slapping” or “spanking” good taxi drivers by increasing penalties and adding to their psychological stress, the Government should provide incentives and utilize technologies to facilitate law enforcement by the Police.

Many Members have mentioned the technological product called driving recorders, which consist of three inseparable functions, namely GPS (Global

Positioning System), cameras, and voice recorders. Why are voice recorders needed? Nowadays, Deputy President, complaints come with no cost; complainants need not shoulder any social responsibility. Even if a driver just says “All right！”, the passenger may find him/her rude or impolite and lodge a complaint. Because of the fuss, the driver might lose a whole day’s income. A single utterance can become grounds for complaints. Therefore, we believe that voice recording can do justice to both drivers and passengers.

Deputy President, how can we assist taxi drivers or the trade in mending public perceptions of them? Most importantly, we should secure their income to attract new blood. Some Members have pointed out that we should increase penalties on the bad elements, i.e. the unscrupulous drivers, which is true in a sense. In fact, we can set up a central database, consisting of both a blacklist of unscrupulous drivers, and a list of drivers with a Certificate of No Recorded Traffic Conviction. Simply put, taxi owners can apply to the Police for drivers’ Certificate of Traffic Conviction Records, and based on the record of penalties and driving offences, they can decide whether to rent their vehicles to the drivers. My friends, we need to note that taxi owners are now facing the dilemma of “possessing taxis with no drivers”. Please consider carefully whether we really need a TDOP System in addition to the existing legislation at this point, because it would only worsen the situation of no one driving taxis in Hong Kong.

Why are we short of taxi drivers? Because while “white licence cars” have been impacting the industry for more than a decade, the Government’s efforts to combat them have been ineffective; to make matters worse, it seems to be instigating the practice. Nowadays, we can see advertisements of “white licence cars” publicizing the illegal carriage of passengers on various online platforms or television. Why are such unlawful commercial activities allowed to be advertised on television? I have serious doubts about that, as it only serves to further complicate the already challenging business environment for the taxi industry.

In light of this situation, the Government should take two actions. Firstly, it should severely punish “white licence car” drivers. Secondly, it should advise the courts to impose higher fines or even imprisonment on drivers of “black taxis” or “white licence cars” to enhance the deterrent effect. Those drivers deserve heavy punishment, not just a fine of merely \$2,000 to \$3,000 as is often the case. They are like “a rat dropping spoiling the whole pot of porridge” for the trade. Indeed, they take the fines lightly as normal operating costs. The Government, if willing to impose heavy penalties, does not actually need to introduce an additional

TDOP System that would cause fear and uncertainty among the entire taxi trade, leading many drivers to consider switching professions and no longer working as taxi drivers.

Deputy President, as a matter of fact, the phrase “psychological stress” has already permeated the entire taxi trade. Therefore, I implore Members, my colleagues, to consider whether we should adopt the stick approach or the carrot approach; whether we should provide the taxi trade with opportunities for progress and improvement, or lash out at them, instilling fear to the point where they no longer want to work as taxi drivers. I hope everyone will give this a second thought.

With these remarks, the Liberal Party and I oppose the Bill. Thank you, Deputy President.

**MR STEVEN HO** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. First of all, I would like to add a remark: the taxi drivers I am going to talk about are a handful of black sheep.

Some time ago, I often heard Members mention a movie called *In Broad Daylight* in this Council when discussing welfare, elderly homes and other matters. They asked if the Secretary had watched the movie, saying that the elders in the movie were very miserable and the situation was very bleak, and so on. Subsequently, the SAR Government introduced some policies for discussion by the Members, and soon implemented some relevant measures. Similarly, the taxi industry also has its own version of *In Broad Daylight*, which is *Taxi Hunter* filmed in 1993. I hope there will be an opportunity to remake this movie in future. In the story, the male protagonist’s wife died because she was refused service by a taxi driver, leading the male protagonist to take revenge on rule-breaking taxi drivers incessantly. Thus, the culture of poor taxi services was already brought to the screen in 1993, but it is not until today, in 2023, that we are discussing a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) here.

Mr CHAN Han-pan has said it is always better to have regulation than no regulation. I am not trying to oppose this statement, but the SAR Government should be held responsible for allowing such a culture to exist. However, the SAR Government should not be blamed for this alone, because this situation was already the case in 1993 under the British Hong Kong Government. So, this is a wrong

culture that was left behind and allowed to persist. After the return to the motherland, some people have even said that it is a Hong Kong characteristic, just like how swearing in a Hong Kong-style tea cafe has become part of Hong Kong's culture until the emergence of a new online culture shock, which is Xiaohongshu as mentioned by Mr LUK Chung-hung just now. When outsiders bad-mouth Hong Kong and point out its flaws—though they are not outsiders, but people from our country—and since non-Hong Kong people have pointed out the flaws of Hong Kong, affecting Hong Kong's economy in real terms and the livelihood of taxi drivers, then a group of people have come forward and said this matter must be addressed.

Secondly, not only the online culture but also the emergence of online hailing platforms has made the business environment for taxi drivers more difficult. However, what is the attitude of the SAR Government towards such online hailing platforms? It is one of tolerance and tacit approval, and I believe this attitude is the main culprit fostering the development of both cultures in a negative direction. If we are asked whether the TDOP System we are discussing today is useful, I regret to inform the public that we have just started to take this problem seriously. Some Scheduled Offences are already criminal acts that warrant immediate arrest, and the number of people who can be remanded may at any time far exceed the maximum number of people who can be accommodated at the renovated Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre. As Mr LUK Chung-hung has just said, as long as decoy operations are carried out at Lan Kwai Fong, remarkable outcomes will be guaranteed, akin to “netting with luxuriant catches”.

I am not sure whether or not it was yesterday, but Mr Edward LEUNG told me that there were apparently nine vehicles from Uber—I should not say Uber, but a certain online hailing platform—seized. He asked me if the seizure of nine “white licence cars” was considered a lot. I replied that it was certainly not a lot, because these are easier to crack down on. The offenders will immediately appear before your eyes when the App of that platform is opened and clicked on. As soon as people get into the vehicles and transfer the fares, the drivers concerned can immediately be arrested. If the Government is determined to crack down on the problem, there are actually many ways to do so, but the authorities have not. So, why have they not done so? We cannot blame the Government entirely either, because there is a market need, and the taxi industry has also evolved into a monopoly under this kind of licensing regulation over a long period of time. Some conscientious taxi drivers have told me that they have certainly violated the

law, but they indeed do not want to do so. They have no choice but to follow suit reluctantly because their peers have snatched up all the business by violating the rules.

Therefore, the SAR Government has failed to formulate fair rules of the game, leading to the industry's downward spiral. Eventually, when a critical point of explosion is reached one day, the SAR Government may have to apologetically take heavy-handed measures to crack down on the problem. However, is this proposal regarded as a heavy-handed one? I think it is definitely not; instead, it can only be described as a stopgap proposal. If I oppose this proposal today, I frankly do not know what other measures the authorities can resort to unless they really enforce the law strictly. However, as many Members have just said, it is not sufficient to solely rely on the Police to take action.

The Secretary mentioned yesterday that technologies would be introduced. Still, these technologies are actually no different from the infrared sensor-activated flushing system commonly found in gentlemen's washrooms nowadays. They have actually been in existence for the past 20 years. Now, it is just about bringing out outdated technologies by installing dash cameras in vehicles, all because the authorities were initially unwilling to legislate or promote it, and only now are they saying they will consider it.

Just now, Mr CHAN Han-pan said that this measure could protect both parties, but I believe it protects the Government rather than passengers and drivers. It safeguards the SAR Government by providing it with a means to offer excuses and evade its responsibility when brought to court. However, it can also show that, after improving the district governance systems and the electoral system nowadays, the SAR Government is truly taking this measure to get practical work done. Previously, the Government could put the blame on the Legislative Council ("LegCo") because of the chaos there, but this is no longer the case. In order to boost the economy, the taxi industry must be regulated properly. At this moment, as I speak at this moment of 4 minutes 59 seconds, I would like to point out again that only a handful of taxi drivers are black sheep, causing some conscientious drivers to be forced to go in the direction of breaking the rules.

Let me give a further explanation with reference to some licensing requirements in the agriculture and fisheries sector. In the past few years, African Swine Fever, which was actually transmitted from Europe, has emerged in the Mainland. However, whenever the SAR Government encounters a new problem,

it often likes to propose to me that additional regulatory clauses should be imposed on the Livestock Keeping Licence. In fact, could the same approach be applied to taxi licences? I constantly hear that tourists coming from the Mainland or overseas to Hong Kong must pay fares in cash and thus must exchange for cash in Hong Kong dollars in advance before coming to Hong Kong in order to take a taxi there. However, if the authorities want to improve the service quality, can they include a clause in the licensing requirements that mandates the acceptance of certain payment methods? If they do not even dare to do so, I really do not see the point of having Secretary LAM of the SAR Government sitting here.

I hope Secretary LAM will seriously consider making changes to the current situation in several ways. First, in response to the emergence of online hailing platforms, what changes need to be made to the monopolization arising from the existing taxi system? Second, how can the public regain confidence in the taxi industry? It means they will not need to worry about drivers' refusing hire, overcharging or not using the most direct practicable route every time they hail a taxi or use an online taxi hailing service. If these two points cannot be achieved, I do not believe the SAR Government will be able to settle this matter simply by introducing a TDOP System.

I hope the SAR Government will again pay attention to the fact that if it continues to do nothing, more social costs will have to be used to address these problems. For instance, last time when I was at the airport late at night, I was very tired and had to take a taxi home. When I reached the taxi stand, a staff member asked me where I was going. After I replied that I was going to Yuen Long, the staff member used a device to input information and printed out a receipt for me marking a value of \$230 or so. The staff member informed me that if the taxi took a detour and exceeded this amount, it would be a case of overcharging. Surprisingly, a person is designated at the taxi stand to deal with the matter in such a way. In order to guard against taxi drivers overcharging, an additional person and an extra device are used to counter a handful of black sheep. Why must such a lot of social costs be used? It is because we do not trust taxi drivers; however, remember, I have to emphasize again that it is only for the sake of a handful of taxi drivers that so much has to be done, including legislating and establishing certain systems.

Therefore, I hope that the SAR Government will once again review their objectives, methods and ideologies in resolving this problem, and that it will not just try to get by or provide a stopgap measure by telling us that a review will be

conducted again after two years to study whether the relevant Schedule is effective. I cannot see where the authorities' determination lies when they are so conservative even in their inspection work. However, Mr CHAN Han-pan, the spokesperson for transport affairs of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, is really generous in that he acts as the glue in the middle, fully engaging in communication and lobbying. Of course, Mr Frankie YICK and other Members are doing the same, but I do not quite remember the details. It is precisely because everyone has acted this way that I, who am so hot-tempered and want to have *Taxi Hunter* remade, can manage to tolerate the passage of this amendment proposal.

I hope Secretary LAM can tell me again in his speech later what he will do about the entire taxi industry, including the "white licence cars" offered by online hailing platforms, in addition to introducing this TDOP System. Please let me hear a speech with full and solid determination. This proposal will be passed, as I believe it has a good chance of being passed despite the opposition from some Members, such as Ir LEE Chun-keung who just expressed his objection. Having said that, the purpose of LegCo is not just to get proposals passed, but to seek the greatest level of support. After the improvement of the electoral system, many matters on which there is consensus have been unanimously approved by us, even if there is only one opposing vote—which may be too few—if there are several opposing votes, I think it is imperative for the SAR Government to review the situation.

Deputy President, I am just taking this opportunity to express my anger as an ordinary citizen who takes a taxi daily. If no changes are made today, I believe there is a very high probability that citizens will end up riding in taxis driven by a handful of black sheep. I do not hope this situation will occur again.

Thank you, Deputy President.

**DR HOEY SIMON LEE** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. I often take a taxi and have met many good drivers. However, unfortunately, if we ask Hong Kong citizens how many of them have taken a taxi without feeling aggrieved, the answer is probably close to zero. Especially when people take a taxi to cross the harbour, it is highly unlikely that they have never experienced a refusal to hire. I believe many Honourable colleagues have also reflected here the quality and

attitude of the drivers in the taxi industry and even the overall service at present. Therefore, punishment must be administered in this regard first.

I support this legislative exercise, but from a criminological perspective, having laws in place is not the most important thing, but law enforcement is what truly matters. The reason is that even with very stringent laws, if the likelihood of being caught after committing a crime is very low, there will still be a very high potential for a crime to reoccur. This is a fundamental theory in criminology. We already have several pieces of legislation in place. If the problem persists after the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill is passed today and thus have the tool in place, then the problem lies in the effectiveness of law enforcement.

Let us delve further into why there are so many problems with taxi drivers. For instance, the example mentioned just now about taxi drivers' reluctance to cross the harbour may be related to the issue of taxi shift changes. As the time of shift change approaches, drivers become poor in attitude, but the underlying reason is actually that their income will be affected. A lot of other examples are in fact the results stemming from the mechanism. For instance, we have certainly heard from news reports that during typhoons, taxi drivers demand extra fares before they are willing to travel certain routes—which happens so frequently that it is no longer reported in the news—and the underlying reason for this is actually related to insurance.

If we look further into this issue and explore why fewer people are joining the trade nowadays, we will find that it is actually directly related to income. I once conducted a study comparing public transport fares in 15 cities with a development level similar to that of Hong Kong. Our fare difference between buses and taxis in the first 3 km is about 3 times to 3.2 times, while in other places, the difference in the same km is 5 times, reflecting that our taxi fare prices are not able to support taxi drivers in earning a reasonable income.

Of course, if taxi fares are to be increased, we have to consider many factors, including inflation and citizens' affordability. Therefore, we may think about implementing a two-tier pricing system for taxi fares, whereby some taxis with better quality may charge higher fares while others may maintain their original fares, so as to give the industry more flexibility and bring it closer to the situation in some similar cities around the world. I have chosen this number of km because it is the average distance most passengers travel by taxi.

If that is the case, we may need to increase the number of taxi licences. However, we are currently quite conservative about issuing more taxi licences. Is it because we want to protect the taxi licence premium? If that is indeed the reason, then it is unacceptable because it will mean protecting the interests of a small group of people at the cost of society as a whole.

In fact, if we do adopt a two-tier system, we can do so this way: The existing taxi licences can be for taxis that charge higher fares, while the new licences we issue can be for taxis that charge lower fares. This can act as a buffer for both the quality of taxi services and the stabilization of taxi licence premium.

Therefore, on the whole, I share the view of many Honourable colleagues that it is not the case that the entire taxi industry or service can be improved with the addition of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System today and the passage of the relevant legislative amendments yesterday. I do not think this is the case. For this reason, I am pessimistic that the passage of these two bills can improve the present situation. I think there is really an urgent need for the Government to think deeply about what the future of this component of Hong Kong's transport services should be, which involves the relationship between online hailed cars and taxis, the level of taxi fares charged, how the taxi industry can continue to attract new entrants and so on. These all require comprehensive planning by the Government.

The passage of these two bills has merely shown the public that we have really started to consider this matter seriously, but this is far from enough. Therefore, the Government is actually shouldering a very significant responsibility in this regard, and it is necessary for the Government to design and guide the entire industry as soon as possible with respect to how this component of the public transport services should be designed and where it should be heading. Otherwise, the problem will not be resolved.

Finally, I would like to cite an example—though not a good one—as a conclusion so that everyone can see the severity of the problem. Earlier, Mr Steven HO has mentioned Xiaohongshu. Many Mainland people in Xiaohongshu or around us have said that Hong Kong's taxi drivers discriminate against them. So, I believe the aforesaid situation in Hong Kong can be used as an excellent justification when we explain to Mainland people that Hong Kong taxi drivers are not discriminating against Mainlanders but everyone. From this example, which is not at all funny but rather ironic, it is evident that today's Bill

should be passed because having laws is better than not having any, and having regulation is better than having none at all. In fact, there are rules, but as long as people do not break them, these rules have nothing to do with them. The key lies in law enforcement, as well as the comprehensive planning of the entire taxi industry.

Thank you, Deputy President. I so submit.

**DR JUNIUS HO** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, taxi drivers are human too. “Nobody with a head of hair will want to look bald”. Today, we criticize the taxi industry for being plagued with all sorts of problems, as if we are asking taxi drivers to shoulder all the sins of society. I believe this is not fair.

As the saying goes, “It takes more than one cold day for the river to freeze three feet deep”. For instance, I will certainly want to make more money if I have the ability. So, I have to work 27 days a month and may even have to work “two shifts” a day consecutively without any holidays. This kind of almost-inhuman life is that of working at a sundry shop, which I heard about when I was studying in the United Kingdom in the past. The workers there only have two or three rest days in a year. One rest day is on the Chinese New Year, followed by a day off when a relative passes away, that is, a day off for attending weddings or funerals. The third rest day is when they themselves die. For this reason, we need to show some understanding towards taxi drivers.

Every time I take a taxi, those drivers are very nice to me, not because they know me, but because I always tip them a little bit more. Even for a taxi driver who displays an “Out of Service” sign, as long as the driver is willing to roll down the window, I will add \$100 to the fare. This solves the problem. If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. However, why are there so many “monkeys” in this industry now? It is because, at one time, we expect them to perform somersaults beautifully; at another time, we want them to act as ambassadors of Hong Kong and not to drag Hong Kong down; however, despite everything, we want them to do “monkey shows”. Then, we even question why they perform so poorly and why they are so disgraceful. Yet, how much do we actually pay them? A flagfall fare of \$27 for the first 2 km and only \$1 or so for each subsequent km. Nowadays, it is hard to have small change amounting to more than one dollar in our pockets. Who still carries small change when going out? It is typical of a

distorted mentality to require others to accept meagre fares while expecting them to provide extensive services.

The Honourable colleagues of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions have spoken up for wage earners. I fully understand and strongly agree to the concept of the Bill that we cannot let a handful of black sheep ruin the entire industry. As Brother Chun-keung has said, “A rat dropping spoils the whole pot of porridge”. However, the problem is that now, all ... not all, but there are too many “rat droppings”. How should we deal with these “rat droppings”? Therefore, we come up with this Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”) as one of the solutions, but we must have a set of “combination punches”.

I remember my father once taught me a point. He said, “When teaching a child, do not just scold him, but also praise him. The more you scold him, the naughtier he will become, and the less he will listen to you. However, if you praise him and make him feel valued, important and appreciated, he will immediately become well-behaved.” So, what should we do? These taxi drivers actually play an important role in Hong Kong’s transport sector. Still, it seems that their presence is shrinking, resulting in an abnormal phenomenon where the number of passengers has dropped from 1 million in the past to 800 000 at present. What can be done? The pie, which has to be as big as possible, is nonetheless shrinking. We do not want taxi drivers to raise their fares, yet we expect them to wear tuxedos and ride a “palace car” to pick up passengers for grocery shopping. Could it be considered psychologically imbalanced in any way?

Deputy President, I think we should have a set of “combination punches”. The Transport and Logistics Bureau has proposed this Bill, which I think is like brewing Chinese medicine—Is Prof CHAN present? He is not here—brewing Chinese medicine involves using not just one herb but rather a combination of more than 10 herbs, and in some cases even up to 24 herbs. After each ingredient is put in, we may find one is toxic, another is cold-natured, and the other is overly nourishing. If it turns out that the overly nourishing herb causes the patient who takes it to have a nosebleed, then we should use a cold-natured herb to balance it out.

Therefore, relying solely on this TDOP System is not enough. However, I highly appreciate that the Bureau already proposed a bill yesterday for providing point-to-point quality services, allowing for price negotiation over the phone. For instance, if I offer \$500 to go from one street end to the other, someone or a whole

fleet of vehicles will immediately come to pick me up. This is just one of the elements, which I think is the right one.

However, Deputy President, we need to consider the dignity of taxi drivers. Where do we place their dignity? If we treat their dignity like trash put beneath the carpet, how can we expect them to respect us? As the saying goes, “I will give you a yard in return for an inch.” This is part of our traditional culture. If you treat me with contempt, I will reciprocate with even greater contempt. It is a vicious circle. Is this simple logic not something fundamental to comprehend? I believe we should understand such a fundamental concept. It is crucial for us to be mindful of this concept in our policies and foster a sense of caring for others in our community.

The second aspect is about the working environment. What is the condition of those taxis like? They are old, worn out and smelly. If you sit in a taxi, you will have to cover your nose after less than five minutes. Taxi drivers have to stay in the compartments for eight hours. Perhaps they do not think they stink too much, as the saying “after a long while, one no longer smells the stench” suggests. However, is it not like staying in a fish market when sitting in an old taxi compartment?

What should we do? In some advanced places, vehicles over five years old are not allowed to be used as taxis. Have the authorities set a limit on this aspect? The situation that taxis aged 10 years are still running on the streets is an issue that the authorities should address but have thus far not done so. Why not? Is it to protect the interests of taxi companies? Are the authorities aware that taxi companies are currently charging taxi drivers a rental fee of \$500 per shift for a new vehicle? Let me do a simple calculation here: based on the calculation of \$500 a shift, three shifts will amount to \$1,500, which is \$45,000 in 30 days and equivalent to \$540,000 a year. So, in five years’ time, a rental income of \$2.7 million will be incurred. Have the authorities calculated this amount?

How much is a taxi worth now? Those electric vehicles cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, but all the authorities need to do is to waive the tax. The taxis I take in the Mainland are BYD vehicles costing \$200,000, and I find them quite nice. Despite the significantly low taxi fares charged there, the taxi drivers are very happy with their job. So, why do we not have this kind of empathy? Why do we not try to feel it ourselves? What is the point of criticizing our taxi drivers? Even if the authorities increase the offence points again after three years,

not to mention 15 offence points, even “doubling” the offence points will not resolve the problem.

So, Deputy President, I support the passage of this Bill, but this principle and this spirit should not be treated as a panacea, and a set of “combination punches” must be added. We need to respect taxi drivers, give them dignity and improve their working environment, which is their vehicles. Moreover, with prohibited zones everywhere and many tourists coming to Hong Kong, how will tourists know what “double yellow”, “triple yellow” and “quadruple yellow” lines mean? I only know of “quadruple yolk” mooncakes. Tourists will have no idea about our double yellow lines. So, they will just open the door and get into a taxi upon seeing one, but the fines will then fall on the driver.

For all taxi drivers, the applicable prohibited zones should be reduced to facilitate their operation because they are our ambassadors. Otherwise, when tourists open the door to get into a taxi, the driver can only say “No! No! No!”, “Don’t! Don’t! Don’t!” and “Don’t into my car!”—because taxi drivers do not speak English, and they should use a full statement like “Don’t get on my taxi” instead. Before the driver finishes saying, “Don’t into my car”, the tourist has already got into the taxi. Therefore, the authorities should allow for cases of “pick up, drop-off” without issuing fixed penalty tickets, though stopping and waiting should not be permitted. The law as a whole should be amended in these aspects to recognize the working environment of taxi drivers and give them a sense of presence. Then, they will win our applause. However, at present, this is not the case. There is only shirking of responsibilities, with everyone minding their own business only.

Deputy President, I so submit. Thank you.

**MS ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. In fact, I have really met some very good taxi drivers who did not charge me for the ride when I forgot to bring my wallet. Some kaifongs have commended that some excellent taxi drivers are willing to offer extra emergency services in urgent situations, while some have a very good service attitude. Therefore, we should not make any sweeping generalization although we are aware that there are now some black sheep in the trade, as there are taxi drivers who do very well and those who do not. I believe the Government has put forward this legislative proposal in

the hope of taking action against those black sheep who have seriously violated the rules.

Deputy President, regarding the issue of taxis (especially “black taxis”), I have looked up the questions I raised in the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) and the history of the proceedings, and have found that I actually raised a written question to the Government as early as 5 December 2012 on problems such as “black taxis”, refusing hire and selecting passengers. The figures disclosed at that time were about 18 000 taxis, with approximately 57 000 taxi drivers, and the number of complaints each year was about 8 000-odd cases. Do Members feel that the above figures are more or less the same as those today?

Deputy President, at that time, I even carried out a decoy operation by going to Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui with media reporters, pretending to be a tourist speaking Putonghua, and standing on the street with many shopping bags. As a result, I was attracted to a taxi with an “Out of Service” sign which pulled up beside me. The driver rolled down the window and asked me where I wanted to go in Putonghua. When I replied that I wanted to go to Hung Hom, the driver haggled with me over the price and finally said he would charge me like \$150 for taking me from Canton Road to Hung Hom. After getting into the taxi, I continued to pretend to be a tourist. Upon arrival, the driver really charged me the aforesaid amount of fare. I encountered “black taxis” several times, and each time I was charged a different price, but none of those drivers charged me according to the meter. I still remember when I returned to LegCo after completing the decoy operation, there was an outcry from Honourable colleagues who thought that it was too dangerous for me to do so, and that I would be in trouble if it were known that I, as a Member, had carried out a decoy operation.

It was 2012 at that time, but it is now 2023. Today, the Secretary has proposed the establishment of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points (“TDOP”) System, which I certainly support. Still, the content therein is actually no different from the situation I encountered back then, involving acts such as overcharging taxi fares, wilfully refusing hire, touting for passengers, not using the most direct practicable route and taxi pooling. These circumstances under which offence points will have to be incurred have existed for no less than 10 years, right? In the past 10 years, has there been any progress? In fact, no progress has been seen.

Therefore, I fully understand the hardships and challenges faced by taxi drivers who have to spend long hours inside their vehicles every day, striving to make ends meet. Just recently, a very young 31-year-old taxi driver suddenly passed away due to the strain of working two shifts in a day. These are all tragedies that I do not wish to see. Nevertheless, we still need to resolve these problems. Of course, I think implementing a TDOP System can serve as a certain deterrent, as it mainly targets some black sheep. For completely law-abiding drivers, this system should have no impact on them at all.

However, I have actually received feedback from some taxi drivers. In their opinion, the authorities' doing so will firstly deal a blow to their morale and apparently further stigmatize them by making people believe there is a need to enact a law specifically targeting taxi drivers because all of them are driving "black taxis" unscrupulously. Taxi drivers feel that such a move actually damages their dignity.

Additionally, in their viewpoint, with a driving-offence points system already in place, will the introduction of the proposed TDOP System potentially result in the imposition of double penalties? If offence points are incurred under both systems, double penalties will indeed be imposed. Of course, I have explained to them that double penalties will not be imposed, because if they have not committed the specified offences, that is, they are not "black taxi" drivers overcharging taxi fares, they will not be affected by this TDOP System actually. However, I fully understand their reaction, unhappiness and sense of injustice, so I also hope that, as Mr CHAN Han-pan has said earlier, rewards can be given besides punishment. Is it possible for the authorities to set up more incentive schemes to make the taxi drivers with good performance happier in their work?

