

22 questions to be asked at the Council meeting of 26 June 2024

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Question 1
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Manpower and resources for public healthcare services

Prof Hon Priscilla LEUNG to ask:

It has been reported that the situation of Hong Kong residents returning to Hong Kong for medical treatment after settling overseas for years has persisted for a long while. Among such residents, many are patients suffering from catastrophic illnesses such as cancer, and some of them are referred to public hospitals for further treatment after receiving preliminary treatment in private hospitals. Regarding the manpower and resources for public healthcare services, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as a professor of a medical school at a university has reportedly pointed out that the number of patients returning to Hong Kong for medical treatment has slightly increased by 5% to 10% in recent years, whether the Government has compiled statistics on the exact figures and assessed if the existing manpower and resources for public hospitals can cope with the increase in the number of such patients;
- (2) as the Secretary for Health indicated in a media interview in August last year that more than half of the local doctors were practising in the private market, serving about 13% of the patients in Hong Kong, which in effect means that less than half of the local doctors were practising under the public healthcare system, taking care of nearly 90% of the patients in Hong Kong, whether the Government has compiled statistics on the latest figures and formulated corresponding plans; and
- (3) as it has been reported that a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine in 2019 found that over 70% of the local young doctors interviewed showed signs of overexertion at work, and more than 20% of the doctors interviewed even had the problem of depression, whether the Government has gained an understanding of the actual situation and what corresponding plans it has put in place?

Question 2
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Enhancing the services provided by District Health Centres

Dr Hon David LAM to ask:

The Government set up the Kwai Tsing District Health Centre (“DHC”), the first DHC in Hong Kong, in 2019, and subsequently set up DHCs or District Health Centre Expresses (“DHCEs”) in various districts across the territory. These facilities have been serving the public for nearly five years. However, some members of the public have relayed that apart from health promotion programmes and the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme, they do not know much about other services provided by DHCs and DHCEs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has reviewed in a timely manner the roles and functions of DHCs in primary healthcare services, such as medication management, vaccination and rehabilitation treatment, as well as the effectiveness of their services provided in collaboration with various private healthcare service providers in the community; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it has upheld the role of DHCs as case managers and service providers for patients discharged from public hospitals for rehabilitation in the community; and
- (3) whether it has plans to effectively link up healthcare service providers in the community and members of the public through DHCs, so as to introduce diversified healthcare services for members of the public; if so, of the details of the newly introduced service items; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 3
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Protecting the safety of passengers of marine excursion vessels

Hon YIU Pak-leung to ask:

There are views that the Victoria Harbour is an iconic tourist spot in which Hong Kong takes pride, and Victoria Harbour tours are well received by visitors to Hong Kong. However, there are views relaying that vessels engaging in illegal operation of harbour tours have now become increasingly rampant in the vicinity of Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront with inadequacies in the berthing arrangements, rendering it difficult to protect passenger safety. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current numbers of Class I and Class IV vessels that can provide harbour tour services, as well as the respective operational requirements of and restrictions on these two classes of vessels;
- (2) as there are views relaying that some pleasure vessels have allegedly been engaging in illegal carriage of passengers in the vicinity of the Victoria Harbour and instantly charging individual passengers by means of soliciting, of the numbers of onsite inspections and decoy operations conducted by the authorities in respect of vessels allegedly engaging in illegal carriage of passengers in the past year, and whether they have reviewed the effectiveness of such law enforcement actions; and
- (3) whether it has monitored the usage of the Victoria Harbour's various piers and landing facilities during peak hours and holidays, and whether it has planned to enhance the relevant facilities and formulate crowd control measures with a view to diverting passengers, thereby meeting the increasing market demand; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 4
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

Hon Holden CHOW to ask:

It has been reported that in January this year, a child abuse case took place in the Tuen Mun District involving a nine-month-old baby girl who was taken care of by a home-based child carer (“HCC”) recruited by a non-profit-making organization under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (“the Care Project”). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as it has been reported that the baby girl involved was the first child entrusted to the care of the HCC involved in the case, whether the authorities will consider rendering more assistance to novice HCCs with less experience in the future by, for example, deploying another experienced HCC or professional child carer to accompany them to take care of children for several times until they are experienced enough to take care of children on their own; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) of the respective numbers of profit-making and non-profit-making organizations providing home-based child care services under the Care Project in the Tuen Mun District in each of the past five years, and the details of training provided by these organizations for recruited HCCs; and
- (3) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on 27 March this year, the Government indicated that since the launch of the Care Project, the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) had received four reports of accidents leading to the injury of young children, of the number of accidents proved to be caused by the negligence of