Earlier, a Member has also mentioned that the current problems with taxis lie not only in taxi drivers but also in the hardware of taxis. To taxi drivers, problems such as dilapidated vehicles and unpleasant odours are indeed among the reasons contributing to their poor working environment and customer dissatisfaction. These problems cannot be resolved simply by improving taxi drivers' service attitude. I feel that the entire taxi industry has actually fallen into a vicious cycle. A poor environment leads to a lack of customers, which in turn makes earning a living difficult and naturally results in fewer people joining the trade. With people in the industry earning less money, some may take risks because of problems in making a living. This is a vicious cycle. Therefore, I

support this legislative proposal as having it in place is preferable to not having any measures at all; however, it does not resolve the problem of taxi service quality in Hong Kong. Overall, I am of the opinion that significant reforms and improvements are necessary for Hong Kong's taxi services to become more effective, encompassing both quality enhancements and systemic changes.

I believe the proposed TDOP System is preferable in that instead of incurring all offence points in a one-off manner, which will result in the individuals concerned losing their jobs as taxi drivers, an advice of TDOP will be served when a person has incurred 8 (less than 15) offence points. If a person incurs 10 offence points, the person will be given a chance to rectify the situation by attending a taxi service improvement course ("TSIC"). Only when a person incurs all 15 offence points will the person face disqualification from driving a taxi for a specified period. I believe this will definitely have some deterrent effect, as most taxi drivers who have incurred 10 offence points will not dare to do so again. As for the contents of TSIC, I am unsure whether they can truly bring about substantial changes or if they are just a perfunctory effort. This deserves attention.

Many taxi drivers and Honourable colleagues are concerned about law enforcement, which I believe also warrants study. Deputy President, apart from how to enforce the law, I have also received numerous complaints pointing out that every taxi is installed with a dash camera, which, nevertheless, takes pictures of the passengers instead of the outside street view, thus resulting in a lack of protection for the passengers' privacy. Nowadays, there are some online platforms dedicated to sharing video clips, both live and edited, from these dash cameras inside taxi compartments. Therefore, we propose to draw reference from the practice of Macao and solve this problem through technologies by installing dash cameras that directly connect to the Government's cloud server, where a central cloud-based camera system records all footage inside the vehicles. In this way, even if it is necessary to enforce the law, there will not be inconclusive arguments with each party telling their own version of the story.

Moreover, the installation of a dash camera system by the Government can also resolve the problem of drivers installing their own dash cameras. Currently, many taxi drivers install dash cameras on the grounds to protect themselves and prevent robberies. However, with the dash camera system installed by the Government, taxi drivers will not be allowed to install their own dash cameras to take pictures of passengers, thus providing greater privacy protection for passengers.

Macao's experience has already shown us that installing dash cameras can have a significant deterrent effect and greatly reduce the number of violations. Therefore, I think the Government should also thoroughly study and implement this system. The legislation on privacy protection in Hong Kong is already very clear; installation of dash cameras can be justified as long as passengers are duly informed, thereby negating privacy concerns and making it an invalid excuse for non-implementation.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support this Bill.

**DR KENNEDY WONG** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, as a legal professional, I do not think there is any problem with the spirit of the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”). As we all know, any road user may violate the law, and the relevant legislation also provides for penalties, including incurring offence points. I have been observing the development of the taxi industry and have listened to the views expressed by several Honourable colleagues today. I am deeply concerned about the development of the taxi industry.

The taxi industry serves as an icon representing Hong Kong. A few months ago, when a cruise ship berthed at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, the weather happened to be inclement, resulting in hundreds of passengers waiting painfully for taxis near the terminal. Although the Bureau had made a lot of coordination efforts at that time, taxi drivers felt there was no incentive to enter the terminal to pick up passengers. This had a great impact on the overall image of Hong Kong.

Is the actual number of taxis insufficient? I would like to listen to the views of the Secretary later on. Perhaps, is it because the taxi industry itself is operating under difficult conditions and lacks significant room for development that many talented individuals are unwilling to join the industry? What should be the way forward for the taxi industry? I am very concerned about this.

Deputy President, since the beginning of this year, the number of visitors to Hong Kong has been rising steadily, and it has so far recovered to about 70% of the pre-pandemic level of 2019. The development of the taxi industry is closely related to Hong Kong's tourism industry and its position as an international tourist centre. Whether the Bureau can make the taxi industry better through regulation under draconian laws is something I have doubts about.

Deputy President, although I do not often take a taxi, I am aware that taxis are classified into “red taxis”, “green taxis”, and the less common “blue taxis”. Certain operating areas for taxis have been delineated over time, with “red taxis” serving the urban areas, “green taxis” serving the New Territories regions, and “blue taxis” serving the Lantau Island. Could the authorities consider reviewing such delineation in the future?

Several months ago, the Secretary communicated with our association regarding the Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles. Of course, I fully support this measure, and the Hong Kong Chinese Importers’ & Exporters’ Association, to which I belong, has also given its full support. Since some Hong Kong vehicles can go north via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, will the Bureau consider allowing some taxis to expand their operating areas in the future? If the Bureau regulates the taxi industry with draconian laws without providing appropriate room for development, how can taxi drivers lead a dignified life? According to a survey, taxi drivers in Hong Kong are even older than I am—I have already reached the age of 60. If more young people cannot be attracted to join the taxi industry and taxi drivers are generally elderly, can their income enable them to lead a dignified life?

Deputy President, my current private driver used to drive a taxi. He told me he was fortunate to have sold his taxi long ago and mentioned that it was more comfortable to be a private driver now. This so-called “being more comfortable” may be due to the recent continuous wage rise for private drivers. Looking around the Chamber, at least two Honourable colleagues have told me that they have been unable to hire a private driver these days even they offer \$28,000 to \$32,000. One of the veteran Honourable colleagues has just informed me that he is currently recruiting a private driver, but there have been no applicants even with an offer of \$28,000 to \$32,000. Has the Secretary conducted a detailed study on the actual income of taxi drivers? Has the Secretary looked into their current situation, working hours and career prospects? How can the Secretary alleviate the vicious cycle the taxi industry currently faces?

At present, due to the absence of young people joining the taxi industry and the unpromising prospects, some taxi drivers are resorting to unscrupulous practices in their operation. As soon as the black rainstorm warning signal is hoisted or when a typhoon hits Hong Kong, they overcharge passengers. Some taxi drivers do not follow the rules and resort to taxi pooling and the like. Everyone is clearly aware of the situation. Given that the development prospects

of the taxi industry are so worrying, can the problems be resolved by relying solely on the Bill?

I hope the Secretary and the Bureau will conduct a detailed review of the policy on Hong Kong's taxi industry. In particular, I hope most of all to see an appropriate expansion of the operational areas of taxis, allowing some taxis to travel north or, at the very minimum, to enter the Frontier Closed Area ("FCA"). Suppose individuals returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland via the Huanggang Port can take a Hong Kong taxi directly home from FCA, will the expansion of the taxi industry be facilitated in this way? I hope the Secretary and the Bureau will carefully consider this matter.

Thank you, Deputy President.

**MS YUNG HOI-YAN** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I express my support for the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill that we are discussing today.

In my opinion, the reason for the authorities to enact the legislation is that they have seen many citizens or tourists having no means to lodge complaints, or that it is difficult to combat the relevant offences. In my view, the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System ("TDOP System") should be effective in bringing this handful of lawbreakers to justice and significantly reducing their chance of re-offending. As we can see, this TDOP System is similar to the one for other vehicles, such as private cars. If drivers repeatedly commit offences within a short period, they will incur 10 offence points for serious offences and 5 for less serious offences. Those who have incurred all 15 offence points will have a chance of being disqualified from driving a taxi. In this way, this system serves as a significant deterrent to taxi drivers.

As a barrister myself, I frequently conduct prosecutions in court, including handling cases of illegal parking and vehicle offences in what is commonly known as the "traffic court". I understand the difficulties faced by taxi drivers. Despite knowing they have not violated the law, many taxi drivers sometimes have no choice but to say "I plead guilty" in court to avoid wasting the court's time and the time to scrape a living. Therefore, from another perspective, will the introduction of this TDOP System exert additional pressure on taxi drivers and subject them to increased prosecution stress?

Even if they are really outlaws, they have not been convicted before trial. How can we protect these taxi drivers? If they have truly been framed up, is there a way for them to receive legal aid, legal advice service and so on in court? As everyone knows, there is no Duty Lawyer Service in “traffic courts”. Understandably, taxi drivers will not spend \$8,000 or even \$10,000 on a lawsuit over a fine of \$2,500 or \$1,000. Will the newly introduced legislation increase the pressure on taxi drivers in this regard?

As we all know, some taxi drivers work one shift, while others work two shifts, spending more time driving on the roads than ordinary private car drivers. An ordinary family driver may be a parent who drives to pick up and drop off his or her children, whereas taxi drivers spend much more time driving. Therefore, the TDOP System should target taxi drivers who intentionally break the law. For example, as many Members have mentioned earlier, there are indeed syndicated offences in Hong Kong tourist destinations as mentioned in Xiaohongshu. We hope that when the Police enforce the law, they will target these black spots of traffic violations, rather than increasing general drivers’ pressure of going to court. I think this is an issue that the Government needs to consider.

When introducing a two-tier TDOP System, how can we ensure that truly law-abiding and courteous drivers are protected and not subjected to additional pressure? We have communicated with many taxi drivers. Regarding the legislative exercise, they say since they have not committed these illegal acts, they estimate they will not be affected much. However, this Bill introduces some less serious offences, including taxi pooling or not using the most direct practicable route. Earlier, many Members have also asked about the enforcement standard for not using the most direct practicable route. What constitutes not using the most direct practicable route? How far is it off the route? How much is the extra time? What is considered not using the most direct practicable route? If there is really a dispute, and someone has actually lodged a complaint and taken the evidence, the relevant drivers will have to go to court for a trial. Assuming a taxi driver carries 20 to 30 passengers a day, the chance of him or her facing passenger complaints is much higher than the chance of an ordinary driver parking illegally at areas marked with double yellow lines or “overtaking”. Thus, taxi drivers’ risk of going to court has significantly increased.

However, the Government has not made any effort with respect to legal aid. Of course, this is just the beginning. Yet, after the introduction of the TDOP System, could the Government provide more support to taxi drivers or general

drivers in terms of legal aid even for vehicle violations dealt with by the ordinary “traffic courts”? This is because the pressure on drivers is really too great. As their income is meagre, I think it is unfair to them if they have to cope with the pressure from legal litigations when facing legal sanctions.

Secondly, on evidence collection, we understand that there are different views that encouraging the installation of electronic dash cameras in taxis will be conducive to protecting the safety of both the drivers themselves and their passengers. However, this is a considerable investment. It will be desirable for the Bureau to collaborate financially with the business sector, or to encourage the business sector to give more support to taxi drivers so that the industry can replace dash cameras.

In court, lawsuit cases with dash cameras are easier to handle. Whether it is to protect passengers or drivers ... whether it is speeding or scratching of vehicles, it is much easier to ascertain who is responsible, which can thus reduce disputes between parties. Therefore, we hope the Bureau will collaborate with the business sector and taxi associations to provide more support to taxi practitioners. More technological collaboration in this area will help effectively combat “black taxis” or those acting unlawfully.

Thirdly, on the current law enforcement issue, can the Government or police officers step up law enforcement at tourist black spots? I have asked many taxi drivers who all say they seldom look for business opportunities on Canton Road because they know that place is full of illegal taxis and taxi drivers intent on committing unlawful acts. Basically, most of them nowadays are using online hailing platforms to take orders, or waiting for passengers to call them by phone through other ways. Therefore, to provide a better experience for visitors, at taxi stands ... When we go to places like Japan, we can see a taxi fare chart posted there. Suppose the normal fares, for example, from Tsim Sha Tsui to Causeway Bay or Wan Chai can be specified in a fare chart. In that case, this fare chart can then prevent passengers from being cheated and reduce the chance of lawless persons deceiving passengers and tourists. I feel that various parties can obtain support in this way.

Regarding refusing hire, it is actually very troublesome. As we all know, taxis are differentiated into Hong Kong Island taxis, Kowloon taxis, and so on, but we are now encouraging online hailing. Yesterday, we just discussed the fleet issue. When hailing online, passengers can choose a cross-harbour taxi. If they

do not need to cross the harbour, they can choose a taxi that only runs on Hong Kong Island or in Kowloon. If they cross the harbour, they can choose which tunnel to use. In fact, the Government really needs to be a bit patient and give more support to related groups and fleets, so that everyone can enjoy flexibility in taking a ride or choosing a taxi. Do we still need to differentiate taxis into cross-harbour and non-cross-harbour ones? After all, Hong Kong is so small. In future, when going to the Greater Bay Area (“GBA”), do we have to differentiate taxis into GBA taxis as well?

The entire industry actually hopes to have improvement. Still, our Government has not yet provided them with a forward-looking idea in this regard to make them understand the necessity of improvement. With the introduction of this TDOP System proposed by the Government today, we hope that it can contribute to the taxi industry’s advancement and facilitate the overall growth of Hong Kong’s tourism industry, thus enhancing the reputation of our tourism industry.

I hope that after the enactment of this legislation, the aforesaid matters can be taken forward effectively. Most importantly, I hope the Government will consider the suggestions regarding legal aid so as to alleviate the pressure on taxi drivers.

Thank you, Deputy President.

**MR KWOK WAI-KEUNG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. Firstly, I appreciate the speech made by Mr Steven HO. Besides, several Honourable colleagues have expressed a higher degree of empathy for the poor quality of taxi services at present, and have been willing to find out the reasons behind it. Of course, although Dr Junius HO has just stated his support for the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System (“TDOP System”), he has also expressed many views of the industry.

Deputy President, in fact, when a complaint is lodged against a taxi driver, there seems to be a wrestling between the driver and the passenger at first glance. That is to say, one of them wants to get into the taxi while the other one refuses to let him or her in. This is what happens. However, we must not overlook the fact that taxi drivers may also be in a difficult dilemma, as they have numerous

considerations behind their actions that prevent them from meeting their customers' demands. Why do I say so?

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

Firstly, the quality of vehicles is a factor to consider. Regarding automobiles, as a user myself, I have noticed that the seats in taxis are getting old or that the quality of the vehicles has significantly deteriorated. In fact, clear-minded Honourable colleagues will surely know that when taxis were switched to ones using liquefied petroleum gas (“LPG”), the government departments tilted towards vehicle owners and encouraged them to replace their vehicles with LPG ones by relaxing the age limit for vehicles. Figures from a few years ago had already shown that out of 18 000 taxis in Hong Kong, 5 000 had an age of 13 years or more. Everyone can imagine how serious the problem of taxi ageing is.

Additionally, apart from the fact that vehicle owners are responsible for the quality of their vehicles, the operational model of the industry itself also has a long history. First of all, it is a leasing system, with two shifts 24 hours a day and drivers being self-employed. Internationally, taxi fares in Hong Kong are relatively inexpensive. I cannot find more recent data, but the latest global comparison of taxi fares was conducted in 2017. In that ranking, Zurich, Switzerland, ranked first in terms of taxi fares, with a 3-km fare costing more than US\$25 or about HK\$200. Hong Kong ranked fiftieth in terms of taxi fares, with a 3-km fare of only HK\$48. Of course, I am aware that there has been a fare increase for taxis in Hong Kong before, but taxi fares in other places have also risen. Whether Hong Kong still ranks fiftieth now is something that needs to be verified by the relevant departments.

In addition, if a driver is issued a fixed penalty ticket, the driver needs to pay the penalty out of his or her own pocket. A driver needs to pay a deposit to rent a taxi. In the case of an accident, the driver is required to pay a “deductible”. Besides, if there is an issue with the vehicle, the driver can rent another one; however, if the driver encounters any problem, the driver receives no protection whatsoever. As we all know now, the Police are issuing fixed penalty tickets vigorously, causing drivers to have meals in their vehicles and having limited time for toilet breaks. Although a shift lasts 12 hours, as everyone knows, the streets

are not busy 24 hours a day, so the operating hours for each shift may only be five or six hours at most.

The problem is that taxi drivers are not working without concern; instead, they must figure out how to earn enough to cover their expenses without incurring losses. A driver may work five hours daily by crossing the harbour five times. Spending one hour on crossing the harbour once, the driver spends precisely five hours on crossing the harbour five times and then earns \$500 to \$600. However, the driver may be working for nothing and even lose money instead of being paid on that day because, as a Member has just mentioned, the rental fee alone is \$500, without taking into account the cost of fuel and other expenses. So, when drivers have to consider so many issues, how much room do they really have?

President, the crux of the matter now is whether the TDOP System can help this situation. Some Honourable colleagues say it can help, but frankly speaking, I think the chance of it being helpful is not high. Why? Last year, of the 2 000-odd complaint cases involving taxis, 40% of them were about refusing hire. Of course, I do not know if each of these cases of refusing hire is related to crossing the harbour. At the breakfast meeting before the Legislative Council meeting this morning, our Honourable colleagues unanimously expressed strong interest in this gesture unique to Hong Kong, which is hailing taxis. What does this gesture represent? It represents crossing the harbour, something that is not found elsewhere. However, does travelling from Central to Causeway Bay count as crossing the harbour? Previously, “black taxi” drivers ripped tourists off, charging them hundreds of dollars for a trip from Central to Causeway Bay and claiming that it was due to the need to cross the harbour. This is ridiculous. However, the question is why crossing the harbour makes Hong Kong Island, separated by the Victoria Harbour, feel like a world apart.

President, I would like to elaborate further on the issue of refusing hire. Let me “play safe” first. If there are drivers who are “ripping passengers off” and overcharging them, they should be eliminated immediately, without the need of incurring offence points, so as to avoid complications. These “rat droppings” must be swept away instantly. Currently, the TDOP System includes refusal of hire as an offence. However, it is relatively simple for drivers to avoid getting implicated in such instances. As many Honourable colleagues understand, as long as a taxi driver always displays an “Out of Service” sign, no refusal of hire will be involved. In the future, you will not see a taxi’s “flag” on the street, but only that sign. When taxi drivers see people waving their hands, they will stop

and ask where they want to go. Is this how the situation should be? So, I actually have serious doubts about whether the TDOP System can serve any practical effect. That is the first point.

Secondly, I myself have also experienced unsuccessful attempts to hail taxis for cross-harbour trips, something I have just mentioned as being difficult to accomplish. The traffic congestion problem in Hong Kong is very serious, and the tunnels are saturated in terms of usage. During peak hours, the utilization rate of every single tunnel exceeds 100%, indicating that queuing is inevitable as demand always surpasses the capacity of the tunnels. Of course, I understand passengers who hail taxis are a bit anxious. I also understand passengers will be particularly angry if the drivers refuse to take them at this moment. I have just described a series of problems; for example, if a driver who has taken passengers across the harbour is unfamiliar with the roads there, it is difficult for the driver to pick up passengers there on his or her return trip. Thus, the driver may choose to return without taking passengers or wait at the cross-harbour taxi stand for passengers, but it is uncertain how long the wait will be. How long will the driver have to wait during those five to six hours of prime time? In addition to waiting for cross-harbour passengers on his or her return trip, a driver has to wait for gas filling because every taxi must be refuelled before each shift change. Everyone knows that each visit to a gas filling station involves waiting in line.

Under such circumstances, without even taking into account the time drivers need for cleaning and meals, how much time is actually left for them to do business? For this reason, every time I try to hail a taxi to cross the harbour, I will ask the driver, “Are you going to cross the harbour?” It is not a big deal if he or she is not crossing the harbour. The situation is a bit better at night because there are not too many passengers crossing the harbour; however, during the daytime rush hours, it is indeed difficult to successfully hail a taxi unless it is a pre-booked taxi. I have taken a pre-booked taxi to cross the harbour without any problem because it was arranged in advance, and the driver may be coming from a nearby cross-harbour taxi stand. This is something to consider, and I hope the problem can be solved through technologies.

Ultimately, drivers want to make a living. Suppose drivers take passengers across the harbour or to a place where no passengers will get into their taxis on their return trips. In that case, they will consider their opportunity cost, that is, the potential income they can earn from taking other passengers instead may enable them to earn a living. They have to do the calculation because of so many

restrictions and conditions that force them to make a choice. Of course, members of the public are unhappy to hear this, but this is the reality. However, the current environment for the entire taxi industry is not ideal. The good orders have been taken by “white licence cars”, leaving taxi drivers with the only choice to pick up other passengers like short-haul passengers with lower fares. Yet, taxi drivers are then asked to represent Hong Kong, build up an international image and show hospitality. How can this be justified?

Therefore, under such circumstances, it is, in fact, difficult for the industry to operate. Hence, at the Bills Committee meetings, I, first of all, told the relevant departments that I could not stop them from handing in their homework and carrying out some management work. However, so far, my Honourable colleagues also think that the Government has not taken any measures to assist the development of the industry, nor considered rectifying the current environment that favours taxi owners while neglecting taxi drivers. Therefore, regardless of whether the Bill is passed or not, the most important thing is how the Government will assist the industry in the next step to attract more newcomers to join the industry, which will then create opportunities to improve the services.

Thank you, President.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): If not, I now call upon the Secretary for Transport and Logistics to reply. Then, the debate will come to a close.

**SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS** (in Cantonese): President, once again, I would like to thank Mr CHAN Kin-por, Chairman of the Bills Committee, and other members, as well as the colleagues from the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) Secretariat for their effort and support, which has enabled the resumption of the Second Reading debate on the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill (“the Bill”) today. I would also like to thank all the 24 Members who spoke yesterday and just now for their views, and I am grateful to Members for their support.

The quality of taxi services has been a matter of concern in recent years. The Transport Complaints Unit under the Transport Advisory Committee received thousands of complaints related to taxis each year during the period from 2020 to 2022, reflecting that there is still much room for improvement in taxi service quality. Considering the public's strong demand for enhancing the quality of taxi services, we believe that in addition to measures such as the introduction of the taxi fleet regime, effective measures must also be implemented to strengthen the deterrent effect against malpractices of taxi drivers, so as to combat the black sheep in the taxi industry and enhance its overall image.

In this connection, the Government introduced the Bill to LegCo on 12 July this year, proposing to model on the existing driving-offence points system and introduce a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points (“TDOP”) System in respect of 11 offences related to taxi drivers. Under the TDOP System, only the four most serious offences (i.e. defacing, damaging or altering a taximeter, overcharging, and two offences relating to refusal to accept a hire) will be assigned 10 points. These offences involve an obvious mens rea and fraudulent behaviour which may result in passengers having to pay more than the normal fare or may directly affect the supply of taxis as a point-to-point service. Therefore, we consider it necessary to assign higher points for these offences in order to enhance the deterrent effect. Other relatively minor offences will only be assigned five or three points to give taxi drivers more room to rectify their behaviour. In determining the relevant points, we have taken on board the industry's views and balanced the community's strong desire to step up efforts to combat the malpractices of individual taxi drivers.

The design of the proposed TDOP System is similar to that of the driving-offence points system. Under the TDOP System, accumulation of offence points up to certain thresholds will trigger corresponding actions or penalties. Specifically, if a person incurs 8 to 14 points within a two-year period, the Commissioner for Transport (“the Commissioner”) will serve on the person an advice of TDOP. If a person incurs 10 or more points within two years, the Commissioner will require the person to attend and complete a taxi service improvement course (“TSIC”) at his/her own expense within a specified period of time. If a person incurs 15 points or more within two years, he/she will be disqualified from driving a taxi for a certain period of time. We believe that the relevant system will help alert taxi drivers to pay attention to their service attitude and behaviour in a timely manner, urge them to make improvements, and at the same time strengthen the overall deterrent effect, particularly against those drivers who repeatedly commit various offences related to taxi services.

During the scrutiny of the Bill by the Bills Committee, members have generally agreed on the need to impose severe penalties on the black sheep of the taxi industry and to strengthen the deterrent effect against repeat offenders, so as to enhance the overall quality of taxi services and the industry's image. However, some members have also expressed concern about whether the TDOP System will cause taxi drivers to break the law inadvertently or to be disqualified from driving a taxi easily.

I would like to point out that the 11 offences covered by the TDOP System are all existing offences under current legislation, and no new offences are involved. In law enforcement, prosecutors will take into account the evidence, the applicable law and the Prosecution Code (including considering the actual circumstances of each case, and the nature and seriousness of the offence) in deciding whether to initiate prosecutions or not. Taxi drivers will not incur points simply because they have been complained by passengers. They will only incur points after the Police have carried out investigation and collected evidence and they have been convicted by the court. We think that Members have no cause for concern about law-abiding drivers breaking the law inadvertently.

I wish to emphasize that the TDOP System aims to penalize the black sheep of the trade and will not affect the majority of taxi drivers who are good and law-abiding. On the contrary, these black sheep of the trade have severely affected the reputation and image of the taxi industry, and it will be unfair to the good and law-abiding taxi drivers if they are not combated. After the passage of the Bill by LegCo, the TDOP System will come into effect after nine months, allowing the Transport Department ("TD") and the taxi industry ample time to prepare for the implementation of the TDOP System. TD will actively brief the taxi industry on the contents of the legislation so that the industry can grasp the operation of the TDOP System.

Regarding the other related matters mentioned by some Members yesterday and this morning, I would like to give some responses here. First, many Members suggested in their speeches yesterday and just now that the Government should make it mandatory for the compartments of all taxis to be installed with video recording systems, so that in the event of a dispute between a driver and a passenger or a complaint by a passenger against the behaviour of a driver, video footage can be recorded as evidence to facilitate law enforcement.

The Government understands Members' concerns. As I also mentioned in my speech yesterday on another taxi service-related bill, the Government has always encouraged the taxi industry to make good use of technologies to enhance service quality. Under the taxi fleet regime, we will require Fleet Licensees to install video recording systems in the compartments of their taxi fleets. We hope to promote the installation of such devices in other taxis as well through the demonstration by taxi fleets. Whether the installation of video recording systems should be made mandatory for all taxis in Hong Kong involves more complex issues. After the passage of the Bill, we will immediately begin to study the feasibility of the relevant proposal and consult the taxi industry next year, with a view to forging a consensus on whether or not to implement the relevant mandatory measures.

Some Members have mentioned whether introducing a TDOP System and a two-tier penalty system will result in imposing "double penalties" on taxi drivers. The TDOP System and the two-tier penalty system target different situations. The two-tier penalty system targets unlawful drivers who repeatedly commit the same offence, while the TDOP System targets those who commit different offences multiple times within two years. These two measures complement each other in enhancing the overall deterrent effect on law-breaking drivers.

Furthermore, the TDOP System does not solely focus on punishing law-breaking taxi drivers but also wishes to remind and educate offenders in a timely manner through serving advices of TDOP and requiring law-breaking taxi drivers to attend a TSIC, so as to urge them to improve their service behaviour and prevent them from violating the law again.

Some Members have also mentioned an offence—we call it "not using the most direct practicable route". We understand that some Members have expressed concern about the definition of "not using the most direct practicable route". I wish to point out that this offence of "not using the most direct practicable route" is already an existing offence under the current legislation and not a new offence. The original text of the relevant provision reads: "Any taxi driver who, without reasonable excuse, drives to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route upon acceptance of a hire." It is not an offence if the taxi driver has a reasonable excuse for not taking the direct practicable route, such as following a passenger's instructions or if there is a traffic accident on the most direct route resulting in serious traffic congestion. What constitutes a "direct practicable route" will, of course, depend on the circumstances of the case. Past

cases have shown that a “direct practicable route” can mean the route with the shortest driving time, not necessarily the shortest distance.

As a good practice, we recommend that drivers should communicate clearly with passengers about the route to be used before starting the journey to avoid disputes. Such a practice can also enhance passengers’ travel experience.

Some Members have also mentioned whether other countries or places have introduced a similar offence point system. To our understanding, other countries or places have also introduced similar offence point systems for certain offences related to taxi drivers, such as Singapore and New York City in the United States.

Let me take Singapore’s points system as an example, which includes dozens of provisions on offences related to taxi driver behaviour, such as overcharging, refusing hire, and not using the most direct practicable route. Different offences are assigned corresponding points according to their severity. If a driver incurs six points or more, his or her licence will be suspended for a period of time. The more points a driver incurs, the longer the licence suspension period will be. If a driver incurs 21 points or more within 24 months, his or her licence will be revoked.

Additionally, some Members have raised the question of whether there is room for reviewing the current operating boundaries for different types of taxis. The introduction of New Territories and Lantau taxis aims to ensure that there are sufficient taxis to serve the more remote rural areas of the New Territories and the Lantau Island region.

Regarding New Territories taxis, their operating areas are mainly limited to the North East and North West New Territories regions to ensure that appropriate New Territories taxi services are available within their operating areas. In the light of the constantly changing circumstances and the demands of New Territories taxi operators and residents, the Government reviews the permitted operating areas for New Territories taxis from time to time and makes appropriate adjustments.

The Government will continue to review the operating boundaries for taxis and maintain communication with the industry. Appropriate adjustments will be made having regard to factors such as the original roles and operating areas of various types of taxis, the traffic development in new development areas, and the completion of major infrastructure facilities.

Many Members have also mentioned how the Government will step up the regulation of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to combat such malpractices through targeted law enforcement actions, including collecting intelligence, conducting undercover operations, and investigating and following up on referral and complaint cases. For example, to improve the service quality of public service vehicles in picking up citizens and tourists, the Police conducted a dedicated operation in September this year to combat malpractices involving public service vehicles and illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by motor vehicles. The Police arrested individuals suspected of illegally driving motor vehicles to carry passengers for hire or reward, driving without a third party risks insurance, and soliciting others to take rides in vehicles for hire at various locations such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Wan Chai and the airport.

The Police welcome members of the public and the industry to proactively provide information to the Police and report illegal carriage of passengers for reward. If sufficient information is available, the Police will definitely conduct serious investigations and take enforcement actions against the relevant activities. The Police will continue to allocate appropriate resources according to the priorities of operations.

Members are also concerned about whether the Government will study the regulation of online car hailing platforms. The Government has announced earlier that a review of the existing legislation will be launched on how to deal with illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward more effectively. The Government will also explore the regulation of online hire car hailing platforms, so that only taxis and vehicles with hire car permits can provide services through the platform, with a view to combating illegal activities. We plan to communicate with and listen to the views from LegCo Members, the trade and other relevant stakeholders in mid-2024 on policy and legal perspectives involved in the relevant regulation, as well as the key considerations derived from study on overseas experiences. Subject to the progress of a judicial review case involving a driver of an online car hailing platform and its potential impact on the regulatory regime, as well as stakeholders' views, we will draw up detailed proposals for conducting a detailed consultation in the first half of 2025.

Members have also mentioned the driving safety records of taxi drivers. Currently, drivers (including taxi drivers) may apply to the Central Traffic Prosecutions Division of the Hong Kong Police Force as required for obtaining

Certificate of Traffic Conviction Records, Certificate of No Recorded Traffic Conviction and Driving-offence Points Record. Drivers are welcome to apply for obtaining these records to assist taxi owners, companies or management agents in identifying drivers with good driving records and take these factors into account when deciding whether or not to rent a taxi to the relevant drivers.

Members have also mentioned how we can commend taxi drivers who perform well. To encourage the taxi industry to enhance service quality, TD and the Committee on Taxi Service Quality have jointly organized the Taxi Service Commendation Scheme in the past few years to recognize taxi drivers and taxi service management teams who provide outstanding services. We will continue to explore how to optimize such commendation schemes, so that taxi drivers who perform well can receive reasonable recognition in public.

President, the Government is determined to address this long-standing problem relating to taxi services. We believe that the introduction of the TDOP System, coupled with other measures to enhance personalized point-to-point transport services, can effectively improve the quality of taxi services and enhance the overall image of the taxi industry. At the same time, we will also step up law enforcement, study the mandatory installation of video recording systems, and explore measures such as the regulation of online car hailing platforms, so as to improve the taxi service environment in a three-dimensional manner, which will have a positive impact on the industry, passengers and society as a whole. I earnestly request Members to support the passage of the Bill.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill be read the second time. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of the Members present.

I declare the motion passed.

**CLERK** (in Cantonese): Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

Council became committee of the whole Council.

### **Consideration by Committee of the Whole Council**

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): This Council now becomes committee of the whole Council to consider the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

### **TAXI-DRIVER-OFFENCE POINTS BILL**

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the following clauses and schedule stand part of the Bill.

**CLERK** (in Cantonese): Clauses 1 to 61 and the Schedule.

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Does any Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): If not, we now proceed with the voting.

I now put the question to you and that is: That the clauses and schedule read out by the Clerk stand part of the Bill. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of the Members present.

I declare the motion passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): All the proceedings on the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill have been concluded in committee of the whole Council. Council now resumes.

Council then resumed.

**SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS** (in Cantonese): President, I now report to the Council: That the

Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill

has been passed by committee of the whole Council without amendment. I move the motion that “This Council adopts the report”.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics be passed.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, this motion shall be voted on without amendment or debate.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mr Frankie YICK rose to claim a division.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Frankie YICK has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for five minutes.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Ms Starry LEE, Mr CHAN Hak-kan, Mr CHAN Kin-por, Prof Priscilla LEUNG, Mr Paul TSE, Mr Michael TIEN, Mr Steven HO, Mr MA Fung-kwok, Mr CHAN Han-pan, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr Jimmy NG, Dr Junius HO, Mr Holden CHOW, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan, Mr CHAN Chun-ying, Mr LAU Kwok-fan, Mr Kenneth LAU, Mr Vincent CHENG, Mr Tony TSE, Mr Stanley LI, Dr Hoey Simon LEE, Mr Robert LEE, Mr Dominic LEE, Dr TIK Chi-yuen, Mr Stanley NG, Dr CHOW Man-kong, Ms LAM So-wai, Ms Nixie LAM, Dr Dennis LAM, Mr LAM San-keung, Mr Andrew LAM, Mr Duncan CHIU, Mr YIU Pak-leung, Dr Wendy HONG, Mr LEUNG Man-kwong, Mr Edward LEUNG, Mr Kenneth LEUNG, Ms CHAN Yuet-ming, Mr Rock CHEN, Mr CHAN Pui-leung, Mr CHAN Yung, Mr Sunny TAN, Ms Judy CHAN, Ir CHAN Siu-hung, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan, Mr CHAN Hok-fung, Ir Gary ZHANG, Ms Lillian KWOK, Mr Benson LUK, Dr Kennedy WONG, Mr Edmund WONG, Mr YANG Wing-kit, Revd Canon Peter Douglas KOON, Mr TANG Fei, Mr LAI Tung-kwok, Prof LAU Chi-pang, Mr Kenneth FOK, Mr Louis LOONG, Dr NGAN Man-yu, Ms Carmen KAN, Dr TAN Yueheng, Dr SO Cheung-wing, Mr YIM Kong, Mr Adrian Pedro HO, Prof CHAN Wing-kwong and Prof William WONG voted for the motion.

Mr Frankie YICK, Ms Doreen KONG and Ir LEE Chun-keung voted against the motion.

Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Mr LUK Chung-hung, Mr CHU Kwok-keung, Dr Johnny NG, Mr CHAU Siu-chung, Dr David LAM, Mr LAM Chun-sing, Mr Dennis LEUNG, Ms Joephy CHAN, Mr Kingsley WONG, Mr TANG Ka-piu and Mr SHANG Hailong abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mr Andrew LEUNG, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that there were 85 Members present, 68 voted in favour, 3 voted against and 13 abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of the Members present, he declared the motion passed.

### **Third Reading of Government Bill**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Government Bill: Third Reading.

### **TAXI-DRIVER-OFFENCE POINTS BILL**

**SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS** (in Cantonese): President, I move that the

Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill

be read the third time and do pass.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill be read the third time and do pass.

Does any Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mr Frankie YICK rose to claim a division.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Frankie YICK has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for five minutes.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Ms Starry LEE, Mr CHAN Hak-kan, Mr CHAN Kin-por, Prof Priscilla LEUNG, Mr Paul TSE, Mr Michael TIEN, Mr Steven HO, Mr MA Fung-kwok, Mr CHAN Han-pan, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr Jimmy NG, Dr Junius HO, Mr Holden CHOW, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan, Mr CHAN Chun-ying, Mr LAU Kwok-fan, Mr Kenneth LAU, Mr Vincent CHENG, Mr Tony TSE, Mr Stanley LI, Dr Hoey Simon LEE, Mr Robert LEE, Mr Dominic LEE, Dr TIK Chi-yuen, Mr Stanley NG, Dr CHOW Man-kong, Ms LAM So-wai, Ms Nixie LAM, Dr Dennis LAM, Mr LAM San-keung, Mr Andrew LAM, Mr Duncan CHIU, Mr YIU Pak-leung, Dr Wendy HONG, Mr LEUNG Man-kwong, Mr Edward LEUNG, Mr Kenneth LEUNG, Ms CHAN Yuet-ming, Mr Rock CHEN, Mr CHAN Pui-leung, Mr CHAN Yung, Mr Sunny TAN, Ms Judy CHAN, Ir CHAN Siu-hung, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan, Mr CHAN Hok-fung, Ir Gary ZHANG, Ms Lillian KWOK, Mr Benson LUK, Dr Kennedy WONG, Mr Edmund WONG, Mr YANG Wing-kit, Revd Canon Peter Douglas KOON, Mr TANG Fei,

Mr LAI Tung-kwok, Prof LAU Chi-pang, Mr Kenneth FOK, Mr Louis LOONG, Dr NGAN Man-yu, Ms Carmen KAN, Dr TAN Yueheng, Dr SO Cheung-wing, Mr YIM Kong, Mr Adrian Pedro HO, Prof CHAN Wing-kwong and Prof William WONG voted for the motion.

Mr Frankie YICK, Ms Doreen KONG and Ir LEE Chun-keung voted against the motion.

Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Mr LUK Chung-hung, Mr CHU Kwok-keung, Dr Johnny NG, Mr CHAU Siu-chung, Dr David LAM, Mr LAM Chun-sing, Mr Dennis LEUNG, Ms Joephy CHAN, Mr Kingsley WONG, Mr TANG Ka-piu and Mr SHANG Hailong abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mr Andrew LEUNG, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that there were 85 Members present, 68 voted in favour, 3 voted against and 13 abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of the Members present, he declared the motion passed.

**CLERK** (in Cantonese): Taxi-Driver-Offence Points Bill.

## **MEMBERS' MOTIONS**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Members' motion with no legislative effect.

Mr Adrian Pedro HO will move a motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”.

Three Members will move the amendments to the motion.

This Council will proceed to a joint debate on the motion and the amendments.

Later, I will first call upon Mr Adrian Pedro HO to speak and move the motion. Then I will call upon Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang to speak in sequence, but they may not move the amendments at this stage.

The joint debate now begins. Members who wish to speak please press the “Request to speak” button.

I now call upon Mr Adrian Pedro HO to speak and move the motion.

**MOTION ON “PROMOTING HEALTHY AGEING TO CREATE A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE SILVER-HAIRED GROUP”**

**MR ADRIAN PEDRO HO** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. I move that the motion, as printed on the Agenda, be passed.

Many colleagues have repeatedly talked about the subject of elderly care in the past, and put forth many proposals to the SAR Government to optimize its elderly policy. My motion today seeks to discuss healthy ageing.

I have looked at government data and found that in 2021, people aged 65 or above accounted for 20% of our total population and the median age rose to 46 in 2022. That is to say, I am already a “middle-aged man” and gradually ageing. Recently, I have seriously followed LAI Sir’s recommendation and started taking NMN for anti-ageing.

I very much hope that when I grow old, I do not need to rely on others to take care of me, and that I have the ability to take care of my wife without becoming a burden to my family. That is why I recently started to read articles about healthy ageing, hoping that I can age healthily and stylishly. I hold that “healthy ageing” can be a possible solution for the SAR Government in facing up to the problem of ageing population.

The concept of “healthy ageing” was first brought up in the World Health Assembly in 1987. In recent years, the World Health Organization released an action plan titled “The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021-2030”, in which four areas for action will be taken forward. One of these areas for action is to establish “age-friendly environments” to foster the abilities of older people by

creating age-friendly environments and retaining the active factors of healthy ageing such as their autonomy, dignity and well-being with a view to achieving a society where people live longer and more healthily. I wish to bring out this concept of “healthy ageing”, and with the aim of alleviating the burden of an ageing population and ensuring the quality of life of the silver-haired group, I propose alleviating the problems of an ageing population in a proactive and orderly manner and by identifying new opportunities.

First, I suggest that the Government look into enhancing the existing welfare system and related measures to benefit more people. I made a visit to Singapore earlier during the Legislative Council recess. It so happened that the Singaporean Prime Minister LEE Hsien Loong delivered his annual policy address at that time and announced the Majulah Package for Singaporeans. Different levels of assistance will be provided to citizens aged above 50 with lower incomes or fewer assets based on their income levels and Central Provident Fund (“CPF”) savings. Such assistance includes the “Earn and Save Bonus” of S\$1,000 per annum as a CPF bonus; a one-off “Retirement Savings Bonus” of up to S\$1,500 for those who have not reached the CPF basic retirement sum; and a one-off “MediSave Bonus” of up to S\$1,000 to encourage them to continue contributing to society and enhance their retirement readiness.

In my opinion, Singapore’s concept of providing different levels of assistance according to people’s wealth is worthy of Hong Kong’s reference, and it is also similar to the principle of “common prosperity”. Their concept even focuses on caring for those who will soon join the silver-haired group and the lower-income group. I hope that the SAR Government can refer to this concept and look for feasible ways to provide targeted support to the soon-to-be silver-haired people, and regularly review whether there is any room for enhancing the existing Old Age Living Allowance and various assistance, so as to continuously improve the system for caring the silver-haired group.

Apart from making good use of government resources and assisting the Government in planning for the future life of the silver-haired group, I suggest that the Government should educate the public to start at a young age and instil in the next generation a sense of “proactive planning”, so that they can make early planning for their own health and the later stages of their lives in their prime years. For instance, one can plan for his silver-haired life in his thirties and strike a good life balance and make investment in health at a young age, so that he can be in a

better position to realize ageing locally in the future and have greater autonomy in life.

Enabling silver-haired people to remain self-reliant allows them to continue to excel and contribute to society, and helps to continue to protect their basic human rights and their right to attain the best health. At the Healthy Ageing Conference 2023 held by the School of Nursing of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in October this year, Prof LEUNG Yee-man shed light on the issue of intrinsic capacity decline among community-dwelling older adults in Hong Kong, and that they strove to promote the adoption and effective implementation of the World Health Organization's integrated care for older people ("ICOPE") Framework in Hong Kong. At present, the ICOPE model has been successfully trial run by Wong Tai Sin District Health Centre. And I hope that this concept of integrated care can be further promoted and popularized in Hong Kong through early health assessment and intervention, so that the physical functions of the silver-haired group can be improved at an early age and their future chances of becoming dependent on other people's care can be reduced.

In addition, preventing and delaying disabilities have a decisive impact on the lives of silver-haired people. For example, the Jockey Club Cadenza Hub has launched over the recent years an elderly health community programme in individual districts. The programme combines health assessment with community care, covering areas such as vision, hearing, cognition, toileting abilities, disease management, diet and health to help people aged over 50 to delay the onset of debilitation and disability. Participants in need will be further assessed and referred to appropriate free professional services, including sports and cognitive training, hearing test and podiatry to comprehensively help them improve their physical and mental health. Another example is about regular exercise, which can help elderly people delay disability and maintain health and vitality. We can learn from the example of the Silver Hair Fitness Club (銀髮健身俱樂部) in the New Taipei City of the Taiwan region where there are professional exercise instructors to tailor exercise programmes for the elderly based on their different levels of health, with an aim to help delay and improve their frailty and cultivate a healthy lifestyle.

After having talked about a series of policy measures and addressing efforts, there can be another direction for an ageing population. In addition to creating social problems, it can also bring us an opportunity, such as that for exploring the

business opportunities associated with the silver-haired group. Recently, my team went to the other side of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge for a duty visit, in which we found a very good silver-haired community in Hengqin. The residents can live there permanently and maintain their social life. The community provides daily services such as housekeeping, cleaning, repair and maintenance, and most importantly, it is equipped with a high-quality health management system. A team of healthcare professionals and medical technical staff provide health management and disease prevention to help residents slow down the ageing process and ensure their quality of life. In fact, such continuing care communities for the elderly have become popular in the Mainland over recent years. It can indeed serve as a good reference model for the elderly care services in Hong Kong; and expanding the local high-end retirement living market can make it possible for families to make quality choices for their needy silver-haired family members to stay in Hong Kong to live their old age.

Whether it is to enjoy a relaxed and comfortable old age life, or to continue to show their abilities and values, and to contribute to their family and society, it can be an ideal choice for the silver-haired group. I very much hope that the ageing population will not be a scourge on Hong Kong, and that through systematic planning and policies of the Government, Hong Kong will be developed into an age-friendly social environment where silver-haired people of different strata now and in the future will be able to lead a quality life.

President, I so submit.

**Mr Adrian Pedro HO moved the following motion: (Translation)**

“That the continued ageing of the population in Hong Kong has led to a rise in the elderly dependency ratio and exerted tremendous pressure on Hong Kong’s healthcare system, welfare policies, public resources, etc.; in order to meet the needs of the silver-haired group, this Council urges the SAR Government to draw reference from international experience and proactively promote healthy ageing, so as to address the problem of an ageing population; the measures include raising people’s awareness of planning for a silver-haired life for their future in order to realize ageing in place; promoting services for preventing and delaying disabilities, so as to enable the silver-haired group to maintain self-reliance and continue to give full play to their strengths and contribute to society; and developing silver-

hair industries to enhance the quality of life of the silver-haired group, thereby creating an age-friendly social environment for Hong Kong.”

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr Adrian Pedro HO be passed.

**DR JOHNNY NG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. It is predicted that the proportion of elderly people in Hong Kong will continue to increase and the elderly population will reach about 2.58 million in 2037 (which is 10-odd years later), accounting for 30% of the total population, meaning that three in 10 persons are elderly. The phenomenon of “the elderly taking care of the elderly” is becoming increasingly common in Hong Kong. We must face squarely the problems of an ageing population. I thus agree with and support the original motion moved by Mr Adrian Pedro HO today and the amendments proposed by Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang.

Promoting healthy ageing and building a quality life for the silver-haired group involve a wide range of policies and measures. Due to time constraints, I will share with Members the following three main points.

First, with nearly 80% of the elderly aged 65 or above in Hong Kong suffering from chronic diseases, the long-term care services in the public sector are bound to be under greater pressure in the future. Compared with staying in hospitals or residential care homes for the elderly, many elders prefer having long-term care in their familiar neighbourhoods or at home. However, the current supply of community care services for the elderly is insufficient. The average waiting time for subsidized community care services was as long as 10-odd months in 2021. On the basis of the principle of allowing the elderly to “age in place”, the Government must enhance the quality and quantity of community care services in the future.

However, community care services for the elderly involves huge resources and is a long-term financial burden. It is thus worthwhile for Hong Kong to learn from the diversified systems of community care services for the elderly in overseas countries. Countries like Germany and Japan which also face serious problems of an ageing population set up many years ago a mandatory long-term care insurance system. The system seeks to shorten the waiting time of the elderly for

care services by pooling additional resources from the community to strengthen the private elderly care service market. Both countries have increased their premium contribution rates and required users to share the costs, in order to improve the financial sustainability of their elderly services. Since Hong Kong does not have a sound financial system for long-term care, I think the SAR Government can study the feasibility of introducing long-term care insurance in tandem with the existing Mandatory Provident Fund system.

Second, as family size has shrunk, the number of singleton elders has surged in Hong Kong, and the problem of social isolation has seriously affected the mental health and quality of life of the elderly. I hold that the SAR Government will need to put forth more measures in the future to address the problem of social isolation of the elderly, including the implementation of more housing policies which are conducive to intergenerational harmony. For example, Germany has implemented a matching programme based on the concept of Living for Help (Wohnen für Hilfe) to take care of each other in their daily lives, so that the elderly hosts with no children or singleton elders without many close relationships can have a friend to keep them company. Besides, measures can also be implemented to enhance the digital literacy of the elderly so as to bridge the digital divide and broaden their social life.

Third, enhancing the quality of life of the elderly and the quality of elderly services through the use of technology. I hold that the SAR Government should step up its efforts to promote the popularization of gerontechnology in the future. Gerontechnology is the future trend of elderly care and the way to cope with the ageing population. It can help solve the social problems brought by an ageing population; and in the long run, it can enable the elderly to have a better environment to live and age in place with more dignity, and reduce the pressure and burden on public resources and manpower of society.

I believe fellow Members would still remember the motion I moved in the Council meeting in May on “Stepping up the promotion of gerontechnology to enhance the quality of life of the silver-haired group and tackle population ageing”. I am grateful to fellow Members for their active discussions, their insightful views as well as their support for the passage of the motion. And I am glad to learn in the subsequent Policy Address that an additional \$1 billion will be injected into the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care to enhance the subsidies for eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to

procure, rent and trial technology products. The Government has responded to the voices of the people.

However, the Government has yet to come up with new measures to further promote the popularization of gerontechnology. I hold that the Government can do more, such as stepping up measures to popularize “gerontechnology” in the community, so as to enable the elderly to build up their confidence in using digital technology, to facilitate their travelling in their daily lives, etc. This is also the reason I propose this amendment to reiterate the promotion of gerontechnology, in the hope of urging the Government to make more and better use of gerontechnology to enhance the quality of life of the elderly.

In conclusion, the quality of life of the elderly should be improved. In an important speech made by President XI Jinping on 1 July last year, he put forth “four proposals”, one of which expresses his hope for us to earnestly address people’s concerns and difficulties in daily life, and the biggest wish of the people is to, among others, “have better care in their twilight years”. Hence, the SAR Government should solve the social problems brought by an ageing population from different angles and with different methods, in order to enable the elderly to age in a better environment and with more dignity, and to live up to President XI’s expectations of us.

Thank you, President. I so submit.

**MS ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. Like any other places in the world, Hong Kong is also facing the problem of population ageing.

According to the population projections of the Census and Statistics Department, the number of elderly persons aged 65 and above is projected to double in the next 25 years, increasing from 1.45 million (approximately 20% of the total population) in 2021 to 2.74 million (36%) 35 years later, meaning that there will be one elderly person in every three Hong Kong persons.

The median age of the Hong Kong population was 47 in 2021. If this trend persists, it is likely that the median age will rise to 55 in 2046, which is close to the retirement age, and the elderly dependency ratio will also double from 300 to 632 in the same period.

I cited the above figures in order to reflect the seriousness of the ageing problem in Hong Kong.

Although we have discussed the issue of elderly care in the Legislative Council many times, I am still very grateful to and supportive of Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this motion and of the amendments proposed by Dr Johnny NG and Prof LAU Chi-pang today. The amendment I propose mainly seeks to supplement three aspects.

First, how can we enhance the sense of well-being of the elderly? I remember last July, I, together with Ms TUNG Kin-lei, our Sha Tin community officer who will be a member of the next-term District Councils, invited the newly-appointed Secretary Winnie HO to visit Mei Lam Estate in Sha Tin. Mei Lam Estate is a very old housing estate. The first-generation residents who have lived there for 40 years, have now become “elder brothers and sisters”. They said that the housing estate was very old and many facilities were old and dilapidated, and should be brought up-to-date.

What these elderly people want and what will make them happy is actually very simple. First, they wish to have more technological products available at home so that they can “age in place”. Moreover, they are also the ones to “care for the other elderly person” at home. For families with only two elderly persons left, the more “helpful” equipment they have, including devices which help them to push themselves up and support their bodies or are labour-saving, the greater the benefits the equipment can bring.

Second, these elderly people often have to take care of their grandchildren and accompany them to play at the playground. If there are covered areas or fitness equipment for them to stay or to exercise their bodies while watching their grandchildren to play, they will be more relaxed and happier.

Hence, intergenerational harmony is what they long for. Secretary Winnie HO is very nice. We had some discussion and she seriously thought about what could be done after the visit. Subsequently, the Government launched the “Let’s Go Well-being•Well-being Design Pretest” programme, which seeks to enhance the sense of well-being of public housing residents. In fact, this programme not only provides more recreational and barrier-free facilities for the elderly, but also provides more novel and fun-filled playgrounds for children, as well as providing more covered areas for the elderly to sit and rest, so that they can have fun with

their grandchildren. I appreciate the Government's proactive attitude, taking actions when it finds the need to do so.

In fact, a sense of well-being is a heart-warming feeling. It can let elderly people feel that the Government does care about them. I hope that it will not take the Government a long time to test this programme and it will not spend three, five or even seven years on testing it; and that it can expeditiously extend the programme to all housing estates after the trial period, so that elderly people and children can have more enjoyable recreational facilities and a greater sense of happiness and well-being.

Third, I wish to talk about gerontechnology, which many Members have already mentioned. We must make good use of technology to live a better life. As Dr Johnny NG has already spoken a lot on this topic, I will not repeat it. I only wish to say that many elderly people are even reluctant to spend money on subscribing to the Safety Alarm Service. Although the monthly cost is not much, they consider it too expensive to spend money on the service. I thus suggest that the Government issue technology vouchers for the elderly to enable them to make better use of technology.

Last but not least, I wish to point out that elderly people need money to live their twilight years. Although the existing HKMC Annuity Plan is a good measure, many people have asked us whether the Government can provide some contribution schemes for them to save up for the rainy days, so that they can start making contributions at a younger age, say, at their forties or fifties. By so doing, they can create their own pension, as promoted by the Government, so that when they retire at the age of 55 or 60, they will have sufficient money and will naturally be able to live happily. I hope that the Government will consider these proposals, which are all very practical.

I so submit.

**PROF LAU CHI-PANG** (in Cantonese): President, I support the original motion moved by Mr Adrian Pedro HO and the amendments proposed by Dr Johnny NG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT; and I call on Members to support my amendment, which seeks to capitalize on the policy strengths associated with the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

Formulated in 2021, the 14th Five-Year Plan lays down the way forward of China and sets out its development blueprint for the coming five years (2021-2025).

One of its plans is to seek happiness for the present and future elderly people. With an aim to implement the national strategy of proactively responding to population ageing, the State Council issued, in February 2022, the Plan for the Development of National Undertakings for the Aged and Elderly Care Service System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (“the Plan”) to take forward this national strategy, promote synergistic development of the elderly businesses and industries, and to build and perfect the elderly care service system.

Population ageing is an objective development of human society. China has a large and rapidly ageing elderly population. Fortunately, in addressing this important issue, China is better equipped than other countries in terms of material base and human capital, and a strong driving force behind all of this is the core value of Chinese culture, and that is the culture of filial piety.

The main objective of the Plan is to enhance the sense of fulfilment, happiness and security among the elderly. To this end, the Central Government has formulated nine specific work missions, including strengthening the network of social security and underpinning elderly care services; expanding the coverage of universal elderly care services; strengthening the capacity of elderly services at home and in the community; improving the health support system for the elderly; vigorously developing the silver economy; practising a positive ageing attitude; creating an age-friendly social environment; strengthening the development factors to support the system; and protecting the legal rights and interests of the elderly.

Hong Kong is also facing the problems of a large elderly population, their high proportion and a rapid rate of ageing. Hong Kong and the Mainland are both Chinese societies of the same origin, with commonalities in habits and values, and we also attach particular importance to the culture of filial piety. In terms of cultural compatibility, the Mainland’s policies and measures to address population ageing are particularly applicable to the Hong Kong community; and in terms of practicability, the relevant policies and measures are of reference value as well, especially when the response to population ageing has been elevated to the national development planning level. Apart from further improving the existing policy on an ageing population and drawing on the experience of the international community, the SAR Government should also draw on the policy strengths of the National 14th Five-Year Plan to create a better tomorrow for the silver-haired people in Hong Kong.

President, I so submit.

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): President, first of all, I thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this motion, and Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang for their amendments. In February last year, the State Council issued the Plan for the Development of National Undertakings for the Aged and Elderly Care Service System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period to provide planning and guidance on enhancing elderly social security, ageing in place, elderly health support, and developing “silver economy”. Having consulted relevant Policy Bureaux, I will explain the SAR Government’s policy measures on healthy ageing and enhancing the quality of life for the silver-haired group.

#### *Home support services*

“Ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up” is the policy direction of the Government for elderly services. The Government has been providing different types of care and support services at the community level to prevent and delay disability in elderly, and facilitate ageing in place.

The Government provides home support services to elderly persons with mild impairment through “Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases)” or “Home Care and Support Services for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment”, which include personal care, home making, escort to stave off the decline in their health so that they can age in place. In 2022-2023, about 26 000 elderly persons received home support services.

#### *Promoting Active Ageing*

In addition to home support services, all elderly persons can seek services from over 210 subvented elderly centres, including counselling, outreach, social and recreational activities. As of the end of September 2023, subvented elderly centres had a total of about 270 000 members.

Elder Academy is another network serving the elderly besides Elderly Centres. Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Elderly Commission jointly launched the Elder Academy Scheme in 2007. Non-governmental organizations are working with schools to set up Elder Academies across Hong Kong, offering a wide range of courses and intergenerational activities for elderly persons to promote active ageing. Currently, there are about 200 Elder Academies in

non-governmental organizations, primary, secondary schools and postsecondary institutions throughout Hong Kong.

The Social Welfare Department provides funding to social service agencies and district organizations for organizing activities to encourage the elderly to participate in community activities, unleash their potential, contribute to the community and create a spirit of worthiness through the “Opportunities for the Elderly Project”. Since its launch, the Social Welfare Department has allocated over \$120 million to subvent over 6 880 district activities with a total of over 4.1 million participants.

#### *Creating a Joyful Community Living Space for the Elderly*

In addition to providing home support services for eligible elderly persons and promoting active ageing, the Government also enhanced the silver-haired groups’ sense of well-being by building an elderly-friendly environment. Housing Bureau has selected five estates for the “Let’s Go Well-being—Well-being Design Pretest”, and various improvement measures will be studied and implemented in phases on or before 2027 to create a living environment with a greater sense of well-being for residents.

#### *Developing a “Silver Economy”*

The growing elderly population is emerging as a main consumer group, creating considerable demand for such products and services as medical and healthcare, leisure and recreation, and home and personal care catered for the elderly. These products and services enhance the quality of life for the elderly and spur industry growth and business opportunities. By promoting economic activities related to products and services needed by the elderly, we can facilitate the development of the “silver economy”, unleash the economic potential of the elderly market, and better take care of the elderly in their daily lives. Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will establish an Advisory Panel on Silver Economy comprising experts of different fields to conduct an in-depth research and offer recommendations within a year.

#### *Promotion of Gerontechnology*

The Government has been encouraging the use of gerontechnology to improve the quality of life of elderly persons and reduce the pressure on carers.

In December 2018, the Government approved \$1 billion to set up the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (“the I&T Fund”), which subsidizes eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent or try out technology products. The I&T Fund has approved a total grant of \$6.4 million, subsidizing about 1 900 elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure or rent over 17 000 technology products.

Furthermore, the scope of the Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for Elderly has been expanded to cover the rental of assistive technology products, so as to facilitate silver-haired groups to rent gerontechnology products.

The Government will also expand the service scope of over 210 subvented District Elderly Community Centres across the territory to promotion of gerontechnology in October this year. The Elderly Centres will organize seminars, workshops and other activities to enable the elderly to get in touch with and learn how to use smartphones, Apps and other technological products. The Elderly Centres provide support to their members when they encounter difficulties in using digital technology.

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (“OGCIO”) frequently sends staff to carry out outreach activities in residential care homes for the elderly, day care centres and places frequently visited by the elderly, such as parks, through the Information and Communications Technology Outreach Programme for the Elderly. The purpose is to help the elderly make use of digital technology and enable them to better experience digital living. OGCIO also organized the Enriched Information and Communications Technology Training Programme for the Elderly, and launch the online learning platform “Elderly IT Learning Portal” to enable the elderly to learn digital technology according to their needs and interests, including the use of smartphones and mobile applications, electronic food ordering application, online shopping, use of e-wallet and cybersecurity.

### *Conclusion*

President, Under Secretary for Health, and I will listen carefully to Members’ speeches and then respond to their views in my concluding remarks. Thank you, President.

**MR YANG WING-KIT** (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of Mr Adrian Pedro HO's motion on "Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group".

According to the World Health Organization, the ideal way of healthy ageing is one that the elderly can function as they wish. This requires a combination of intrinsic abilities and the external environment. Intrinsic abilities include cognitive ability, mobility, psychology, sensibility and vitality; and the external environment is related to social resources and government policies.

Whenever mothers see their children's bad habits, they always say, "You will know the consequences when you get older." Many people often stay up late. They do not do exercise, and are picky eaters; and they smoke and they drink. These behaviours are bad to health. Do not squander your health at a young age by thinking that it will be fine or you can deal with it if things go wrong. It is often too late when things do go wrong. Health is a state and also a responsibility. The Government should guide the public to establish an awareness that they are the first to be held accountable to their health. It is unavoidable that our inner strength will decline as we age. But we can train our inner strength from a young age. Taking bone density as an example, if we accumulate high bone density at a young age, such as maintaining calcium intake and doing weight-bearing exercise, our risk of having osteoporosis when we are old will be reduced. Education and publicity are thus very important to enable the public to develop healthy living habits at an early age.

The Government needs to try some novel ideas in its publicity. Taking the success stories of yuu and DONKI as an example, everyone is "brainwashed" by their theme songs as soon as they enter their shops and the song will loop in their mind all day long. Can we use innovative advertisements and brainwashing songs to educate the public about various kinds of health or even cancer prevention knowledge? Or, we can film health features on people with similar health problems, organize more health campaigns and invite singers and artists to participate, so as to encourage people to practise healthy lifestyles through the celebrity effect. The Education Bureau can also incorporate elderly health knowledge such as nutritional diet, exercise and fitness, mental health, disease prevention, rehabilitation and care, and emergency assistance into the curricula of primary and secondary schools, so that people can understand how to nurture themselves from an early age and lay a good foundation for health in later life.

When one gets old, they want to be able to take care of themselves, and to be able to walk and run, eat and sleep. Preventing and delaying frailty and disability among the elderly is an important task. The “triple Early” is thus very important, namely early prevention, early detection and early intervention. Chronic and neurodegenerative diseases require long-term treatment, care and specialized rehabilitation. District Health Centres are the hubs of primary healthcare services, but their services only cover diabetes mellitus and hypertension. Can their services be extended to cover other chronic disease conditions, such as cholesterol, which is one of the “triple H” conditions? Or is it possible to provide osteoporosis assessments and refer high-risk individuals for bone mineral density tests to reduce the chance of osteoporotic fractures among the elderly? Moreover, a quarter of the stroke patients in Hong Kong are suffering from atrial fibrillation. The devices for checking atrial fibrillation are not expensive, and some blood pressure monitors can be used to measure blood pressure and detect atrial fibrillation at the same time. Is it possible for District Health Centres to incorporate screening for atrial fibrillation? Besides, the elderly are most worried about developing dementia. A team from The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has developed a blood test to detect Alzheimer’s Disease at an early stage, and medicines in overseas countries have also been proven to be effective in targeting Alzheimer’s Disease. Can we introduce these innovative testing and treatment options to Hong Kong?

Apart from providing healthcare for the elderly, we also need to provide them with a sense of security, worthiness and peace. The Government has launched a variety of policies, including the Elderly Academy Scheme, the Opportunities for the Elderly Project and the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged. These programmes have achieved considerable results. In recent years, the Government has been strengthening its support for ageing in place and upgrading the quality of residential care homes. In the Policy Address this year, there are measures on cross-boundary elderly care; an additional \$1 billion will be injected into the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care; funding will be injected into the lifelong learning fund for the elderly; and efforts will be made to promote elderly-friendly building design. All these policies and measures are good for the elderly, but they are rather fragmented. The Policy Address this year also touches on developing the silver economy. We can refer to the European Union’s 10 key areas of development for the silver economy, such as connected health, silver tourism, development of an age-friendly built environment, age-friendly universities, olderpreneur, and driverless cars, so as to make a comprehensive planning. It is

also worthwhile to learn from Japan's experience in the development of gerontechnology and care robot industries. I look forward to seeing more services for the silver-haired group in the future, so that the elderly can enjoy the convenience brought by technology and live a better life, and that carers will have an easier life as well.

To achieve age-friendly society as a whole is not something that can be achieved overnight, but it is possible to start with each and every one of us by developing good lifestyle habits to achieve healthy ageing.

President, I so submit.

**IR CHAN SIU-HUNG** (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of Mr Adrian Pedro HO's original motion and the amendments proposed by other Members.

Healthy ageing refers to an ageing society where the elderly can live a healthy and quality long life. The World Health Organization defines "health" as a state of complete physical, mental, psychological and social well-being; and apart from the absence of disease or infirmity and having a strong body, it should also be in a good mental and psychological state and be capable of fully developing one's abilities in society. Next, I will recommend some proposals on each of the three aspects mentioned above.

In terms of physical health, I hold that the key point is to enhance people's attention to and awareness of health. The University of Hong Kong conducted a study in 2013 on sub-optimal health due to work stress. The study found that of the 535 Hong Kong citizens aged between 18 and 65 covered in the study, nearly 97% exhibited at least one sub-optimal health symptom, with eye strain, back pain and frequent fatigue being the most common symptoms. Sub-optimal health refers to a critical state between health and disease, in which a person is physically or mentally unwell but without any obvious signs of illness. The saying that "overwork makes one sick" is self-explanatory. It is thus very important to raise the public's awareness of disease prevention at an early age and enhance their ability to manage their own health.

President, Hong Kong's population is rapidly becoming super-aged. The number of elderly people suffering from dementia is also on the rise. Statistics show that one in every 10 elderly persons aged 70 or above in Hong Kong is

suffering from dementia. I hold that the Government should focus on promoting the use of gerontechnology to dementia sufferers and their families, including expeditiously setting up effective screening and treatment for dementia and establishing one-stop treatment centres and community carers' centres. Gerontechnology can enhance the self-care ability of the elderly and slow down their deterioration, and it can facilitate proper care of the elderly and reduce the physical and mental stress of the carers.

When I performed duties in the neighbourhoods, I often heard the elderly mock at themselves, saying that they had to admit that they were getting old. When one reaches a certain age, their role changes from a carer to the one being cared for, or from a wage-earner to a carer. I have come across many families where the retirees have to unexpectedly take care of their partners with dementia, witnessing their partners sleeping next to them to suddenly lose self-care ability, or even develop memory, behavioural and emotional problems. This change of identity is often the biggest source of physical and mental stress. In overseas countries, there are specialist diagnostic centres which provide screening and treatment for dementia. I hold that the SAR Government can promote universal screening on the disease and enhance the public's understanding of and concern for dementia, so that they can make early preparation.

President, according to Israeli medical sociologist Aaron ANTONOVSKY, having a "sense of coherence" is the key to the happiness of the elderly. If the elderly can plan and understand early the experience of their declining years, and are able to take care of their medical, social welfare and economic needs when their ability declines and find meaning in their later stage of life, they will embrace their old age with ease and will not feel intense stress. They will also be able to substantially delay and reduce their dependence on medical treatment, social welfare and family care in their daily lives, and be capable of adapting to changes in life with self-reliance and dignity. I thus hold that the Government can promote the concept of "silver age planning", so that the public can make sound financial planning, among others, from the age of 55 or earlier, covering areas such as Mandatory Provident Fund, medical insurance and social welfare throughout the three stages of life, that is, old age, sickness and death.

Finally, I would like to say a few words to all elderly people who wish to spend their twilight years in a place they know well. The biggest worry for this group of elderly is a lack of a sense of security in their old age. On the one hand, the SAR Government promotes a sense of security, worthiness and care for the

elderly; on the other hand, however, it vigorously promotes the idea of elderly living their old age in the Greater Bay Area, stressing from time to time that the manpower shortage in the local elderly care services and encouraging people to spend their declining years in the Mainland. This gives people the misconception that those who have spent their youthful years on building Hong Kong will have to receive cross-boundary elderly care services when they are old. I hold that the policy for providing cross-boundary elderly care services should only be an additional option for the elderly, rather than the core concept of the elderly policy of Hong Kong. We should strive to let the able-bodied elderly people stay in their familiar places and live with dignity.

President, I so submit. Thank you.

**MR CHAN KIN-POR** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. Population ageing is an important issue which advanced countries have to face. It is a major challenge to social resources, healthcare and social support services. I thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this motion today and other Members for proposing amendments. I support all of them.

When we talk about ageing, many people may associate it with negative connotations such as illness and mobility problems. Getting old is actually a problem which everyone will have to face. What the elderly can do is to reduce or delay the problems brought by ageing, and the best way to deal with it is to change one's way of life, maintain a strong body, delay the age of having chronic illnesses and lengthen the time of having a healthy body, so that they can live a healthy happy life despite being old.

Doing daily exercise is very important to the elderly. Given that the elderly population will continue to grow, I urge the Administration to constantly review the adequacy of community recreational facilities, such as sports venues, fitness equipment and pebble walking trails. The elderly should be encouraged to do more stretching exercise, swimming and aerobics, which can train their bodies, maintain their muscle mass and develop their self-care ability, as well as preventing the degeneration of their joints. Besides, they should have a healthy diet. Many elders think that eating lightly is healthy, which is wrong. Having a balanced diet and adequate nutrition are very important. Elderly people are particularly in need of protein, minerals and vitamins to boost their immune system, maintain healthy bones and teeth, and slow down ageing. We need to promote the correct concept

of healthy diet and reverse the misconceptions among the elderly; and to achieve longevity and good health, it is crucial to pay attention to diet and daily exercise.

In addition, it is crucial for the elderly to maintain a network of interpersonal relationships to reduce loneliness. Maintaining a happy state of mind is very beneficial to health. We can promote the elderly learning scheme and provide different interest classes and skill training courses for the elderly, such as gardening, mobile phone trainings, singing and dancing, so that the elderly can have the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills. This will enhance their self-esteem and overall quality of life, and maintain their enthusiasm and vitality. After learning new knowledge, the elderly can become a mentor to teach other “old pals”, so that they will have something to invest their energy in and make new friends. When their social circle is expanded, their emotional distress will naturally be reduced. Society should pay more attention to helping the elderly to maintain their physical and mental health, so that they can enjoy their twilight years after many years of hard work.

Moreover, in recent years, there has been concern over how to make good use of innovative technology to improve the quality of life of the elderly. For the elderly who are physically challenged or mobility-handicapped, we can improve their quality of life with the help of gerontechnology. For example, a smart pill box with alarm function can be used to remind the elderly to take their medication on time; a smart watch can be used to monitor the health condition of the elderly and remind them to do moderate exercise; and bathroom aids can also help the elderly to take baths more safely and prevent them from slipping and falling. Using these simple gerontechnologies will not only facilitate the daily life of the elderly, but also enhance their quality of life and reduce their psychological stress and live more comfortably.

Hong Kong’s ageing population is a problem that warrants our attention and concern. To be able to live a long and healthy life is very important. The recommendations above will enhance the physical and mental health of the elderly and improve their quality of life. Reducing the dependency of the elderly on society will be of great benefit to Hong Kong as a whole.

Thank you, President.

**MR STANLEY LI** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. I speak on the motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”.

First of all, I am grateful to Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this Member’s motion. This motion shares common ground with the one I proposed two weeks ago on cross-boundary elderly care, which hopes that the life of our “old friends” will get better and better.

President, it is mentioned in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that our country will pursue a proactive national strategy in response to population ageing, and develop elderly care programmes and services. In the year before last, the State Council issued the Plan for the Development of National Undertakings for the Aged and Elderly Care Service System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period, in which nine tasks were set out, including the promotion of technology industries relating to healthy ageing.

As we all know, the ageing problem in Hong Kong is indeed worsening. How can the SAR Government and various sectors of the community plan ahead to meet the challenges in this regard? As I am very concerned about the well-being of the elderly, I have visited different places, hoping to find ways to improve the retired lives of the elderly. To this end, I would like to make a few suggestions to the Government.

Firstly, the Government should improve local elderly health centres by making reference to the examples of outstanding elderly health centres in other countries. If we look at other places, such as Japan, the problem of ageing population is also serious, which serves as a good example to follow. Aichi Prefecture has the largest elderly care centre in Japan, which boasts an array of recreational and health facilities, such as hot springs and video games. Moreover, it constantly organizes a variety of activities and provides physiotherapy for seniors. What sets this centre apart is that it offers tokens for the elderly to encourage them to do more exercise. For example, if they walk 100 meters in a designated area, they will be awarded 100 tokens, which can be used within the centre for various purposes, such as buying snacks or even vouchers for outings. This is a good way to motivate the elderly to stay active and healthy, as well as to remain joyful by engaging in social activities, so it is an example worth considering.

Secondly, healthy ageing depends on material conditions and support. Germany serves as a good example. In 1995, Germany enacted the Long-Term Care Act to set up a dedicated long-term care insurance system. Similar to Hong Kong, Germany advocates the principle of “home care before institutional care” and places a strong emphasis on home care. Specifically, if young people are willing to accompany and assist in caring for the elderly, such as helping them with cooking, cleaning and guiding the usage of gerontechnology, they can receive a rent subsidy. Given that these policies are in line with the Government’s current approach of “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”, is it worthwhile to make reference to them?

Thirdly, at a recent exhibition on gerontechnology, I saw many interesting games designed to help the elderly in preventing dementia, slowing down the ageing process and helping them to relax through brain and sensory stimulation. These tools are similar to those proposed in today’s motion regarding the promotion of healthy ageing.

The idea of fitness centres for the elderly that I mentioned just now is actually worth implementing. Currently, local fitness centres are mostly designed for young people, but I hope that in the future, we can have some fitness centres tailored for the elderly, ideally with the Government spearheading the effort. I have visited several residential care homes for the elderly that offer great facilities. Indeed, as a Member has just pointed out, swimming is good for the health of our “old friends”. Some residential care homes for the elderly are equipped with dedicated swimming facilities, allowing residents to enjoy swimming without the need to visit public pools. I am not talking about playing mahjong, but literally swimming in the water. Considering the benefits of such facilities, could the Government take the lead to make greater efforts in this regard? I hope the Government will seriously consider the successful examples from other countries.

Thank you. I so submit.

**MS YUNG HOI-YAN** (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of Mr Adrian Pedro HO’s motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”. I know that Mr Adrian Pedro HO is a regular gym-goer. Today in this Chamber, I also heard many Members highlighting the importance of exercise in elevating the quality of life for the elderly, so that they

can enjoy better health and have a greater sense of gain and happiness. I believe these suggestions deserve our support and encouragement.

I have reviewed documents including the Opinions on Building a Higher-level Public Service System for National Fitness (“the Opinions”) issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, which proposed ways to better engage the elderly in physical activity. The paper emphasized the need for various measures to help the elderly population, and indeed, all sports venues should have such facilities.

The District Council Election has recently concluded. During the canvassing period, we have heard a lot of views from the public. The residents of public housing estates expressed particular concerns about recreation and health services, especially the fitness facilities for senior residents. It is common to see residents, both young and old, exercising together. However, many have pointed out that the facilities for the elderly are outdated, dilapidated and not interesting. Some have noted that the cycling machines have been in service for a decade and hope that the Government will revitalize the fitness facilities at public housing estates and other sports facilities with more vibrant elements.

It is mentioned in the Opinions that an elderly-friendly fitness environment should be fostered, and Shanghai is pioneering in this regard. Throwing in a little self-advertisement, I am a member of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. How can we draw on the experience of Shanghai or some forward-looking regions on the Mainland to benefit Hong Kong? While some of our old housing estates still provide cycling facilities, walking trails in the Mainland have taken a leap forward with the installation of smart lampposts. These lampposts, featuring facial recognition technology, can identify senior citizens and provide them with monthly activity records, such as step count, calories burned, and various health indices and exercise-related metrics. For the users, particularly the elderly, this feature is thoughtful and considerate, offering not just a sense of happiness, but also serving as a motivation for them to keep doing exercise to maintain health and vitality.

In the Mainland, it is common to see the elderly and children exercising together. Experiences from other countries have shown that placing facilities for both the elderly and children in close proximity can foster inter-generational harmony. Although seniors may not be as energetic as children, simply sitting

nearby and watching the young ones playing can make them feel younger. Such measure also contributes to creating an inclusive society, which is indeed praiseworthy.

We have also seen some residential care homes for the elderly that bring together senior citizens and children. In this way, the elderly can share their life experiences with the younger generation while receiving proper care. I believe this plays a significant role in fostering social inclusion and the transfer of knowledge.

Many of us may have our own parents helping to look after our children. We should not forget that grandparents can still be very active and contribute positively to society. Therefore, for better social integration, I believe that the Home Affairs Department should incorporate elements into community development that encourage interaction between the elderly and children, thereby creating a positive dynamic. I think this is crucial as it fosters a more inclusive society and deepens our understanding of the elderly. While our society faces the challenge of an ageing population, the contribution of the elderly population remains significant.

Just now we talked about how to live with dignity. In fact, it is all about the recognition and understanding of all people, so that we can share what we know with others. I believe that we will all appreciate and welcome our elderly, hoping that they can live a long life and contribute to Hong Kong society.

Thank you, President.

**DR TIK CHI-YUEN** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. Population ageing is an indisputable fact in Hong Kong. According to statistics, the proportion of people aged 65 or above will rise from 17% in 2016 to 25% in 2026 and 31% in 2030. The United Nations has predicted that by 2050, Hong Kong will be the city with the oldest population in the world, with 40.6% of its population aged 65 and above. In other words, Hong Kong has a higher average life expectancy than many other places in the world, suggesting that population ageing will be a significant challenge for Hong Kong in the future.

In the face of the challenges arising from population ageing, I think the Government lacks a positive attitude and commitment. Today, I do not see any

policies, plans or targets from the Government addressing the problem of population ageing. It can be concluded that there is “no policy, no planning and no target”. The Government has kept saying that it will “roll out initiatives once they are ready”. I cannot see how this reflects a proactive attitude from the Government. Does it mean that if it has the money this year, it will do something, like setting up another elderly centre? The Government has not responded to the needs of people at all. Officials from the two Policy Bureaux will likely enumerate the proposals in the Policy Address again, listing all the works the Government has been and will be doing. However, has the Government really solved the problem? Since Hong Kong has the longest life expectancy, where does the problem lie?

As at 31 October 2023, there were 17 069 elderly applicants waiting for subsidized places of residential care homes and the waiting time was 22 months. If a residential care home can accommodate 100 residents, we would need 170 homes in the future to take immediate care of our elderly. In this regard, does the Government have any specific plan and timetable? If possible, I hope the Under Secretary can tell us later the types and number of residential care homes for the elderly planned for the next 10 years, as well as the number of care places they will provide.

In addition, as at 31 October 2023, the number of elderly applicants waiting for subsidized places of community care services was 7 507, and the average waiting time for integrated home care services was seven months, while that for day care centres for the elderly was three months. President, the elderly waiting for the relevant services generally have immediate needs for such services since they have already met the required criteria, proving that they have an immediate need for the services. At present, despite having immediate needs, the elderly face a waiting time of three months for day care centres for, and an even longer wait of over half a year, that is seven months, for integrated home care services. Is this in line with the objective of “ageing in place as the core” as mentioned by the Secretary?

Moreover, according to the figures of the Housing Authority, as at March 2023, there were more than 121 000 elderly singletons aged 60 or above. A survey conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service this year (2023) found that 1 in every 10 elderly persons in Hong Kong is living alone. There are a large number of elderly singletons who lack both care and safety nets. How can they enjoy a quality life when they are isolated and in difficulty? Some of the

elderly may even make regrettable decisions because of momentary weakness or overwhelming pressure.

Mr Adrian Pedro HO said in his opening speech earlier that he hoped he could age healthily and stylishly. I wish to tell Mr HO that he is already stylish now and will certainly be so when he grows old. However, upon hearing this, many elderly persons might wonder how they can live healthily and stylishly when their everyday lives are already filled with difficulties and struggles. I wish Mr Adrian Pedro HO could give them a helping hand.

The World Health Organization launched the Global Age-friendly Cities Project in 2005. According to the definition, efforts should be made to encourage active ageing so that the elderly can stay healthy, participate actively and be protected. In this regard, has the Government adopted a positive attitude in formulating medium, long- and short-term plans to improve the quality of life of the elderly? What are the future plans of the authorities? It is all about determination. Take another Policy Bureau, the Housing Bureau, as an example. Initially, the land supply for the next decade was insufficient, but the Bureau has managed to reverse this, now securing not just an adequate but a plentiful land supply. Can the authorities apply a similar approach to elderly services, transforming them from insufficient to more than sufficient for the next decade?

Thank you, President.

**DR SO CHEUNG-WING** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. As of mid-2023, the number of elderly people aged 65 or above accounted for about 22% of Hong Kong's total population. The United Nations estimated that by 2050, Hong Kong will be the city with the oldest population in the world, with 40.6% of the population aged 65 or above. In other words, in 25 years' time, every five Hong Kong people aged between 15 and 64 will have to support or take care of two elderly people aged 65 or above.

The increasing proportion of the elderly population will place a financial pressure on public welfare policies and the public healthcare system, which is difficult to balance. The need for long-term care and attention will only grow. Yet, given the current shortage of land supply and manpower of residential care homes for the elderly in Hong Kong, this challenge will become even more severe when the number of elderly people is projected to double in the next 20 years.

Therefore, we should put our heads together as Mr Adrian Pedro HO's motion is worthy of in-depth discussion. The Government should prepare for rainy days and actively seek solutions to the problem.

I suggest that the Government make reference to the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing and take proactive actions in the areas of primary healthcare and long-term care, and the building of an elderly- and age-friendly community.

Firstly, continuously improving a sustainable social security system remains the Government's primary mission in coping with an ageing society. Especially in 2023, the poor population aged 65 or above in Hong Kong exceeded 514 000 persons, suggesting that while Hong Kong has a high coverage of social security, there is still an urgent need to implement more effective measures to prevent elderly poverty and reduce the number of impoverished elderly persons.

Secondly, the Government should enhance the medical-social collaboration and let primary healthcare lead the long-term care system. It should develop long-term care system at the community level and establish a family-centric community healthcare system. At the same time, the Government should establish community pharmacies, increase the number of elderly health centres and day care centres to provide effective care for the disabled elderly and ageing support, thereby shifting the focus from treatment to prevention.

Thirdly, the Government should strengthen home care support through the use of gerontechnology. According to statistics, over 30% of the elderly population aged 70 or above in Hong Kong experience limitations in body movement, and another 30% face difficulties with vision and hearing. The Government should promote gerontechnology, utilizing remote and smart devices to offer solutions such as health monitoring and smart home systems, so as to support the elderly in achieving ageing and rehabilitation in place.

Fourthly, the Government should build age-friendly communities. This includes providing safe and convenient public transportation, accessible public areas and community recreational facilities. At the same time, the Government should strengthen the social support network and fully utilize the Care Teams in all 18 districts to provide the elderly with support in daily life, mental health, and daily care, with a focus on supporting carers who are "seniors caring for seniors". It is also vital to promote the concept of healthy lifestyle among the population aged 40 to 65, with a view to expanding the base of healthy seniors over the next 20 years,

as their experience and wealth will become an important source of the silver economy.

President, I so submit.

**MR TONY TSE** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. President, the Legislative Council has had several debates over issues concerning the well-being and health of the elderly during this term. One example is the motion that I moved in the middle of last year, titled “Expediting the achievement of the ‘healthy city’ target”. At that time, I pointed out that the Government should provide support in various areas, including healthcare, dining, living and commuting, to empower Hong Kong to confront the challenges posed by its ageing population, enabling people of all ages to lead a healthy, easy and happy life.

Over the past one and a half years, I have been glad to see that the Government has listened to us and taken steps to build a healthy city and promote elderly health. In respect of healthcare, the Government has formulated the Primary Healthcare Blueprint to integrate preventive care and early treatment into its policies and mainstream practices. Furthermore, efforts have been made to bolster Chinese medicine services and promote collaboration between Chinese and Western medicines. As Hong Kong is a latecomer in this regard, we must exert greater efforts to catch up with the frontrunners in the future.

Regarding living, this year’s Policy Address has taken on board the proposal that I presented a few years ago. The proposal suggested incorporating universal and accessibility design concepts suitable for the elderly, the disabled and the able-bodied into the Buildings Department’s building design manual so that more buildings will be suitable for the elderly to age in place.

In recent years, there have been extensive discussions about ageing in place, but the integration of old and young seems to have been overlooked. If urban planning, redevelopment of old districts, building design, policy support and public education could all encourage young people to live with or near their elderly parents, it would facilitate their mutual care and bring numerous advantages to society at large.

To facilitate the life of the elderly, it is crucial to consider special design not only for buildings but also for various aspects of commuting. The design of roads,

open spaces, transportation modes and public facilities, as well as town planning as a whole, should not be neglected. Currently, the Transport Department is conducting the Traffic and Transport Strategy Study. I would like to remind the Department of the importance of giving special consideration to the needs of the elderly to go out during this study because it is likely that one in every three Hong Kong people is an elderly person when the relevant transport strategy is implemented in the future.

Furthermore, I suggest using gerontechnology to facilitate the implementation of ageing in place and foster the integration of old and young. As gerontechnology and related equipment will advance and become more affordable, the authorities should keep abreast of their advancement to ensure timely introduction. Subsidies for the elderly to acquire such equipment should also be taken into consideration.

When it comes to dining, it seems to me that the Government has shown minimal effort and allocated the least attention. Although many elderly people in Hong Kong are greatly concerned about healthy eating, it is often because they are already suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and respiratory problems, which are closely linked to their dietary habits from their younger years. However, the current food policy emphasizes safety rather than healthy eating, disregarding aspects such as excessive sweetness, excessive saltiness, excessive spiciness, hard-baked food, excessive richness, fast consumption and overindulgence. I urge the Government to step up its efforts in this regard.

Lastly, there is a common misconception that the elderly are a burden to society, leading to a decline in consumption and economic vitality. However, in Hong Kong, there are indeed many healthy and energetic elderly people who can continue to contribute to our economic development. They are capable of engaging in different roles and sharing their experiences with younger generations to save the young from the same mistakes. With the establishment of the new Advisory Panel on Silver Economy, I hope that its focus will extend beyond economic development and consumption to unlock the potential of the elderly, enabling them to live a happier and healthier life.

With these remarks, President, I support the original motion and its amendments.

**MR CHAU SIU-CHUNG** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, “healthy ageing” refers to the fact that even with an ageing population in society, “old pals” can live a long, healthy and quality life. In recent years, the Government has been making efforts to promote healthy ageing, for example, by launching health education for different age groups, carer training and reorganization of primary healthcare services, which are all good measures worthy of support. However, health is not confined to physical health, but also includes mental health, and both of which are equally important.

To borrow the words of the Secretary for Labour and Welfare earlier, “work can realize the value of life” and “work is not only for earning money, it is also very important to one’s mental well-being and health”. Indeed, many of the silver-haired group in Hong Kong want to continue to work, firstly, it is because of inadequate retirement protection in Hong Kong, they do not want to rely on government welfare for a living, so they have no alternative but to continue to earn money to support their old age; and secondly, some of them think that they are still healthy and have the heart and strength to stay in work, so they do not want to retire so soon. Although these “old pals” want to continue to work, it is not that easy in reality. Recently, I have received a request for assistance from a 65-year-old worker in the construction industry who told me that after several job interviews, the company concerned refused to employ him because of his senior age, and this made him “furious”.

The workplace environment in Hong Kong is by no means age-friendly, coupled with the impact of imported labour, I am afraid employers will be even more reluctant to employ those from the silver-haired group, which is in fact a great waste of precious local manpower resources. The labour force participation rate of Hong Kong’s population aged 65 or above is only about 13.3%, which is lower than that of other neighbouring regions. Take Japan as an example, the employment rate of its population aged 65 or above is as high as 25.3%. One of the reasons for such a high rate is the active promotion by local governments. For example, in Akita City, one of the areas with the most seriously ageing problems in Japan, the local government, in order to promote the participation of the elderly in social activities, has launched the Age-Friendly Partner Program which encourages cooperation between enterprises and non-governmental organizations to provide silver-haired friendly equipment and arrangements, and at the same time, significantly increase the number of re-employment opportunities for the elderly, so that “old pals” can give full play to their strengths. This will not only enrich

their lives and help them realize their life values, but also increase the workforce in community, so that the elderly can make use of their past expertise and experience to contribute to society again.

In addition, the local governments of eight prefectures in Japan, including Kyushu and Okinawa, have cooperated with enterprises to set up the Lifelong Active Society Promotion Council to promote support for the employment of the elderly. This includes establishing and promoting corporate case studies and reward systems for senior employment. Participating enterprises comes from various industries such as manufacturing and construction. They are not only willing to employ more elderly staff, but also provide a friendly work environment by adjusting font sizes on documents and introducing automated equipment to help reduce the physical workload of their staff, offering comprehensive support.

In order to create an age-friendly social environment in Hong Kong, the Government needs to assume a more important responsibility and role in promoting various aspects such as public space, mass transportation, housing, social participation, employment support, as well as community and health services, etc., and then combining with the power of the community to form a supportive network, in order to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group, and to enhance their sense of well-being and fulfilment.

President, with these remarks, I support the original motion and all the amendments.

**MR BENSON LUK** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. President, first of all, I would like to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for moving the motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”, and I would also like to thank several other Members for proposing their amendments.

According to a publication entitled “Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046” published by the Census and Statistics Department, it is projected that the elderly population aged 65 or above will increase from 1.45 million in 2021 to 2.74 million in 2046, which means that the number of elderly persons to be dependent on every 1 000 members of the public by that time will be 632, more than doubling the 300 recorded in 2021.

In recent years, there has been a trend of the silver-haired group becoming younger, both physically and mentally, and there is now a concept called “young elderly”. In fact, many “old pals” who have reached retirement age still have good working ability. Of course, the Labour Department has also provided the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged for retirees, but the number of elderly people aged 60 or above participating in the programme is actually not very high, with the statistics for 2021 showing that elderly people accounted for about 26.8% of the participants. There are many reasons for their low participation rate, but from the perspective of sustainable development, I think the SAR Government can actually cooperate with different sectors.

Now in this new chapter, if we want to solve the problems in society, we really have to make more use of the mode of cooperation between the Government, the business sector and the community. The cooperation among the business sector, non-governmental social enterprises and the SAR Government will enable the silver-haired people to enjoy a better life. To cite an example, in the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong (“BPA”), a member of our Youth Committee who is a young entrepreneur has set up a social enterprise to give full play to the creativity of young people by repackaging traditional Chinese cakes and adding young and innovative elements to attract the market. But the most interesting point is that she has recruited a group of retired grass-roots women of golden age to learn and make pastries together, enabling them to start afresh, discover their abilities, build confidence and give full play to their strengths to earn extra income. In addition to empowering more golden-aged women to join the labour force, the women are also able to build up their social circles, thus achieving multiple benefits at the same time.

This successful model is reflective of the so-called “create share value” theory of social enterprises, linking young people and the silver-haired group, giving full play to the complementary strengths of the two age groups by utilizing the creativity and sales skills of young people, driving the job market for the silver-haired group, as well as passing on traditional culture, thereby achieving a multi-win situation.

Therefore, I think the SAR Government can encourage young people to give play to their creativity in targeting the silver-haired market, and it can also encourage more social enterprises or private organizations to make use of the mode

of cooperation between the Government, the business sector and the public to launch this kind of schemes to enable the elderly to rejoin the workforce. Of course, if possible, the authorities should also provide financial, venue or tax support to this kind of social enterprises, so as to encourage more people to join the ranks.

In fact, BPA has recently published a report entitled “Perfecting the Four Elderly Policies and Building an Age-friendly Society”, in which a number of policies and measures relating to care for the elderly, respect for the elderly, support for the elderly and protection for the elderly are proposed in the hope that the authorities can take part in formulating the details and discussions with us. Apart from this, I also have the following three directions, hoping to trigger better ideas, so as to provide the silver-haired group with a more caring and precise elderly policy.

First, I hope that the authorities can expeditiously re-establish a high-level Steering Committee on Population Policy, so as to formulate a more precise direction and assess the demographic trend afresh, so as to enable the Government to precisely mobilize resources to respond to the different aspirations of the silver-haired group.

Secondly, I hope that the authorities can step up publicity on the promotion of respecting and caring for the elderly, so as to build up a positive image and atmosphere for the elderly, so that the community will understand that the elderly can still make contribution to society.

Thirdly, many people in Hong Kong are at a loss as to what to do after retirement due to the changes in their lives. Therefore, I suggest that the SAR Government should provide more retirement education support courses targeting the elderly, so as to help them build up a positive mindset and keep abreast of the times in order to achieve the goal of healthy ageing.

President, with these remarks, I support the original motion and the amendments.

**PROF PRISCILLA LEUNG** (in Cantonese): President, in 1957, Chairman MAO Zedong said to a group of young students: “The world is yours and ours, but in the

final analysis, it is yours.” Today, I would like to say that “the world is ultimately ours”, regardless of whether we are young or old.

In 2012, I already proposed in this Council that we should introduce the general direction of “silver economy” because Hong Kong would soon enter an ageing society. At the same time, I have also actively advocated that people aged 60 or above should be entitled to the “two-dollar ride throughout the territory”, and we, the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong (“BPA”) do not advocate handing out money. This \$2 fare concession is in fact a good investment in society in the long run because we have to make preparations for the rainy days of the ageing of Hong Kong’s population.

At present, the problem of an ageing society in Hong Kong is imminent. According to statistics, people aged over 65 will account for 30% of the population in 2036 and 36% in 2046. By 2050, according to the figures of the United Nations, they will account for 40.6%, which is a very large figure. The so-called “silver-haired” refers not only to the retired silver-haired group, but also the silver economy, which enables these people to release their energy, rejoin society and even start their own business.

In the past, a colleague of mine named Prof Patrick LAU often said that he became a Member of the Legislative Council only after he had reached the age of 60 and had served two terms. Horizontally, Mr Mahathir of Malaysia still served as Prime Minister at the age of 92; Korea has specially organized model training classes for elderly people aged 60 or 70; there is a very famous artiste in Hong Kong who joined an artiste training class at the age of 70; and there are also numerous KOLs who have started their talk programmes. We need carers to babysit the children or to care the elderly nowadays. All of these require the provision of training and the support of social policies, including family therapy, and there are many of them. People over 60 years of age with rich life experience are in fact very suitable for this kind of work, and this is their opportunity to rejoin the job market.

Secondly, in respect of the silver economy, we hope to set up a silver-haired entrepreneurship fund, so that people can have the opportunity to make use of their accumulated experience and networks to rejoin the community and assist young entrepreneurs in starting their own business because there is a lack of talents everywhere nowadays. Members may have seen a movie called *The Intern*

starring Robert DE NIRO. It is about a CEO of a large corporation who retires to work as an intern and collaborates with a young entrepreneur, from which we can see that the energy of interaction is very great. In Sweden, there is also an organization called “Volunteer Bank”, which aims to train young elderly people (i.e. people over 60 years old who are really retired) to be volunteers, so that in the future, when they are old, other people can pay for some of their volunteer hours in that bank to come back and serve them.

I often describe this group of people born during the baby boom (that is, the 1950s and 1960s) in Hong Kong as hyperactive as they do not want to be inactive. I have received quite a number of requests for assistance. Some of them have used their pensions to buy a franchise to run a laundry, and in the end, they have been cheated out of all their money. They do not want to be inactive, they do not want to sit at home, they do not want to just play Tai Chi, but they do not know what they can do. Is it necessary for the Government to provide a policy to enable these people to enter their second career in a systematic manner? We think that more workshops or exhibitions should be organized. After all, this group of people make up such a large proportion of the population, and the world is no longer just yours or ours, they are also a very important part of the world.

Secondly, I would like to talk about retirement for the silver-haired group. As far as the retirement for the silver-haired group is concerned, Taiwan and the United States have done a very good job in enabling people with financial means to retire. Hong Kong should take care of retirees aged 65 or above, so that their insurance coverage can continue and will not fall into poverty all of a sudden, while at the same time, we can avoid a substantial increase in the burden on our public healthcare system. Of course, it would be best if we can cooperate with the development of the Northern Metropolis and the Greater Bay Area—as we said at the press conference last week—to create quality retirement centers and elderly cultural areas for the elderly to live in.

Finally, I think that society has to change its mindset. What is meant by “reaching the age of sixty”? It seems that people at the age of 60 are very old, but this is no longer the case. Such a change can alleviate the pressure on society, boost the self-confidence of the elderly and enhance their sense of well-being in life.

President, I so submit.

**MR TANG KA-PIU** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. The needs arising from an ageing population and Members' concern about it could be said to be of a pressing nature in this District Council Election. I have conducted electioneering activities in four places, including Kwun Tong, Islands, Tseung Kwan O and Sha Tin, and I found that all candidates attached great importance to community safety in the light of an ageing population, as well as the health and well-being of the public, which has become their shared aspiration. Therefore, it is a great consensus in society to care about the ageing population and how the elderly can live a healthy and safe life in the community.

I am concerned about health issues because the main idea of the motion proposed by Adrian is “healthy ageing”, that is, when one reaches the age of 60, 70 or even 80, one must be physically fit and have a good resistance against diseases, and one must be able to “move around, walk around, eat well and sleep well”. It is only natural for us to be happy when we can do all these things. This has to do with the state of our life before retirement. If everyone is in a sub-healthy state before retirement, working 12 to 14 hours a day, under immense pressure, even having a strong sense of anxiety, and in a precarious state, how can we have a healthy body after retirement?

Secondly, when wage earners devote themselves to their work before retirement, whether they are forced to do so or voluntarily, they will devote zero time to their families and the development of their personal interests, especially men. That is to say, when a man retires, he will suddenly realize that he does not know how to get along with his family members and he cannot find the second meaning of life. As a result, he will develop psychological illnesses or age rapidly, and he may even develop dementia as a result of the impact on his cognitive ability, and all of these are risks. Therefore, I would like to point out that if society is very concerned about how elderly people aged over 60 can continue to contribute to society, maintain good health and fitness, avoid a significant decline in their health due to the exhaustion or even overuse of their physical and mental strength before retirement, we have to think about how middle-aged people in the pre-retirement stage can make themselves healthier.

Of course, we are very glad that the Health Bureau has launched the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme to introduce this concept in primary healthcare for people from the age of 45 upward, so as to remind people that they should pay attention to the risk of contracting chronic diseases starting from the age of 45, and this is a very good warning. However, I think that structurally, we also have to

start thinking about whether it is necessary to deal with the problem of excessively long working hours in Hong Kong.

If it is said that employers and employees cannot reach a consensus on standard working hours which involve the setting of standards for every trade and industry, and that it is quite difficult to pay 1.5 times or even two times of the wages for working hours in excess of the standard ones, is it not possible to deal with the issue of capping the number of working hours first? Death from overwork is a common problem in many metropolitan cities, and I believe there are also many examples in Hong Kong of people suddenly collapsing due to myocardial infarction. Since society as a whole attaches importance to the physical, mental and spiritual health of retirees and the elderly, what needs to be emphasized is not only the problems of exhaustion of physical strength, overuse of mental energy or pressure hidden inside the body, as mentioned just now, but also the even more important problem of family relationship.

(THE PRESIDENT'S DEPUTY, MS STARRY LEE, took the Chair)

Many men really work 12 or even 14 hours a day. They do not know how to get along with their family members over time, and I myself have been reflecting on this problem constantly. It is only after a man has retired that he realizes that he has to face his wife 24 hours a day and he does not know what to do. It seems that Dr NGAN Man-yu immediately shares this feeling. However, I am not forced to do so because my job as a Member of this Council is my profession, but most wage earners have to work to the limit of their physical capacity in order to make ends meet. Therefore, the imposition of a maximum number of working hours can ensure that the health state of individuals can be extended from the age of 50-odd to the age of 60-odd or 70-odd, so that they can maintain sustainable physical and mental strength after all.

Moreover, since we have been able to set aside time for our families and even develop our personal interests during the prime of our lives, we will not suddenly fall off the wagon and go to the other end of the spectrum, both physically and mentally, after retirement. These are issues that we need to start thinking about, especially in the post epidemic era. Therefore, I, TANG Ka-piu, would like to call on Mr Adrian Pedro HO and the New People's Party to support the introduction of legislation on capping the number of working hours at least now

that we all agree with the need to care the health of the elderly, so as to prevent wage earners from working for long hours, or else they will be plagued with various illnesses after retirement.

I so submit.

**DR NGAN MAN-YU** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, with the ageing of the population in Hong Kong worsening, how to assist the elderly in planning for their retirement life and building a good community environment are hot topics these days. In recent years, the community has been promoting ageing in place, believing that the elderly should live in the living environment with which they are most familiar. Therefore, this motion not only respects and appreciates the contribution made by the elderly to society, but also aims to ensure that the elderly can lead a healthy and dignified life.

Sixty-five years old is the threshold of the United Nations' definition of "elderly". With the current standard of living and technology, most silver-haired people are still in good spirits even after retirement. Older people inevitably face deterioration in their physical abilities as they age. They may sometimes forget things, and their eyesight, hearing ability and mobility may slowly deteriorate. However, good lifestyle habits and community planning can ensure that seniors are healthy and energetic.

Earlier, the Metropolitan University and the Lutheran Church conducted a study and found that one quarter of the middle-aged and elderly people had a high risk of developing cognitive impairment, but the risk was lower if they had a part-time or full-time job, and those who had a good living and dietary habit also had a lower risk of developing cognitive impairment. Many empirical studies in the past have told us that the community environment and lifestyle can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases or accidental injuries among the elderly. In the case of Hong Kong, the Government should give priority to the living, housing and community support for the elderly.

Many elderly people who have just reached the age of 60 and who have retired from their previous positions wish to re-enter the workforce, take up part-time jobs and start their own businesses, and even many of our volunteers are around 60 years of age. However, as far as rejoining the workforce by the elderly is concerned, they have always faced problems such as age discrimination, skills

upgrading, competition from the younger generation, difficulties in job changes or social mindset, it is necessary for the Government to assist them in removing the obstacles to their re-entry into the labour market. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong suggests that the Government should set up an elderly employment fund to subsidize enterprises and organizations to employ more elderly people, or assist enterprises in redesigning their working environment and duties so as to absorb more elderly people for re-employment; at the same time, it is hoped that various organizations can be encouraged to organize more training courses for elderly volunteers, so as to promote the participation of elderly people in community services, thereby enabling them to continue to give full play to their strengths, and to enrich their retirement life.

Moreover, the existing barrier-free community facilities are rather inadequate. For example, the progress of the pedestrian linkage system projects in various districts is very slow, especially the Universal Accessibility Programme. In addition, lifts and pedestrian linkage facilities are often out of order. Let me cite an example. In Choi Ha Estate, one of the Tenants Purchase Scheme estates that I serve, one of the elevators has been out of service two-thirds of the time throughout the year, and the elderly in the entire estate rely on the lift for going up and down. How to do a good job in day-to-day management is an issue that the Government should think twice.

As for ageing in place, many elderly households actually lack support facilities for ageing in place in their homes, for example, there are no handrails, non-slip flooring, handles, assistive devices, and so on, at home, and all of these have given rise to the possibilities of the elderly sustaining injuries in their daily lives.

Therefore, I very much hope that the Government can do a few jobs. First, it should set up a \$5 billion fund for hillside improvement projects to expedite the implementation of some planned escalator systems and elevator works under a “dedicated fund for dedicated purpose” mode, and subsidize private housing estates to install barrier-free facilities in public places. In addition, the Government should really consider extending the scope of the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care to cover individual applications.

Finally, as far as community care and support are concerned, the number of elderly people is increasing but the support is far from adequate. The Government

should strengthen services such as escorting the elderly to medical consultations, home-based rehabilitation treatment, meal delivery, household maintenance and cleaning, and review the existing staff establishment for home care services, so that more elderly people can receive tailor-made care services on a case-by-case basis to meet their daily needs.

Deputy President, with a trend of an ageing population and a declining birth rate in Hong Kong in recent years, it is necessary for the Government to build an elderly-friendly city to enable the elderly to lead a wonderful life.

Deputy President, I so submit.

**MR CHAN HAK-KAN** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. Deputy President, we have actually discussed many times in this Council how to help the silver-haired people. However, there are two focal points in today's motion debate: first, how to age healthily, and second, how to help the silver-haired people build up a good quality of life. Therefore, healthy ageing and a good quality of life are the focuses of today's motion.

We have also thought of many different ways to help the silver-haired people. Deputy President and I often conduct district visits and see that there are many elderly people in the community. As far as I can observe, those elderly people who chat with other people in the community or walk around, or those who work as volunteers in Members' offices are usually more nimble-witted, active and healthy. Sometimes, we take some supplies to the homes of some elderly people, and those elderly people usually do not like to go out and always stay at home, they are less nimble-witted and tend to be sluggish, or they are in poorer health; of course, this is also due to their own factors. Therefore, I think that in order to improve the quality of life for the elderly and enable them to age more healthily, it is actually necessary to encourage the elderly to go out and have more social life. The Government can also implement some measures, for example, the \$2 fare concession scheme, which is advocated by us, and we think that it can help the elderly to get around.

However, in the community, the elderly will not go out by public transport every day, and they may mostly go downstairs for a walk or chat with others. Those living in public housing estates may fare better because there are shopping malls or parks in the vicinity, and in fact, they only aimlessly sit on the seats in the

parks or go to the shopping malls to enjoy the air-conditioned environment, but they will be asked to leave the shopping malls later, and if they have nowhere else to go, they will just find a place to sit afterwards. Therefore, this cannot provide the elderly with a good quality of life or enable them to lead a healthy life in their twilight years.

At present, I notice that there are also courses in the community targeting the interests of the elderly, some of which are arranged by the Social Welfare Department and some by non-governmental organizations. However, the participation rate of the elderly may not be too high. Why? It is because many of these courses are fee-charging. When the elderly spend their life savings, they will “save as much as they can”, so if they are asked to spend a lot of money on the courses, they may not be willing to do so. Therefore, I think the Government should organize more interest classes at community centers for the elderly at low fees or free of charge, so as to attract the elderly to participate in these classes, thereby continuing or cultivating some of their interests and reducing the chances of the elderly staying at home for a long period of time. Therefore, in fact, there could be some incentives to encourage them to go out, or the Government can take one more step, and I hope the Secretary can consider this.

Second, Deputy President, how can the elderly have a good quality of life? Just now, many colleagues have expressed their views. I often put forward a proposal in this Council, and as there will soon be a new budget, I will propose it again, that is, to waive rates for elderly owner-occupied properties. This is actually not very helpful, but as the rates for a quarter may amount to \$2,000 to \$3,000, the equivalent of a saving of \$500 to \$600 a month can still be of some help to them. Many elderly people may not be able to enjoy a lot of social welfare benefits because they own properties, which constitute their life savings or are rented out for rental income or for self-occupation. If the Government can help those elderly people who own properties by giving them a rates waiver for their self-occupied properties, they will have a few hundred dollars more to spend on their living expenses each month, and they will be able to live a better life, or at least they will be happier if they can go to a tea house once or twice more. Therefore, I will continue to put forward the proposal demanding a rates waiver for elderly owner-occupied properties in the Budget. I will put forward this proposal to the Financial Secretary in the hope that the Secretary and the Under Secretary will give a hand, so that the elderly can have a few hundred dollars more a month to meet their living expenses. Deputy President, as many members of the public have pointed out to us that there is no rates concession at present and rates have

increased substantially, I would like to take this opportunity to express my views to the two Secretaries in this Chamber.

Thank you, Deputy President.

**MR TANG FEI** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the situations of the silver-haired people from different social strata are entirely different. The “silver economy” we are talking about is more targeted at the silver-haired members of the middle class, but the silver-haired members of the grassroots actually need more welfare assistance. Therefore, in respect of the policy on the silver-haired group mentioned in today’s motion, it is necessary to treat them differently.

Regarding the silver economy, in recent years, the economics sector has made estimates on various countries and places around the world, and it is considered that the assets of the middle-class silver-haired generation have increased, and their spending power should not be underestimated. According to some estimates, in the United States, between 2010 and 2020, the consumption spending of people aged 50 or above was over US\$1,000 billion more than that of young people, which was a bit astonishing; in the United Kingdom, more than 80% of financial assets are held by the post-war baby boomer generation; and in Europe, the value of the assets owned by the age group of 65 or above exceeds €300 billion. Here, I very much hope that the relevant departments of the SAR Government can make an estimation as to the sizes of the assets and the spending power of the silver-haired members of the middle class if a silver economy is really to be promoted. This is not for the purpose of “victimizing” them or levying taxes on them, but for the purpose of revitalizing their assets, which will not only bring more affluence to their lives, but also inject new impetus of consumption into the economy of Hong Kong.

Despite the risk of a slow-down in economic growth posed by an ageing population, Hong Kong’s industrial and commercial enterprises can likewise create plenty of business opportunities if they can make adjustments to cater for the needs of the silver-haired market. For example, as the ageing population will stimulate the sales of premium food and premium nutritional supplements, banks can design some creative credit loans or investment products and focus on the middle-class silver-haired generation, and there is huge potential for development in the shift from traditional to modern and creative investment services, to various other kinds of retirement schemes and elderly wealth management, and so on. However, we

must first understand the sizes of the assets and spending power of the silver-haired middle class.

Therefore, as far as the silver economy is concerned, our focus should be on making the consumption activities of the middle-class silver-haired people more active, so that they can spend their money without worry and lead a relatively affluent and quality life in their twilight years, and at the same time, they can play a facilitating role in promoting the economy of Hong Kong, in order to make contribution both individually and collectively.

As for the silver-haired people at the grass-roots level, pragmatically speaking, they may be in greater need of welfare assistance. At present, there is still room for Hong Kong to improve its welfare care for the grass-roots elderly. We can see that many elderly people aged 60 or 65 or above still have to continue to work, and the jobs they are engaged in are all manual or semi-manual in nature. Take the two bills relating to taxi services passed today as an example, many Members have pointed out that many elderly people aged 65 or above still have to work for a living by driving taxis or minibuses. To this kind of grass-roots silver-haired people, they have to work as they live hand to mouth and they need more welfare care.

The silver-haired people need to live with dignity and a sense of security. To put it more plainly, no one wants to “be unable to afford retirement”, which means that one is forced to keep on working because one’s financial income is not enough to meet one’s future needs.

Deputy President, while we need a youth policy, we also need a corresponding policy on the silver-haired group. I hereby call on the SAR Government to set up a Steering Committee on the Silver-haired Group Policy to collect information and conduct surveys and researches on the situations and needs of the silver-haired group from different strata, be it the middle-class or grassroots. Nowadays, the Central Authorities and the SAR all emphasize the importance of surveys and researches, and without surveys and researches, we have no right to speak. With regard to the silver-haired people from different strata, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive studies and make policy recommendations on their social and economic needs, the impact of their consumption activities and work on the entire community and economy, as well as the corresponding policy support from different departments of the Hong Kong Government.

Deputy President, young people are our future and they certainly need to be taken care of, but growing older is also the future faced by all of us present here, which needs to be taken care of as well, so that all of us in the future can lead a life with a sense of security, dignity and decency.

Deputy President, I so submit.

**IR DR LO WAI-KWOK** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, first of all, I would like to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for moving the original motion, and the other three Members for moving the amendments.

Deputy President, according to the latest statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department, as of mid-year, the people aged 65 or above in Hong Kong accounted for 21.9% of the total population. In other words, there is one elderly person for every five Hong Kong citizens. To actively respond to President XI Jinping's important address on 1 July and ensure that the elderly receive better care to promote their sense of security, sense of worthiness and sense of protection, the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong ("BPA") has conducted a thematic study on the challenges faced by the elderly in Hong Kong. The study reveals that 40% of the elderly either live alone or with their spouses only, with inadequate care and support. Moreover, four out of ten elderly individuals are living in poverty, and the waiting time for a subsidized place in a residential care home can be as long as several years. There are also frequent cases of scams targeting senior citizens with many of the victims losing their entire life savings. There is undoubtedly an urgent need to address the issue of elderly care in Hong Kong.

On 7 December, BPA published a research report titled "Improving Elderly Care Policies on Four Fronts to Build an Age-friendly Community", urging the SAR Government to prioritize elderly care in its policies. Alongside formulating a comprehensive blueprint for elderly care policies, it is crucial to put forward complementary measures to provide better assistance for the elderly, thereby establishing the four pillars of support, respect, care and protection in elderly services. These recommendations align with the objectives outlined in this motion.

In light of the continuously ageing population in Hong Kong, it is imperative for the SAR Government to move beyond its piecemeal approach to formulating

elderly care policies. A territory-wide census should be conducted to establish a comprehensive database, which would facilitate the development of a detailed blueprint with clear goals and long-term planning, while also promoting coordination among various relevant Policy Bureaux to implement measures that promote support, respect, care and protection in elderly services. The Government must step up efforts to build an age-friendly community and demonstrate its commitment to enhancing elderly services.

Regarding “support for the elderly”, it is recommended that the SAR Government earmark a portion of land in the Northern Metropolis for the development of large-scale elderly care centres to provide diverse housing options for the elderly. At the same time, to meet the needs for cross-boundary medical and elderly care services of Hong Kong senior citizens, the authorities should further promote the cross-boundary portability arrangements for welfare benefits by extending the scope of application of elderly healthcare vouchers (“HCVs”) to cover cities in Guangdong Province outside the Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) and Fujian Province. Furthermore, they should accelerate the implementation of a health insurance sharing system covering the entire GBA and encourage more Hong Kong medical institutions to set up branches in Mainland cities within GBA.

With regard to “respect for the elderly”, BPA suggests that the authorities provide a non-means-tested “fruit grant” to all individuals aged 65 and above, continue the implementation of the \$2 transport fare concession scheme, lower the age threshold for applying for HCVs to 60 and introduce “dental care vouchers”. To promote the popularization of gerontechnology products, the authorities should adopt a multi-pronged approach by funding universities and various organizations to enhance research efforts, as well as subsidizing the elderly to purchase or rent these products. Training for elders in using these products can be provided by leveraging a social mutual help network. These measures will ensure the availability, affordability and accessibility of gerontechnology products to the elderly. Additionally, the authorities should facilitate the market in capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the silver economy, launching more quality products and services for the elderly to unleash their purchasing power.

As regards “care for the elderly”, the authorities should allocate resources to set up a fund supporting community elderly services. Following the introduction of governance improvement at the district level and the successful formation of the new District Council (“DC”), the authorities should set explicit requirements for DC members and Care Teams to enhance the provision of elderly services,

including establishing dedicated teams for single elderly individuals and doubleton elderly households. Furthermore, projects under the Universal Accessibility Programme should be expeditiously implemented to offer greater convenience to the elderly.

In terms of “protection for the elderly”, the authorities should take comprehensive measures both online and offline to combat scams targeting the elderly and safeguard their hard-earned money. This can be achieved by enhancing the functionality of such tools as “Scameter+” and establishing an online report platform for citizens to report suspicious phone calls, emails and websites. In addition, the authorities should urge the banking sector to establish a Stop-Payment Mechanism for the elderly to provide timely assistance in handling suspected deception cases. Increased inspections should also be conducted to combat fraud shops specifically targeting the elderly.

Deputy President, elders have dedicated a significant portion of their lives to the prosperity and development of Hong Kong. It is only fair that society rewards their contributions and provides them with greater support and care, allowing them to enjoy a healthy and happy (*The buzzer sounded*) ...

**DEPUTY PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, your speaking time is up.

Prof William WONG, please speak.

**PROF WILLIAM WONG** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, as the old saying goes, “May your happiness and good fortune be boundless like the East Sea, and may you live as long as the South Mountain”. In traditional Chinese culture, longevity is considered a blessing. Nowadays, the average life expectancy in Hong Kong is over 80 years old, which is a great fortune, and everyone hopes to enjoy their golden years. As mentioned in the amendments proposed by Dr Johnny NG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT, it is important to promote gerontechnology to help the elderly live a healthy old age. Gerontechnology not only enhances the sense of happiness among the elderly but also significantly reduces the burden on carers, allowing them to enjoy quality time with their elderly family members.

Hong Kong's population will continue to age in the future. According to projections conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, by 2046, there will be at least one elderly person for every three Hong Kong citizens. Although the elderly dependency ratio is continuously rising, the education level among the new generation of senior citizens is generally higher. The results of the Population Census show that the proportion of older persons with a secondary education or above has increased considerably from 31% in 2011 to 46.8% in 2021. It is expected that the education level of the elderly population will continue to improve in the future, making their knowledge, skills, experiences and professional qualifications valuable assets to our society.

With the abundant material wealth and advanced medical technology available in Hong Kong, the majority of retirees are relatively healthy and able to maintain their independence. We should strive to create an age-friendly social environment to provide sufficient employment opportunities for the elderly and enable their active participation in volunteer and civil activities. By doing so, we can encourage capable seniors not to be limited by their age, but to continue to give play to their talents and contribute to society, realizing their self-worth.

The Government should take the lead in promoting the effective utilization of senior human resources and undertake effective coordinated efforts in key development areas facing shortages of manpower. Take the nurturing of innovation and technology (“I&T”) talents as an example. Considering that Hong Kong lags far behind neighbouring regions in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (“STEAM”) education, we can make good use of our senior human resources in this regard. The Hong Kong STEM Education Association, for instance, has launched an incubation programme that invites retired I&T teachers to give science talks in schools as expert speakers and arrange visits to I&T institutions for primary and secondary school teachers to broaden their horizons. They also help schools to build connections with these institutions so that the schools concerned can organize their own study trips for students in the future.

To demonstrate its commitment to vigorously promoting STEAM education in primary and secondary schools, it is recommended that the Government set up community I&T education centres in every district. Apart from serving as teaching venues for professional training and the sharing of teaching materials, these centres can facilitate collaboration with I&T educators, scholars, engineers and scientists, especially retired teachers and I&T professionals, to provide support

for teachers. They can deliver talks on their specialized I&T topics in schools and share their professional knowledge and practical experiences with teachers and students, enriching understanding of the I&T industry and fostering interest in pursuing careers in the field.

Moreover, those retired Hong Kong citizens residing in the Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) can also carefully plan their retirement life. Given the rapid development in GBA and the potential manpower shortage, the Government is advised to actively explore making good use of the pool of senior talents within the region with other GBA cities. It can take inspiration from the first GBA silver-haired think tank established in Guangzhou, and coordinate the involvement of talented individuals in thematic discussions and science and technology breakthrough programmes.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I express my support for the motion and its amendments.

**DR TAN YUEHENG** (in Putonghua): Thank you, Deputy President. Hong Kong, known for having the world’s longest life expectancy, is facing the challenge of an increasingly ageing population. To address this issue, it is crucial for the Government to take action to improve the quality of life of the elderly, their families and the community as a whole. It is also important to consider the perspectives on age and ageing from citizens of other age groups. I would like to raise a few suggestions and hope that the Government will play a more proactive role in promoting healthy ageing and creating a good quality of life for the silver-haired group.

Firstly, promote the silver economy and make good use of gerontechnology to enhance the quality of life of the elderly. Developing the silver economy, on the one hand, requires the Government and society to provide a wide range of tailored products and services in key areas of concern for the elderly, including healthcare, long-term care, social security, food, personal care products, transportation and communication, offering more options for financially capable elderly individuals. Additionally, the Government should ensure that underprivileged and marginalized elderly individuals in society benefit from public services to the fullest extent. On the other hand, the elderly population has diverse needs, it is recommended that the existing consumer market be segmented by industries to cater to these needs. For example, the elderly care industry chain

can be further divided into areas such as healthy ageing, elderly real estate, elderly culture, gerontechnology and elderly travel. Through subdivision, we can see that the elderly are both the demand and supply side of the silver economy, acting as both the consumers and contributors. Gerontechnology is an excellent application for developing the silver economy as it can help the elderly address various challenges they face in daily life, health screening, home safety, rehabilitation, healthcare and social interactions, improving their quality of life and self-care abilities. The development of gerontechnology in Hong Kong is still in its early stages and progressing relatively slowly. The proportion of elderly individuals who can benefit from and experience gerontechnology remains low, indicating significant room for improvement. I hope to raise awareness among various stakeholders to optimize the application areas and effectiveness of enhancing elderly services using technology.

Secondly, prioritize the mental health of the elderly by addressing the difficulties they encounter due to physical ageing, changes in interpersonal relationships and shifts in social roles while providing sufficient resource support. To safeguard the mental health of the elderly, apart from family care, enabling capable elderly individuals to stay connected with society and the community is essential to reducing their sense of loss resulting from social disengagement. In addition, the Government should increase funding support to schools organizing elder academy programmes, encouraging them to introduce programmes that align with current social developments and improve the quality of life of the elderly. The programmes should offer practical and culturally diverse content to cater to different interests, allowing the elderly to acquire new knowledge in various fields after retirement. At the same time, the Government should provide subsidies for continuing education to eligible elderly individuals to promote lifelong learning and enable them to engage in fulfilling activities that maintain their enthusiasm for life.

Thirdly, continue to foster collaboration in elderly care among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao by improving arrangements for cross-boundary elderly care and implementing cross-boundary portability arrangements for welfare benefits.

Fourthly, the Government should promote proper understanding of age and ageing among other age groups in society. Ageing is an important stage in life, and the elderly are valuable members of families and important assets to society. Each elderly individual's situation is unique, and their experiences should be leveraged if they are still capable of working and contributing to society.

Therefore, when formulating policies, the Government should thoroughly consider the actual circumstances and needs of different groups, aiming to eliminate the biases against older individuals and fully harness their enthusiasm and contributions to society.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support Mr Adrian Pedro HO's motion.

**DR CHOW MAN-KONG** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, Members pay close attention to the issue of an ageing population in Hong Kong. As per my knowledge, related topics have been discussed four times at this Council this year, reflecting the great importance attached by Members to the impacts of this problem on Hong Kong.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Adrian Pedro HO for moving this motion today, which provides us with an opportunity to revisit this topic. I will approach the issue from three new perspectives, including planning for a silver-haired life, to shed light on the matter in a different manner. Specifically, I aim to demonstrate that the ageing population is not just a crisis but also something that can be improved. As such, I will put forth three suggestions based on these perspectives.

During the previous debate on the motion “Expediting the implementation of cross-boundary elderly care planning in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” by this Council, I emphasized that, from a moral perspective, it is the fundamental responsibility of every son and daughter to care for their elderly parents. Theoretically, the Government should step up efforts to facilitate the implementation of “ageing in place”, promoting intergenerational harmony and prioritizing the value of filial piety. In the 2022 Policy Address, the authorities proposed reserving about 5% of the total gross floor area (“GFA”) in future public housing development projects for welfare purposes, including the provision of residential care homes for the elderly. However, this measure falls far short of meeting the continuously rising demand for elderly services.

To increase the proportion of district elderly care facilities in a more targeted manner, I suggest that the authorities raise the relevant GFA percentage to 10%. Additionally, the bottom three to five floors of every newly completed public housing building should be designated as elderly care homes or day care centers

for the elderly, allowing the elderly to live in the same building as their family members for mutual care. As mentioned, the elderly currently make up one-fifth of Hong Kong's total population, and this proportion is expected to rise to one-third by 2039. Therefore, reserving three to five floors is a scientifically grounded proposal. Furthermore, this approach will alleviate the burden of long-distance travel for carers and provide the much-needed respect and care for the elderly, bringing multiple benefits.

Moreover, it has caught my attention that the average living space per person in Hong Kong was only 172 sq ft in 2021, which was far below the global standard. In comparison, the average living space per person in other places, such as Seoul, Singapore and Chinese Taipei, was as high as 30 to 35 sq m. Improvements are thus necessary to facilitate the implementation of “ageing in place”, particularly in terms of tax allowances. The current policy on tax allowances is quite interesting. Upon careful examination of the allowances table, you will notice that the taxpayers are required to reside in the same unit as their dependent parents to receive additional allowances. Nevertheless, I wonder how many elderly individuals and their family members, or young people and their parents live in a 400-square-foot unit with only two bedrooms in Hong Kong? The design of this mechanism is essentially impractical. I suggest modifying this requirement in the future Financial Budget so that dependent parents, instead of residing in the same unit, only need to live in the same district (i.e. one of the 18 districts) or housing estate as the taxpayers. I believe that this change will bring about significant improvements.

On the other hand, the SAR Government should offer further tax concessions through the “Retire 3”, which includes the HKMC Annuity Plan, the Reverse Mortgage Programme and the Policy Reverse Mortgage Programme, to assist the elderly in effectively utilizing their accumulated wealth and assets and reducing their reliance on social welfare, thereby achieving the objective of caring for the elderly and enabling them to enjoy their old age. In fact, we can only receive a maximum tax concession of \$60,000 per year from the “Retire 3”. Is it possible to expand this concession in the future to include all “Retire 3” options instead of choosing only one? This will enable taxpayers to enjoy an annual tax concession of \$60,000 per year for each scheme. Alternatively, increasing the tax concessions for specific deferred annuity plans will better prepare us for an ageing society as a whole.

Lastly, we should also consider this: Frankly speaking, how many people, including ourselves, would be willing to live in elderly homes during our old age? In this regard, ensuring a stable supply of foreign domestic helpers (“FDHs”) and enhancing their training in elderly care are crucial for the successful implementation of “ageing in place”. Currently, approximately 300 000 households plan to hire FDHs, with 30% of them expecting these helpers to provide care for their elderly family members. It is essential to ensure a consistent supply of FDHs and provide them with training in elderly care. Singapore has introduced the “Eldercarer Foreign Domestic Worker Scheme”, which offers targeted training for FDHs in language, knowledge and basic skills in elderly care to meet the urgent needs of society.

These three suggestions I have presented are innovative and better suited to the needs of the elderly. I urge the Government to take on board these suggestions.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support the original motion and its amendments.

**MR JEFFREY LAM** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. The objective of today’s motion is to promote healthy ageing. I believe that we all understand the needs of the elderly, which include receiving respect. Nevertheless, there are individuals in society who label them as “useless”, which is highly inappropriate and disrespectful. Senior citizens in Hong Kong have contributed to the prosperity and stability of the city for most of their lives, and it is only fair that society repays their dedication by providing them with greater emotional and financial support, allowing them to live a higher quality and dignified life in their later years.

In fact, Hong Kong is already classified as an “aged society”, with one elderly individual among every five Hong Kong citizens. I believe that the Government should extend its focus on elderly care beyond promoting a culture of respect and care by providing practical and comprehensive support policy-wise. The Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong recently published a research report on elderly care, urging the Government to expeditiously improve its elderly care policies on four fronts, which include promoting support, respect, care and protection in elderly services, to build an age-friendly community. Our proposals, targeting five areas, include formulating a comprehensive blueprint for

elderly care policies, developing elderly care centres in the Northern Metropolis, providing a non-means-tested “fruit grant” to all individuals aged 65 and above, continuing the implementation of the \$2 transport fare concession scheme and setting up a fund to support community elderly services. We hope that the Government will carefully consider and promptly implement these proposals.

In terms of “protection for the elderly”, we are constantly exposed to news about elderly being duped, with some of them losing their entire life savings. While acknowledging the challenges posed by new scams and the difficulty of enforcing laws against overseas scammers, there is still much in-depth and detailed work that we can do. For example, setting up an easy-to-use online report platform for citizens to report suspicious phone calls, emails and websites; strengthening inspections to combat fraudulent shops that specifically target the elderly by posing as healthcare companies; and collaborating with banks to establish a Stop-Payment Mechanism for the elderly, enabling prompt notification of their family members and the police to help prevent scams.

Moreover, it is crucial for the Government to take the lead in raising the retirement age while encouraging employment among young seniors. With the global competition for talents and Hong Kong’s existing manpower shortage, why should young seniors who are still physically capable and mentally agile retire so early? In August this year, Singapore launched the “Forward Singapore” exercise, allocating S\$7 billion (approximately HK\$40.3 billion) to encourage seniors to continue working, benefiting 1.4 million middle-aged and elderly individuals. Japan and several European countries have also raised their retirement ages to 67, 68, or even 70 in recent years.

I propose that the Government introduce a large-scale programme to lead the extension of the retirement age of civil servants and government employees, and encourage public organizations, non-governmental organizations and large corporations to follow suit through policy measures. This would promote a culture that recognizes the vitality and capabilities of the elderly while enabling them to save more to support their life after retirement.

Lastly, I suggest that the Government allocate more resources to promote health check-ups among middle-aged and elderly citizens. As the saying goes, “prevention is better than cure”. Early detection of health problems allows for timely treatment. Therefore, I hope that, in addition to promoting primary care services, the Government will encourage public-private partnerships by

subsidizing healthcare professionals to provide free check-ups and health seminars for the elderly in various districts, thereby reducing the risks of chronic diseases among citizens.

Deputy President, I so submit.

**MS JOEPHY CHAN** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. First of all, I wish to thank Mr HO for proposing the motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”.

Just now Dr CHOW Man-kong provided statistics on how many times we discussed the relevant issues in this session. I have also checked the information, and in fact, in the previous term of the Legislative Council in July 2021, there was a similar Member’s motion moved by Mr CHAN Kin-por on “Promoting public health policy to let the elderly enjoy a quality life”. This demonstrates that improving the quality of life for elderly persons, optimizing their health, social participation, and ensuring opportunities are matters of great concern on the agenda of each term. In the previous term, 12 Members spoke on the motion, and in the current session, more than 20 colleagues have already spoken before me, indicating our deep concern about the issues related to the health of the elderly and the ageing population.

Last year, the State Council issued the Plan for the Development of National Undertakings for the Aged and Elderly Care Service System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (“the Plan”), focusing on promoting the coordinated development of elderly affairs and industries and advancing the high-quality development of elderly care services. We often emphasize the principles of “a sense of security”, “a sense of belonging” and “a sense of worthiness” for the elderly. “A sense of security for the elderly” means taking care of their basic needs; “a sense of belonging for the elderly” means assisting them in staying in their homes and communities where they feel a sense of belonging; and “a sense of worthiness for the elderly” means enabling them to unleash their potential and cultivate their self-worth. The Plan also mentions providing medical care, learning opportunities, and recreational activities for the elderly.

According to the statistics of the World Bank, Hong Kong has surpassed Japan since 2013, as our life expectancy has been the highest globally for seven consecutive years. Based on the latest data, the average life expectancy for Hong

Kong's females is 88 years, and 82 years for males. The consequence is that with an increasing number of elderly citizens and longer lifespans, how can we help the elderly to live a healthy and happy life? Of course, this includes improving retirement protection, which has been consistently advocated by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions ("FTU"), and healthcare services. Only by so doing, can we truly achieve the goal of providing medical care, learning opportunities, and recreational activities for elderly persons.

Deputy President, improving the quality of life for elderly persons can start with providing support for singleton elderly. There are over 188 000 singleton elderly households in Hong Kong, and FTU has been concerned about the related issues. We recently held a roundtable meeting on support policies for singleton elderly, where experts and singleton elderly were invited to discuss the needs of and challenges faced by those singleton elderly.

Earlier, along with my colleagues from the FTU, including Mr LUK Chung-hung who is present here, we jointly released a research report on singleton elderly support, which put forward a number of recommendations to alleviate the current difficulties faced by singleton elderly. According to data from the Census and Statistics Department, there are currently 188 000 households with singleton elderly aged 65 and above. Among them, the records of the Housing Authority indicate that 120 000 such households are public housing tenants, with 148 of them having individuals aged 100 and above. While we in Hong Kong often say "live as long as a hundred years", it is now becoming a reality for some to "live as long as a hundred and twenty years" as evidenced by the presence of centenarians in many housing estates.

In summary, we propose a four-tier framework to support singleton elderly, involving individuals, neighbourhoods, communities, and elderly centres. At the individual level, we suggest using a uniform elderly assessment yardstick to identify those with frail health conditions as high-risk cases for centralized attention and treatment. At the neighbourhood level, promotion through the District Services and Community Care Teams (Care Teams) can foster proactive care for singleton elderly by neighbours. At the community engagement level, it entails enhanced collaboration between housing estates and security staffs. At the level of elderly centres, the goal is to handle more elderly cases, providing a membership opt-out mechanism which automatically enrol individuals as members and then offer the necessary services. We will further present this four-tier framework to the Government through various platforms.

Deputy President, lastly, I would like to add that when Mr HO presented his motion earlier, he revealed that he was following the example of ‘LAI Sir’ by taking nutritional and health supplements. Mr HO also expressed concerns about his later years. For this reason, I make a counterproposal through this motion and the Deputy President that an effective way to address the challenges of an ageing population and to enhance the quality of life is to increase the birth rate. Perhaps Mr HO should carefully consider this proposal. Regarding population policies, we have already discussed them in a motion in the middle of this year, therefore I am not going to repeat them here.

With these remarks, I support the original motion and the relevant amendments.

**MS LAM SO-WAI** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. I wish to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing the original motion and three Members for proposing their amendments. I support all of them.

The Policy Address proposes to improve the quality of life of elderly persons through technology. The Government is planning to inject \$1 billion into the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care next year to enhance the subsidies for eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and trial technology products, such as ultra-low beds for medical and nursing care and intelligent anti-wandering systems, with a view to improving the quality of life of the elderly and persons with disabilities and reducing the pressure of carers. I would like to express my appreciation and agreement with them here.

With the advancement of technology, the application of gerontechnology products can alleviate the burden and stress on carers, while encouraging ageing in place, thereby improving the quality of life for elderly persons. Common gerontechnology products include lifting aids, smart pillboxes, assistive tableware, fall prevention devices and wearable smartwatches. By integrating new technology into elderly care and care services, we aim to enable elderly persons to live with a greater sense of happiness and convenience.

In addition to allocating resources to promote gerontechnology, I suggest that the Government should deploy community gerontechnology ambassadors in

all 18 districts to assist elderly persons and carers in understanding and using relevant gerontechnology products. Currently, the Community Care Service Voucher (“CCSV”) for the Elderly can be used for renting assistive technology products, aligning with the preventive care advocated by the Health Care Voucher Scheme and the goal of promoting ageing in place as envisaged by CCSV. Nevertheless, to avoid unnecessary injuries or resource wastage due to elderly persons renting unsuitable products, in my opinion, it is essential for the Government to enhance public knowledge and skills in using gerontechnology products. The training of designated gerontechnology ambassadors can be achieved by collaborating with local organizations, such as District Services and Community Care Teams (Care Teams) and non-profit making organizations. Special emphasis could be placed on promoting women’s re-employment, training women within the community to serve local seniors, thereby ensuring training and employment opportunities within the local community. This approach can enhance job opportunities for women. Moreover, these gerontechnology ambassadors can also foster better communication with elderly persons, especially those who may have limited interactions with the community, such as singleton elderly and elderly couples. In so doing, this initiative may contribute to community harmony, enable women to showcase their capabilities, boost their sense of empowerment, thereby helping elderly persons in the community.

Moreover, with the advent of an ageing society, the global application of gerontechnology has seen significant growth. We can observe the development of “sanatorium villages” in Mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and Europe, which are distinct from traditional nursing homes. For instance, Shanghai has initiated an elderly community trial programme employing smart technology to monitor the activities of seniors. If a singleton elderly resident remains indoors for an extended period, the system will automatically notify the relevant social workers. Similarly, Taiwan and Thailand have established communities tailored for seniors with cognitive impairments, providing a safe environment for their free movement. In light of these global initiatives, Secretary SUN, I propose that the Government should consider exploring suitable locations in Hong Kong to construct communities specifically designed for elderly persons with cognitive impairments. By integrating gerontechnology, we can create an environment where elderly persons with cognitive impairments can age with dignity in a safe and comfortable setting. Given the continual rise in the number of individuals with cognitive impairments in our ageing society in Hong Kong, this group of elderly people faces unique challenges when it comes to the provision of care for them. I sincerely hope that the Secretary will take this into consideration.

Furthermore, the Policy Address has mentioned the incorporation of elderly friendly building design under the Buildings Department's building design manual to enhance living conditions of elderly persons. In this regard, I urge the Government to establish an improvement programme for elderly households that aligns with the construction of new housing units for elderly persons. When constructing new housing units, consideration should be given to installing sensor-equipped lighting; while as far as fall prevention devices are concerned, there should be provisions for fall alert systems. Adequate spaces should be reserved for the installation of hoists to facilitate the mobility of elderly persons, allowing those with moderate or severe physical limitations to age in place comfortably.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support the original motion and the relevant amendments.

**MR KINGSLEY WONG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. I speak in support of the motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group” proposed by Mr Adrian Pedro HO and the amendments by three Members.

Hong Kong’s population ageing is accelerating. According to the projections of the Census and Statistics Department, the number of elderly persons aged 65 and over will nearly double to 2.74 million in 2046, meaning one in every three Hong Kong people will be an elderly. In the foreseeable future, devising proactive measures to tackle ageing will be an important task for Hong Kong.

The Plan for the Development of National Undertakings for the Aged and Elderly Care Service System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period has arranged various tasks to proactively tackle ageing, including encouraging the elderly to continue to play a role, enhancing job services for the elderly, refining relevant laws, regulations, and policies, and safeguarding the labour and entrepreneurial rights of the elderly.

On the contrary, Hong Kong has no proactive policies to encourage elderly employment. Instead, some regulations in the welfare policies are arguably constraining silver-haired groups from participating in the labour market. Taking the Old Age Living Allowance (“OALA”) as an example, the monthly income limits for singleton and couple applicants are merely \$10,580 and \$16,080

respectively. Since the income limit is severe and detached from the reality of the labour market, many elderly persons who wish to take up full-time employment can only work part-time instead, or either spouse of a couple has to give up employment in order to meet the application requirements. The OALA aims to provide a financial supplement for the elderly persons aged 65 or above who are in need of such support to meet their living expenses, but the severe income limit has left the group of elderly persons who are mentally and physically capable of working feeling dispirited.

In actively responding to the ageing of population, it is not just about ensuring that the elderly are well-cared for, have access to necessary medical care, opportunities for learning and a source of enjoyment. The authorities should also focus on how to give the elderly opportunities for their own pursuits and provide policy support for their employment.

Therefore, it is suggested that the Government should raise the monthly income limit for OALA applicants without any change to the relevant asset limit, so as to ensure that more working elderly persons are eligible for OALA. Alternatively, the Government could create a “Full-time Employment Incentive Old Age Living Allowance” under OALA, also without any change to the relevant asset limits, whereby elderly persons engaged in full-time jobs with monthly income below a certain level (e.g. the 25th percentile monthly wages of full-time employees, which is \$14,800 for singleton and \$22,500 for couples) can receive an allowance equivalent to 50% of the OALA rates, so as to encourage elderly persons to take up full-time employment.

Population ageing has far-reaching implications for our economy, society and even international competitiveness. I hope the Government can proactively align with the national policy, foster a positive outlook on ageing, deeply explore the potential of an ageing society, actively support employment among the silver-haired groups, and ensure that economic and social development continually adapts to the ageing population trend.

Thank you, Deputy President.

**DR DAVID LAM** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. I speak in support of Mr Adrian Pedro HO’s motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group”.

We need to age happily in order to age healthily. Health and happiness encompass physical well-being, dental health, and mental well-being. The journey towards health begins in childhood, which is why I strongly support the Life Course Preventive Care Plan under a primary healthcare initiative. At every stage of our lives, we should set health goals for the people. Health starts with each individual; and we are the primary keepers of our own health. We must take responsibility for our health at all times, rejecting harmful habits such as smoking and alcoholism. Education is the key, so is the fostering of a strong and long-term family doctor-patient relationship. Ultimately, we need a well-established primary healthcare system. Prevention is the cornerstone of health. We should start from the education in our lifestyle habits and healthy eating. We should also conduct timely examinations for people on such areas as blood pressure, diabetes, cognitive impairments and so on. We should prevent them from falling. We should conduct regular dental care and teach individuals to stay vigilant about oral hygiene.

Of course, we need comprehensive elderly care services to achieve the goal of caring for the elderly. Achieving this will alleviate the concerns of our elderly and their carers, indirectly promoting the mental well-being of both the elderly and their families. I suggest establishing a sense of community spirit within neighbourhoods. Within the community, we should be able to identify individuals—regardless of age—with a higher risk of mental health problems. This serves as the first point of contact, and a deep and extensive community spirit can help us identify such individuals. It can also reduce the overall mental health crisis in the community through early intervention. I suggest that we should set up mental health service teams within the community. These teams should include psychiatrists from the community. In this area, we may foster more public-private collaboration. This collaboration may also involve family doctors, nurses from District Health Centres, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, and we should also take the role of counsellors into consideration.

I have several suggestions for the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”). First, we should consider centralizing the coordination of cases within SWD and those handled by other social welfare organizations. Only through coordination can we track the resolution or otherwise of each case and the whereabouts of such individuals.

Second, I propose that SWD should consider implementing an SWD version of “Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth)”. This would allow our service providers to input their data into the system clearly. In cases where an individual is receiving services from different providers, sharing resources among providers through the system would ensure a comprehensive record of the services received by the individual.

The third suggestion I put forward to SWD is to establish effective interface with the Primary Healthcare Office (“PHO”) under the Health Bureau. This requires seamless access to certain data within the eHealth system when necessary. This would enable doctors, including family physicians and psychiatrists, as well as other healthcare professionals, to have access to information about individuals’ mental and lifestyle problems, thus allowing them to know how to assist these individuals.

I also wish to suggest that the Health Bureau consider improving our mental healthcare services. The Government should appoint an additional Deputy Commissioner to assist PHO’s Commissioner for Primary Healthcare to oversee mental health services, to coordinate community mental health services, and to establish a platform for collaboration in the fields of medicine, education and social services.

Elderly persons are precious resources in our society. They possess rich life experiences and are walking history books. Teaching young people to respect and care for the elderly is an essential aspect of upholding Chinese civilization. Respecting and caring for the elderly may form a foundation for healthy ageing. While this is currently driven by the legislature, I hope to see that this initiative will be propelled by the Government.

I support Mr Adrian Pedro HO’s motion and amendments moved by other Members, thank you.

**REVD CANON PETER DOUGLAS KOON** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, last month, the 8th Hong Kong Masters Athletics Championships were held, and I was delighted to see that many participants were aged over 80. I could see each elderly person was very spirited, brisk, and their participation affirmed the feasibility of healthy ageing. Although Hong Kong has long been dubbed the

“Capital of Longevity” with its proportion of centenarians in its population second only to Japan, the question remains: do our elders who are 100 years old truly live a good life?

A study has found that over 70% of the elderly suffer from at least three chronic illnesses, and half of them are unable to manage their daily activities independently, including diets. Additionally, approximately 45% and nearly 60% of the elderly population experience visual and hearing impairments respectively. If longevity brings about conditions like blurred vision, deafness, and a myriad of health problems, living longer might become a form of torment. Living a happy life without pain and illness is indeed no easy feat.

The continuous increase in both the proportion and number of the elderly population is an undeniable reality. To cope with this challenge, the Government needs not only to examine existing social policies, systems, and demographic structures but also, more importantly, to focus on how to maintain the physical and mental well-being of the elderly. Concurrently, efforts should be directed towards improving their quality of life, aiming for a scenario where the elderly can find joy, continue to learn, and engage in meaningful activities in their later years.

Whether an elderly individual lives a healthy and happy life, comprehensive care of their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs is indispensable. Exercise not only improves the physical functions of elderly people but also significantly contributes to their overall mental well-being. However, a survey indicates that nearly 90% of the elderly population in Hong Kong do not meet the World Health Organization’s recommendations for physical activity, and nearly half of the elderly population have no exercise habits at all.

Deputy President, the Government should tackle the problem at its roots. For instance, the Government may take the lead by implementing an incentive programme concerning walking and providing appropriate incentives which could actively encourage elderly persons to engage in regular exercise. Besides, in view of the underutilization of community halls and community centres across different districts, especially multi-purpose function halls and rooms, with an average usage rate of only around 40%, I believe the Government should take measures to enhance the functionality of these community recreational facilities and organize more group activities specifically tailored for elderly people, such as cultural and musical events and interest class competitions. At the same time, subsidizing existing organizations to organize elderly exercise classes, such as the Jockey Club

Mus-Fit for Health Project that combines exercise with social activities, which could allow senior citizens to pursue their interests, broaden their social circles, and slow down the ageing process.

Deputy President, in addition to engaging in physical exercise, encouraging elderly people to return to school is also a good option. The concept of lifelong learning suggests that if elderly people can continue to acquire new skills and stay abreast of the time, their mental well-being can greatly benefit from this. I consider that the Government should actively promote and expand programmes like the Elder Academy Scheme, with a view to offering a variety of courses beyond academic topics to cater to the interests and needs of elderly people. Furthermore, collaboration between the public and private sectors can be harnessed to provide rich learning resources and diverse educational opportunities for elderly people.

On the other hand, I am aware that many elderly people need to visit public healthcare institutions to see doctors regularly, and the waiting times can be up to a year or more. For medical procedures like cataract surgery, this delay poses a significant challenge as many elderly people who are experiencing blurred vision may have to wait until they cannot see at all before they get an appointment. For that reason, I earnestly hope that this situation can be improved.

With the accelerated pace of development in the Greater Bay Area, I believe cross-boundary elderly care in the Greater Bay Area will become a new option for elderly people to spend their twilight years and enjoy a healthy and fulfilling retirement.

Deputy President, I so submit.

**DR KENNEDY WONG** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, as people age and time passes, their youthful years fade away. Their temples turn white, their teeth and hair may fall out, and their splendour will inevitably disappear. However, physical and mental health and happiness should be more important than physical appearance. Therefore, I am here today to support Mr Adrian Pedro HO's motion on "Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group" as well as other amendments.

According to a study report that I have read, between 2007 and 2020, the average life expectancy of men and women aged 65 or above in Hong Kong increased by 3.7 years and 2.1 years respectively, but the average life expectancy of those without disabilities increased by only 1.8 years for men and 0.1 year for women. These figures show that the life expectancy of Hong Kong people is indeed getting longer and longer. However, there is a portion of the elderly population who might suffer from various disabilities before their passing, and this poses a significant burden on the public healthcare system in Hong Kong. Therefore, the SAR Government should formulate a policy on healthy ageing, with a particular emphasis on the prevention of chronic diseases.

Deputy President, I declare that I am the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the School of Chinese Medicine of the Hong Kong Baptist University, and for over 20 years, I have been advocating the concept of “preventive treatment of disease” as adopted by Chinese medicine practitioners. Our School of Chinese Medicine has been granted more than \$90 million by the Hong Kong Jockey Club to set up the Jockey Club Chinese Medicine Disease Prevention and Health Management Centre, which adopts the concepts and methods of traditional Chinese medicine. The primary and most important objective is to prevent the occurrence of diseases as far as possible when a person is not suffering from any disease. Secondly, it is to adopt the methods of Chinese medicine to prevent the worsening of chronic diseases. Lastly, it is relapse prevention and nursing of health after recovery. In my opinion, the experience and methods concerning “preventive treatment of disease” in Chinese medicine precisely align with the suggestion of “promoting services for preventing and delaying disabilities” as proposed in the motion, so as to enable the silver-haired group to maintain a certain level of physical health and self-reliance.

In order to promote this concept further and enhance the understanding and utilization of Chinese medicine-related services among the public, including of course, the silver-haired group, so as to prevent and minimize illnesses, it is hoped that the Government can provide support in terms of venues and resources. Specifically, it is suggested to set up more centres for preventive treatment of disease in housing estates with a higher proportion of elderly residents, so that services can be provided to those in need. It is believed that this initiative will also help to reduce the Government’s healthcare expenditure in the long run.

On the other hand, in creating an age-friendly social environment, in addition to making good use of gerontechnology, the interior and exterior designs are

equally important. The Hong Kong Housing Society has developed the Tanner Hill in North Point specifically for lease through application by individuals aged 60 or above. These units incorporate elder-friendly designs that facilitate convenient and safe use of various facilities, enabling seniors to live an independent and self-determined life. Furthermore, it is equipped with a medicine centre, a wellness centre, and a Chinese Medicine Specialty Clinic. It also provides residential and day care services, as well as rehabilitation training for those with dementia, ensuring that the elderly can receive appropriate care and treatment whenever needed. The Government should consider adopting a similar model and incorporating similar facilities in other public-private or public housing developments. Furthermore, it should explore different policies to attract relevant private institutions to provide a more diverse range of services for the elderly. Apart from healthcare services, there are some professional and integrated service enterprises in the market which specialize in the provision of elderly care and daily living products, and they can offer various specialized products for the elderly. I think the Government should attract them to operate in public housing estates through some policies, thus making the lives of the elderly more convenient and secure.

One should take care of other elders as well as one's own. It is hoped that the Government and various stakeholders can make better planning for the elderly and provide them with a better quality of life in old age, so that they can lead a more comfortable and happy life.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support the original motion and the various amendments.

**MR HOLDEN CHOW** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I rise to speak in support of today's motion titled "Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group", as well as the amendments proposed by other colleagues. First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this motion today, which provides us with an opportunity to discuss how to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group in this Council.

Deputy President, according to the current assessment, by 2046, the proportion of elderly people aged 65 or above in Hong Kong is projected to reach a staggering 36%, which is a very drastic increase when compared to the 20%

discussed just a year or two ago. In fact, we have already had numerous discussions in this Council regarding the issue of ageing population. In my opinion, there are several key points to consider when it comes to achieving healthy ageing and assisting the elderly in living a truly healthy life, where “ageing” and “health” go hand in hand.

First of all, we can start from our own community. In fact, the Government introduced a program earlier, selecting five public housing estates in Hong Kong to implement several features of the “Well-being design”, aiming to enhance the well-being index within these estates. I myself, together with Mr Riben LI, our team member from Yuen Long District, and some colleagues from government departments, visited Shui Pin Wai Estate (one of the selected estates for implementing the well-being index) earlier to discuss how to make the elderly in the district feel happier.

One of the aspects, if the Government listens, is actually not difficult to achieve, as many housing estates have this situation. Generally speaking, the elderly find the installation of fitness equipment in the housing estates highly necessary. Besides, in many estates, there is no covered area for them to gather or do morning exercises. Taking Shui Pin Wai Estate as an example, certain areas do not have any cover. From the perspective of the elderly, since there is such a good gathering place inside the estate, why not add a cover? If there is a cover, they will not have to worry about being exposed to the sun and the rain, and they can continue to gather and enjoy themselves in that area in the morning and evening. In fact, this type of work is not difficult to do, but for the elderly, as long as the Government can accomplish such tasks, they will feel the Government’s care for them. Starting with the supporting facilities in our community’s housing estates is something that can actually be achieved.

Furthermore, I would like to point out today that in order for the elderly to stay healthy, apart from making use of the existing District Health Centres (“DHCs”) ... In our previous communications with the Secretary, I often heard the Secretary say that if DHCs were to perform properly their function of prevention in the future, and “prevention” has been repeatedly emphasized by the Secretary, it is necessary to enhance the disease screening services. Currently, such services are already available, but we believe that a more comprehensive and extensive screening would be beneficial.

In addition, apart from physical health, mental health is equally important. What does “mental health” mean? Simply by engaging in a conversation with the elderly, one would understand that the key is to make them have something to look forward to. Many retirees, if left idle and without anything to engage their minds, may face dire consequences. Since poor mental health will affect physical well-being, I think mental health is equally important, and we should let the elderly have something to look forward to.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

How can we make them have something to look forward to? During our last visit to the housing estates with the Housing Department personnel, we suggested providing some hardware facilities and organizing more interest classes in the community centres. For example, recently I watched some television programmes in which some seniors may not have had the opportunity to pursue certain interests, such as music and playing musical instruments, when they were young, and had no prior knowledge in these areas. However, in their later years, they have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument during their free time and even form a band with other elderly individuals, which brings them great joy. This is an example of providing them with a mental engagement.

Lastly, I have to mention silver-hair employment. I believe we can promote certain types of silver-hair employment. Unless it involves highly physical labour, elderly individuals aged 65 or above are actually willing to work shorter hours and contribute their efforts. As long as the work does not require significant mental or physical exertion, silver-hair employment can actually help the elderly to make them to have something to look forward to. I believe this measure can also be beneficial to the elderly.

**MR CHAN YUNG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. I would like to thank Secretary SUN and the Under Secretary as well. We, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (“DAB”), fully support Mr HO’s motion on “Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group” and the amendments from other Members. In fact, as President XI stated, respecting and loving the elderly is a fine tradition and virtue of the Chinese nation, and this matter is of concern not only to us in Hong Kong

but also to all Chinese people. In the report to the 20th National Congress, President XI highlighted, “We will pursue a proactive national strategy in response to population ageing, develop elderly care programmes and services, and provide better services for elderly people who live alone. By doing so, we can ensure that basic elderly care is accessible to the entire elderly population.” His statement reflects the high priority that our country places on elderly care. While Hong Kong has taken the lead in exploring various initiatives in this field, with some initiatives demonstrating maturity and being ahead of others, there are still areas where we can collaborate with the Mainland to drive progress.

Despite the saying that “elders are treasures to families”, we are increasingly concerned about the rising average age. In particular, the longevity of Hong Kong people, especially among women, is among the highest in the world. Yet, longevity combined with good health is what we truly want. In this connection, it is noted that the Policy Address delivered by the Chief Executive of the SAR Government has covered not only welfare but also healthcare, both of which are of paramount importance to our elderly population. There are also some relevant key initiatives highlighted by various Bureaux. Hong Kong’s robust healthcare foundation is believed to be the reason for our high average life expectancy, for which we are deeply grateful.

What else do the elderly hope for? They hope to have a sense of security, a sense of worthiness and a sense of peace in their old age. According to some, the key to a genuinely happy life lies in the well-being and health of one’s later years.

Moreover, the provision of cross-boundary healthcare services is imperative. Hong Kong’s local healthcare system upholds high standards, but there is a need to further strengthen and enhance it in line with the goals of “achieving more, progressing faster, ensuring better quality, and reducing costs”. Particularly, the enhancement process should be expedited. Secretary Chris SUN has led various organizations on visits to different locations, gaining familiarity with overseas practices as well as those in Hong Kong. Many elderly facilities in the Mainland have been making progress towards the said goals. As we strive to improve the elderly policy of Hong Kong, we can allocate additional resources, expand the policy’s scope and even leverage the vast market of Mainland cities within the Greater Bay Area to enhance Hong Kong’s performance in this domain.

Ms Starry LEE, a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress from DAB, puts forward proposals regarding smart homes and ageing in place at the two sessions every year to advance the development of the country while also benefiting Hong Kong. So, what are our proposals? They include the provision of well-coordinated home-based care and community-based services, as well as the integration of medical care and healthcare. Massive health is a concept pursued by the elderly, with elderly care being an integral part of it. Here are some of my suggestions on how medical care and healthcare can be better integrated.

Firstly, smart elderly care services should be promoted. As many Members present are experts in this area, I am not going to go into detail. In addition, an effective system of integrated elderly care should focus not only on providing high-end services but also on enhancing the accessibility of services to families within the community. Moreover, we should promote better community development and ageing-in-place services so that all community members, including neighbours and the Care Teams, can fulfil their roles more effectively. Additionally, professional training should be offered to the next generation of elderly service personnel, ensuring the cultivation of local talent alongside the importation of expertise.

Furthermore, the silver economy can generate numerous new growth areas for the economy. The elderly should not solely be perceived as individuals in need of assistance. Instead, their wealth of experience, strength, savings and knowledge should be recognized as assets which can contribute to the flourishing of Hong Kong and the silver market. In light of this, we hope that the SAR Government will take the lead in enhancing the care for the elderly, in line with President XI's vision, to ensure that all seniors can experience an old age characterized by good health, happiness and joy.

Thank you, President.

**MS DOREEN KONG** (in Cantonese): President, I agree with the motion moved by Mr HO and the amendments proposed by several other Members.

The elderly population in Hong Kong has been rapidly increasing in recent years. According to the latest statistical data, there are currently 1.52 million elderly people in the city. Fortunately, we have seen significant advancements in

healthcare, allowing the elderly population to live longer and enjoy the happiness of family bonds, which is indeed good news. However, this also brings forth numerous profound challenges in caring for the silver-haired group, including the pressure of carers, medical institutions, residential care homes for the elderly, and District Health Centres, among other diverse challenges. Based on my practical observations in community services and cases of people seeking help, I would like to propose some suggestions to improve the existing elderly care system.

I believe that the first and foremost task is to establish more elderly healthcare clinics in the community, providing professional and comprehensive medical services. The Government can introduce these services in the existing district recreation centres, enhancing the development of services specifically designed for the elderly with the introduction of high technology facilities, including preventive healthcare, regular health check-ups, chronic disease management and health education, so as to help the elderly maintain their physical well-being.

Currently, elderly services in Hong Kong are relatively fragmented, and there is room for improvement in terms of integration. The elderly and their carers often have to navigate through multiple administrative procedures. I suggest that the Government should adopt a clearer and more unified strategy in handling elderly affairs or utilize big data effectively to avoid misallocation of resources.

Besides, it is necessary to provide more housing options suitable for the elderly, especially addressing the situation of elderly singletons lacking family care and the frequent occurrence of elderly singletons passing away and having accidents at home in recent years. The Housing Department currently provides certain public housing units specifically designed for the elderly, which not only encourage mutual support among elderly cohabitants, but also provide them with a safe and comfortable living environment. This design concept should be further promoted, and the number of such units should be increased. The Government can also encourage private institutions to refer to successful cases in other countries and the Mainland, constructing more large-scale elderly residential and care facilities that offer accommodation, medical support and social activities, with a view to enhancing the quality of life for the elderly.

Furthermore, for elderly individuals who still wish to continue working, we can enhance their employment protection. Considering that Hong Kong's

average life expectancy ranks among the highest globally, reaching over 80 years old, even after reaching the retirement age of 65, the elderly still have nearly 20 years during which they rely on their savings to support their living. This brings financial pressure to some elderly individuals who lack sufficient savings. The Government may consider amending the law to provide greater legal protection for individuals who wish to work beyond the age of 65 and encourage employers to hire them, for example, by offering higher tax allowances to improve their employment conditions and opportunities.

Lastly, I have concerns about the problems encountered by the silver-haired group in consumer transactions. In recent years, elderly individuals have been the primary victims of online scams and fraudulent transactions. They often lack awareness of crime trends and are more susceptible to being deceived by fraudsters. Scammers sometimes impersonate hospital staff to make phone calls, attempting to swindle money from them. After a lifetime of hard work, losing a significant portion of their savings due to scams not only prevents them from enjoying their twilight years but also has a detrimental impact on their mental health that cannot be easily remedied. Therefore, I urge the Government to conduct an in-depth study and provide protective measures for the elderly when engaging in high-value transactions, and one example is to introduce a cooling-off period to reduce the occurrence of related scams.

President, at 7:00 am last Sunday, I saw four elderly women near the Shau Kei Wan Market. They all had a hunchback and were pushing hand carts loaded with cardboard, regardless of the traffic condition. In fact, similar hunchbacked grannies can be seen in markets in various districts. Why do we have these hunchbacked grannies in every district in such an affluent Hong Kong? Are they doing that simply for killing time or just for interest? This phenomenon is indeed worthy of our contemplation.

President, I so submit.

**MS STARRY LEE** (in Cantonese): President, first of all, I would like to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing today's motion on "Promoting healthy ageing to create a good quality of life for the silver-haired group". I believe it is a common goal shared by all the people of Hong Kong, all Members and even the Government.

One of the keywords in the motion is “health”. How can we help our elderly people lead a long and healthy life? This is of utmost importance. In fact, good health really requires adopting a healthy lifestyle from a young age. Therefore, just now, several Members including Dr LAM have explained the importance of primary healthcare. I strongly concur with this view.

Apart from primary healthcare networks and the early prevention approach of “curing the illness while it is still obscure”, I believe that it is also crucial for the public to have a general understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western medicines, thereby knowing how to achieve health preservation and understand their own body constitutions, so that they can interpret their own body signals and enhance their own health, etc. Apart from establishing sound primary healthcare networks, I hope the Government will continue to roll out other complementary measures. The Under Secretary for Health and Welfare is also present today.

Recently, I have been conducting neighbourhood visits frequently. In particular, I would like to talk about the residents in my constituency. There are a relatively large number of senior residents in Kowloon. Speaking of population ageing, the problem of population ageing in Kowloon is relatively severe. Recently, when I conducted neighbourhood visits for canvassing purpose, many elderly persons complained to me about inadequate medical services. As Members may know, we have long been urging for the provision of a general hospital in the Wong Tai Sin district, and this is not baseless. We are not saying that all districts have such a need; rather, this is a fact. I hope that when planning to build hospitals, the Government will really take into account the proportion of the ageing population in the districts concerned.

From the perspective of population movement, the shift towards an ageing population in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island is inevitable. It is indeed very fortunate if the younger generations are able to continue living with their parents in the same housing estates after getting married. However, not all of them are in a position to do so, and the relatively high property prices in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island in the past have prompted them to move to the New Territories. At present, some housing estates in Kowloon are aged 30 to 40 years. Many of them are very old housing estates, and the residents are mostly elderly persons. In terms of population ratio, districts such as Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong and even Kowloon City, which I have served for a long time, have a substantial number of

elderly residents. These districts indeed have a keen demand for more comprehensive healthcare services.

While the Government has repeatedly emphasized that the Kai Tak Hospital will serve the local district in the future, I have to tell the Secretary that if the authorities rely solely on the Kai Tak Hospital, I am afraid the demand for healthcare services in Kowloon will further worsen the services. Firstly, the traffic problems in the vicinity of the Kai Tak Hospital have yet to be solved. Secondly, Queen Elizabeth Hospital will, in fact, be used for specialist services in future and may no longer serve as a general hospital. We can imagine that without a leading hospital, it is infeasible to ask all Kowloon residents to seek medical services at the Kai Tak Hospital. Of course, the Government can argue that Kwong Wah Hospital will make up for some of the shortfalls in medical services. However, overall speaking, in considering “one-for-one” hospital replacement, given the problem of an increasingly ageing population in Kowloon and its relatively high proportion of elderly population compared to other areas in Hong Kong, I hope that the Government will really make early planning. It is because even if the Government starts planning today, it will take 10 years to build a new hospital, not to mention that it has yet to undertake to plan for it today, and the elderly population 10 years later will not be the same as that of today.

Therefore, I hope that the Secretary will really listen to the views of the public and keep Queen Elizabeth Hospital as a general hospital in Kowloon; otherwise, there will really be a need to identify sites for constructing an additional general hospital, such as in the Wong Tai Sin district. It is because among the 18 districts, Wong Tai Sin is the only district without accident and emergency services, and elderly residents calling for ambulance services will be sent to other hospitals outside the Wong Tai Sin district. These are all long-standing complaints from the public, and I hope that the Bureau will address them squarely and make a positive response.

**IR LEE CHUN-KEUNG** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. The problem of population ageing in Hong Kong is serious. According to the latest government figures, in 2022, one in five persons of Hong Kong’s population were aged 65 or above. By 2046, the proportion of elderly persons in the total population will increase from the current 21% to 36%, meaning more than one in every three persons will be elderly.

President, we will all meet the same fate one day. Everyone will grow old eventually. Members present and I are no exception. Of course, we hope to walk well, move well, eat well and sleep well when we grow old. We also hope that we can enjoy good health and longevity. With longer life expectancy, elderly persons can do what they like, such as acquiring new knowledge and skills, engaging in new occupations, and making new contributions to their families and communities in various ways, thereby exemplifying their sense of self-worth. However, their opportunities and contributions depend primarily on one factor, which is health. After all, elderly persons are senior in age, and they will face the problem of diseases.

Hong Kong's ageing population has inevitably exerted tremendous pressure on the healthcare system due to the prevalence of diseases, especially chronic diseases among elderly persons. The waiting time for specialist services in public hospitals has continued to rise, and the capacity is already overloaded. In addressing this long-standing problem, it is crucial to understand why the grassroots are in dire need of public hospital services. Ms Starry LEE has also mentioned it just now. The demand for specialist services is particularly high because many elderly persons cannot bear the high expenses for private specialist services, leaving them no choice but to wait in long queues for specialist services in public hospitals.

Therefore, the Liberal Party has all along been urging the SAR Government to consider importing more overseas medical specialists to solve the problem of excessively long waiting times for specialist services, especially for cataract treatment. Besides, primary healthcare development—as mentioned just now—is also very important. Through promotion, consultation and counselling services, we can promote healthy lifestyles to help elderly persons prevent chronic diseases effectively. The Liberal Party suggests that the Government should invite medical specialists to hold health talks and provide free consultations on a regular basis in various District Health Centres across the territory, and even provide screening services for different diseases, so that the public (especially elderly persons) can have a better understanding of different speciality diseases, thereby enabling them to identify various diseases and seek medical consultation at an early stage, and enhancing their awareness of prevention.

In fact, those of us who are involved in district affairs are delighted to see the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (“LCSD”) provide various recreational and sports facilities for elderly persons, such as steppers and

equipment for stretching arms and legs. The problem is that while these recreational and sports facilities are prone to damage, LCSD often made excuses about the difficulties in ordering spare parts, causing delays in repair. These facilities are well-received by elderly persons, so I hope that LCSD can introduce a larger variety of fitness equipment. For example, there is some outdoor fitness equipment in Korea. Besides, additional parts should be ordered so that damaged equipment can be repaired at once, allowing elderly persons to exercise more.

In addition, the Government can organize more competitions for elderly persons or even introduce a priority scheme under which priority will be accorded to elderly persons for booking venues for playing some relaxing sports such as badminton, table tennis and lawn bowls, so as to encourage elderly persons to stretch their bodies.

In view of a manpower shortage, especially the shortage of carers, there has been a consensus in our society to step up the promotion of gerontechnology. Most importantly, to truly promote the use of gerontechnology in the community, the Government may consider establishing gerontechnology centres in the 18 districts throughout Hong Kong to facilitate visits by elderly persons and their understanding of the relevant technology. It may also arrange for young volunteers or even Care Teams to pay home visits to elderly singletons to demonstrate and promote gerontechnology products, so as to enhance their quality of life and self-care abilities.

President, the Government should make better use of policies and big data to help promote the development of the “silver economy”. It should also make use of the data to identify elderly singletons and elderly persons with chronic diseases (such as diabetes and hypertension), so that Care Teams can adopt a more precise approach in addressing and catering for elderly persons’ pressing needs, thereby alleviating the pressure on Hong Kong’s healthcare system and public resources in addressing the problem of population ageing.

Of course, we have to remind elderly persons to stay vigilant to deception, and care for the sandwich middle-class retirees who need to make mortgage repayments and are currently facing pressure in various aspects of life, such as high interest rates and the fall in property prices.

I so submit. I hope that these policies can help provide better care for elderly persons. Thank you.

**MR PAUL TSE** (in Cantonese): President, I would like to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing this motion. I would also like to thank him for mentioning in his speech that the Singapore Government has provided actual financial assistance for the so-called “young seniors” who are now in their 50s and 60s to help them retire in a well-planned manner. It is definitely worthwhile for the Hong Kong Government to consider and draw reference from this example.

People are very concerned about the results of the District Council Election. I will talk about the phenomenon reflected in the voting results. All along, the Government and political parties have strived to garner as much support as possible from the middle class. In this election, 1.19 million electors cast their votes, and those who did not cast their votes or apparently “lay flat” and remained silent were mostly middle class. The middle class used to be the most self-reliant who would act on their own initiative, that is, most financially capable of undergoing regular medical check-ups in their own care. However, the Government’s policies in recent years seemed to have turned a blind eye to the interests and concerns of the middle class.

President, the middle class actually faces many constraints in real life. Of course, we all know that they have to support their elderly parents while also raising their own children, and they have to deal with high residential mortgage rates or rent payments in their younger years. Several days ago, I read from the news reports that the Chinese character meaning “tax” has been chosen as the kanji that best represents this year in Japan. For some time in the past, the middle class in Hong Kong did not have to worry much about tax. However, tax has now become an increasing concern for the middle class, and we will have to make tax payments again soon. Moreover, one of the so-called four pillars of retirement, i.e. the Mandatory Provident Fund (“MPF”), seems to show shrinking benefits as we make more contributions. The middle class is faced with problems on various fronts.

Earlier, Members mentioned the definition of physical health. In this regard, we can sidetrack a little and look at the World Health Organization’s concept of health. In fact, since 1947, health has been defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. In 1984, this definition was further elaborated to emphasize social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities. Basically, health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but rather a more holistic concept encompassing the ability to change and cope with various aspects of life. Health is a concept of balance and integration.

With respect to the aforesaid problems, being physically healthy but experiencing psychological distress or constant worry is definitely not a desirable condition for the silver-haired group. The same applies to our society as a whole. As we all know, our society is currently facing considerable stress, not to mention the number of suicide cases. People seem to have opinions, but they feel scared, reluctant, or simply do not see the need to express them, and thus they “lie flat”, which is very unhealthy. Therefore, I think it is important to pay attention not only to physical health but also to the overall well-being in terms of social mentality and social environment.

This morning, I came across a list on the Internet about celebrities who died prematurely before the age of 65. Of course, we remember the recent deaths of Kathy CHAU and LAM Chiu-wing. There were in fact many others, including Jacqueline LAW, Roman TAM, James WONG, Lydia SHUM, Yammie LAM, Anita MUI, Leslie CHEUNG, SO Hang-suen, Blackie KO, and SHING Fui-on. It is very unfortunate that the performance of MPF has nothing to do with them. In fact, many middle-class people and the public are very concerned that while they have made MPF contributions for most of their lives, the benefits in their accounts continue to shrink as they make more contributions. Do the benefits have anything to do with them in the end? Therefore, this is not solely a matter of physical health but also about how to ensure that the silver-haired group, the middle class, and those in their 50s and 60s, i.e. the young seniors, can lead a more comfortable life in Hong Kong.

I once proposed an MPF reform to the authorities, specifically suggesting the establishment of a fund to compensate for significant losses. Of course, the Secretary did not respond or dare to respond. His attitude was that no matter how strongly I urged him, it would be in vain. I think we should adequately address these problems so that the public can really enjoy a physically, psychologically, mentally and socially comfortable environment. I would like to quote a saying from one of the top tycoons, “Home is where the heart settles”. This is very important.

We are also concerned about the recent problem concerning public order. It seems that the increase in robbery cases has created a slight social disturbance. By prioritizing both national security and public order instead of excessively focusing on national security at the expense of maintaining public order, we can

create an environment where people in Hong Kong can live with peace of mind. This is indeed the key to caring for the silver-haired group.

Thank you, President.

**DR JUNIUS HO** (in Cantonese): President, I would like to express my gratitude to Adrian for reminding us to take good care of the silver-haired group, as their actual population is expected to increase. However, there is a very big technical question of what we should do about that. We often say that “young people should have access to education and old people should have access to elderly care”. But now it seems that we need to modify it to “young people should have a sense of worthiness … old people should have a sense of worthiness and young people should be gainfully employed”. So, what should we do?

We should encourage them to be proactive while they are still young. Some people may start having silver hair around the age of 50, but they may choose to dye it to cover it up. However, in general, people from the age of 60 are already considered as the silver-haired group. In the silver-haired group, those who retire at around 55 are relatively fortunate, even though they may sometimes feel bored. Some people at that age may choose to work for an additional six years … or five years, retiring at the age of 60, but they are still full of energy. What kind of energy is that?

Firstly, from a societal perspective, they have already established their own families, raised their children to adulthood and completed their parental duties. Their personal careers have come to an end, and they have accumulated a wealth of life experience. In terms of personal wealth, although they may only have modest housing, by the time they reach 60 years old, mortgage payments are mostly completed, so they do have a certain level of financial capability. As for their physical health, it is still relatively good. In reality, it is not until around 70 years old that modern people may experience a slight decrease in mobility. Between the ages of 60 and 70, they still possess abundant vitality. How should we make good use of this?

(THE PRESIDENT'S DEPUTY, MS STARRY LEE, took the Chair)

In fact, the Government should consider, for example, whether it is appropriate to continue distributing the “fruit money” in its current form. There needs to be a change in this aspect. In the past, it was meant to make the elderly happy as they have indeed made significant contributions to society and this city. We showed our filial respect by providing the “fruit money”. However, the associated expenses have gradually become burdensome, although they have not yet reached an uncontrollable level. Similarly, is the current \$2 Scheme wasting resources? Originally, it was a gesture of respect, but now it seems to have lost its essence and has become something of an entitlement.

In that case, we can make some adjustments and encourage the elderly or the silver-haired group to engage in volunteer work. They can be provided with volunteer fees, a kind of “easy money” in return for their volunteer service. This approach would allow us to utilize their labour force once again and keep them happy. Besides, more volunteer fees will be given to those who work more. Their hard work will be rewarded according to the number of hours they dedicate to volunteering. When we combine both aspects, the situation may look good. It is because while there is a certain level of labour force, their reward would be relatively inexpensive compared to regular employment, thus making the surplus value they contribute quite valuable.

As the silver-haired population continues to grow, we have a considerable amount of resources that can be aggregated. These resources can truly help meet certain societal needs, such as promoting intergenerational harmony as mentioned earlier. At the very least, they can assist in childcare, cooking, and it is befitting for them to perform these tasks. I think this is commendable indeed. While utilizing these resources, we have to make sure that they are put to good use. I am glad that Mr Paul TSE raised the issue of the Mandatory Provident Fund (“MPF”) earlier, and I appreciate Dr Johnny NG’s questioning of whether our MPF benefits could only remain idle for the long term. It seems that the money cannot be utilized, and I am afraid that before we go to heaven, the money will not be in the bank but will disappear without a trace in the end.

What should we do? We should allow people to withdraw their money after the age of 50 so that they can revitalize their accrued benefits in MPF. If such money can be used to purchase health insurance, they can at least have one more option. They can choose to seek medical treatment in public hospitals or utilize their insurance to consult private doctors and take better care of their health. Afterwards, they can engage in volunteer work. Therefore, I have been

advocating the revitalization of MPF benefits for two consecutive terms, but my colleagues have not been supportive. Today, I am presenting it in a different context, but essentially, it is still a good initiative.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support this motion. Thank you.

**DEPUTY PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

**DEPUTY PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Adrian Pedro HO, you may now speak on the amendments.

**MR ADRIAN PEDRO HO** (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President. I am very grateful to Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang for proposing their amendments to the motion. Their proposals have brought additional aspects to the motion. I thus strongly support the various amendments, and I urge Members to support this motion and the amendments.

Deputy President, I so submit.

**UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I would like to thank Mr Adrian Pedro HO for proposing the motion today, as well as Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang for proposing their amendments. I also thank the 30-odd Members for their enthusiastic speeches and support for healthy ageing, especially in relation to healthcare services.

With social progress, rising living standards and advancement in medical technology, the life expectancy of human has continued to rise, and Hong Kong is among one of the regions with the highest life expectancy in the world. Certainly, our goal is not only to live longer but to enjoy a long and healthy life, just as Mr CHAN Kin-por has said.

The issue of healthy ageing is closely related to various Policy Bureaux, and we share the same goal of ensuring that the silver-haired group, after years of

contributing to Hong Kong, can enjoy a better life in their golden twilight years. As Mr Adrian Pedro HO said, citizens should maintain health at a young age by making life planning and adopting healthy lifestyle habits for prevention. I also agree with Mr YANG Wing-kit that “health is a state of being and a responsibility”.

In formulating a comprehensive plan, the Government has particularly strengthened and reformed Hong Kong’s healthcare system, thus changing the current approach of treatment-oriented to prevention-focused. From a preventive point of view, the Government hopes that members of the public can eliminate bad harmful habits, such as smoking, excessive wine drinking and physical inactiveness, so as to minimize the risk of diseases when they grow old. Next, I will respond to Members’ views concretely.

#### *Promoting primary healthcare development*

To address the challenges brought about by an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of chronic disease, the Government released the Primary Healthcare Blueprint (“the Blueprint”) at the end of last year, setting out a series of reform initiatives to strengthen primary healthcare services in Hong Kong. Through prevention-oriented, community-based and family-centric strategies which focus on early detection and intervention, the vision is to provide accessible and coherent healthcare services, and establish a sustainable healthcare system.

Among those initiatives, the Government has set up District Health Centres (“DHCs”) in various districts throughout Hong Kong, and some interim DHC Expresses of a smaller scale across Hong Kong, achieving the goal of having all 18 districts in Hong Kong covered by DHCs. DHCs deliver district-based primary healthcare services in the community, aiming to safeguard the lifelong wellness of the public. Based on factors like gender, age, and lifestyle, DHCs provide health planning for citizens and help them in adopting the relevant health recommendations and building a healthy lifestyle. For example, citizens should receive appropriate vaccinations at different ages, undergo cancer screening or screening for risk factors for chronic diseases, and develop personal health management plans, thereby realizing the goal of “prevention beats cure”. I especially urge members of the public aged 45 or above to invest in their health by enrolling in the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme to receive screening for two common chronic diseases, i.e. diabetes mellitus and hypertension, for the time being. At the same time, we are gradually strengthening and expanding the existing primary healthcare services.

*Elderly health service*

Regarding elderly health service, the Elderly Health Centres (“EHCs”) under the Department of Health (“DH”) adopt a family medicine approach in providing primary healthcare services to the elderly with a team of multi-disciplinary professionals, aiming at prevention, early detection and control of disease. EHCs provide integrated primary healthcare services to elderly members aged 65 or above, including health risk assessment, health education, individual counselling and curative treatment.

In the medium term, the elderly health service of DH will be integrated with the Primary Healthcare Commission so that members of the public can have more effective and convenient access to the service. In addition, DH has been collaborating with other government departments and organizations in organizing programmes targeting at the different needs of the elderly to further prevent and delay elderly disability. These initiatives include training volunteers to visit the homes of the elderly, identifying elderly with a high risk of fall and assessing their living environment, providing recommendations for improving the environment to reduce the risk of fall, as well as strengthening the skills of foreign domestic helpers in caring for the elderly, so as to support the elderly to age in place.

*The Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme*

On the other hand, to support the healthcare needs of the elderly, the Government has launched the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (“EHVS”) since 2009 to subsidize eligible Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above with an annual health care vouchers of \$2,000, subject to a cumulative limit of \$8,000, so as to allow them to choose the private primary healthcare services in their local communities that best suit their health needs. Adopting the concept of “money follows patient”, EHVS aims to supplement the existing public healthcare services and promote the concept of family doctors.

Under the framework of the Blueprint, the Government further enhances the Elderly Health Care Vouchers, with a view to guiding the elderly to better use their vouchers for primary healthcare services for disease prevention and health management. In November this year, the Government launched the three-year Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme to encourage eligible Hong Kong elderly persons to use health care vouchers on designated primary healthcare services provided by the private healthcare service sector through providing a \$500

reward. In addition, starting from July this year, eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can share-use the health care vouchers with their spouse.

*Mental health of the elderly*

The Government attaches great importance to the mental health of the elderly. The Advisory Committee on Mental Health launched the mental health promotion and public education initiative “Shall We Talk” in July 2020. The “Shall We Talk” one-stop website dedicated to mental health includes a section specifically for the elderly, providing easy access to relevant information. Joining hands with Radio Television Hong Kong, “Shall We Talk” also explores common mental and psychological problems of the elderly in its programs, so that audience can learn to seek help.

Regarding the support for the elderly people with dementia, we launched a pilot project called the Dementia Community Support Pilot Scheme (“the Scheme”) in 2017. Based on a medical-social collaboration, the Scheme provides community support services to elderly people aged 60 or above with mild or moderate dementia and their carers through District Elderly Community Centres (“DECCs”) under the Social Welfare Department. The Scheme had been regularized since February 2019 and extended to all 41 DECCs, benefiting over 2 000 elderly and carers each year.

Health is the treasure of life. The Health Bureau will continue its efforts to help our senior citizens in enjoying the golden period in their twilight years and developing good lifestyle habits through various programmes and measures to enhance their physical and mental health.

Deputy President, I so submit. Next, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare will speak on his policy areas. Thank you.

**SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE** (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I would like to express my gratitude again here to Mr Adrian Pedro HO who has moved the motion, and Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang who have moved their respective amendments. I have counted that a total of 37 Members have spoken today, and this tells us that Members are very concerned about the challenges posed by Hong Kong’s ageing population. Moreover, what Members have put forward does not merely target the current

challenges but is also forward-looking. I thank Members for their proposals. We will go back and consider them.

One in every five people in Hong Kong is aged 65 or above. Among these elderly persons, one in every four is aged 80 or above. Therefore, today's discussion on the health of the elderly and how the elderly can maintain a healthy lifestyle should be addressed from several aspects:

- (1) How can we enhance the elderly's quality of life, especially those younger elderly persons who can move?
- (2) If the elderly can work, how can we encourage them to take up employment and inject energy into the labour market?
- (3) How will we take good care of the elderly whose health has begun to deteriorate and who are in need of care?

On the livelihood front, we now have 214 Neighbourhood Elderly Centres/District Elderly Community Centres with about 270 000 members. We have incorporated this into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. As the population grows, the new districts will be planned with a corresponding number of Neighbourhood Elderly Centres/District Elderly Community Centres.

Members mentioned the Elderly Academy and noted that this year's Policy Address proposed an injection of \$80 million. We have also raised about \$11 million in the community through donations, which shows that the Elderly Academy has gained widespread recognition as an effective measure to provide learning opportunities for the elderly. The learning is offered in two types. Some are general courses, and some are designed for the elderly without prior university education when they were young. The Elderly Academy offers the elderly the opportunity to attend classes at tertiary institutions, giving them a taste of university life regardless of their age. This initiative serves as an effective means of encouraging our elderly to lead active and fulfilling lives.

On the other hand, we need money to live. As Members mentioned, about 700 000 elderly persons receive Old Age Living Allowance, accounting for 40% of the elderly population. Taking into account various cash allowance schemes, three in every four elderly persons are recipients of some form of government subsidies. The total annual disbursement of these subsidies is about \$50 billion.

This shows that the Government has invested considerable resources in supporting the elderly to spend their twilight years.

Moreover, Members are concerned about the level of accessibility of community activities for those are in their later years, which is also an important issue. In this regard, the Chief Executive has proposed promoting elderly-friendly building design in this year's Policy Address. This initiative, coordinated by the Deputy Financial Secretary, aims to ensure that future building design incorporates accessibility and universal design concepts. This is an important measure to better cope with an ageing society.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

Regarding employment, 24% (or one in four) of persons aged 60 or above is in work. However, more men than women are in employment. In this year's Policy Address, Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme was launched, targeting persons aged 40 or above (including elderly persons aged 60 or above) who have been out of work for three consecutive months but wish to return to work. This scheme offers an allowance to such individuals. If they can secure continuous employment for over half a year, they will receive a maximum of \$10,000. If they can work continuously for more than one year, they will receive \$20,000. It is hoped that these measures along with age-friendly policies adopted by enterprises will encourage more elderly persons to join the labour market.

Members are also concerned about care services, including residential care homes. At present, about 4% of the elderly population live in residential care homes, which is comparable to the global average and may be slightly higher. Globally, the figure is about 3%, while in Hong Kong, it is about 4%, representing that around 60 000 individuals live in residential care homes in Hong Kong. To cope with an ageing population, we will continue our planning process to increase the supply of residential care homes. One of the key initiatives is to reserve premises equivalent to about 5% of the total domestic gross floor area in suitable public housing development projects in the future for the provision of social welfare facilities. A considerable portion is designated to meet the needs associate with residential care homes or community care services.

In addition to residential care services, the Government has put more resources into community care services, including centre-based or home-based services. Centre-based refers to daycare services, and home-based refers to “home-care services” or services selected by the elderly through the Community Care Service Voucher Scheme for the Elderly (“CCSV”). The CCSV has been regularized, with the number increased to 12 000 in 2025-2026, which will offer a wider range of choices for the elderly.

Regarding singletons and doubletons elderly households, their population is over 550 000. Our primary concern is whether they are aware of the different services. To address this, we will pilot in Tsuen Wan and Southern Districts to engage the Care Teams to visit singletons and doubletons elderly households. If they face any difficulties, we will refer them to suitable social welfare units for further assistance. We have also prepared to assist with installing “Safety Bells” where necessary.

Using technology to help the elderly enjoy their twilight years is one of the important measures of the Government. This year’s Policy Address has proposed to inject an additional \$1 billion into the existing \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care. In addition to the centre-based approach, we hope to extend the use of gerontechnology products to the home-based approach. This would allow the elderly to use these products at home, either through purchase or rental from the centres, thereby maximizing their effectiveness.

Moreover, Members mentioned cross-boundary elderly care, and we will do this well. In addition to the participation of non-governmental organizations, the Government has expanded the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to include private organizations with a good track record in Hong Kong. The Government will also consider expanding the coverage of the scheme to residential care homes in the Greater Bay Area, even if they do not have a track record of service provision in Hong Kong. Provided that residential care homes in the Greater Bay Area fulfil the necessary standards and levels, they will be eligible to participate in the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong.

I understand that Members are concerned about the silver economy. The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is responsible for promoting the silver economy, and will set up an Advisory Panel on Silver Economy comprising experts, which will conduct in-depth research and provide recommendations for

development. The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will seriously consider the views expressed by Members today and follow them up.

President, Hong Kong is obviously facing the challenges of an ageing population. The elderly population will increase over time. Nevertheless, as discussed at today's Council Meeting, the Government is confident that an ageing society is not a cause for concern. If we actively face it, we can join hands to deal with all sorts of challenges posed by an ageing population. We should also seize the business opportunities brought about by an ageing population to create more wealth for our society.

President, I so submit. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now call upon Dr Johnny NG to move an amendment.

**DR JOHNNY NG** (in Cantonese): President, I move my amendment.

**The amendment moved by Dr Johnny NG (See the marked-up version at Appendix 3)**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment moved by Dr Johnny NG be passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, that is, those returned by the Election Committee and those returned by functional constituencies and geographical constituencies.

I declare the amendment passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Ms Elizabeth QUAT, as Dr Johnny NG's amendment has been passed, you may move your further amendment.

**MS ELIZABETH QUAT** (in Cantonese): President, I move my further amendment.

**The further amendment moved by Ms Elizabeth QUAT (See the marked-up version at Appendix 4)**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the further amendment moved by Ms Elizabeth QUAT be passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, that is, those returned by the Election Committee and those returned by functional constituencies and geographical constituencies.

I declare the amendment passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Prof LAU Chi-pang, as Dr Johnny NG and Ms Elizabeth QUAT's amendment has been passed, you may move your further amendment.

**PROF LAU CHI-PANG** (in Cantonese): President, I move my further amendment.

**The further amendment moved by Prof LAU Chi-pang (See the marked-up version at Appendix 5)**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the further amendment moved by Prof LAU Chi-pang be passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, that is, those returned by the Election Committee and those returned by functional constituencies and geographical constituencies.

I declare the amendment passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Mr Adrian Pedro HO, you still have 1 minute 43 seconds to reply. Then, the debate will come to a close.

**MR ADRIAN PEDRO HO** (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. I would like to thank the more than 30 Members who have spoken on this original motion and the amendments proposed by three Members. They have made a lot of constructive comments. I am grateful to the Secretary for his positive response to the motion.

I sincerely hope that after this motion debate, the SAR Government will attach greater importance to and actively study healthy ageing policy directions, with a long-term goal of making Hong Kong a place suitable for raising children and family formation, as well as a place where the elderly can enjoy their twilight years and are properly cared for.

With these remarks, President, I hope Members will support my motion. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr Adrian Pedro HO, as amended by Dr Johnny NG, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Prof LAU Chi-pang, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, that is, those returned by the Election Committee and those returned by functional constituencies and geographical constituencies.

I declare the motion as amended passed.

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): Honourable Members, as the remaining time of the meeting today may not be sufficient for us to finish the debate on the next item of

the agenda, the motion debate, that is “Proactively responding to national development strategies by following up on the development of the Northern Metropolis”. In order to preserve the completeness of the motion debate and after seeking the opinion of Ms CHAN Yuet-ming, we shall deal with this motion in the next meeting.

This is the last Council meeting in this session. I wish you and all citizens of Hong Kong a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

**PRESIDENT** (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council. The first meeting of the next session will be held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, 10 January 2024.

*Adjourned accordingly at 3:35 pm.*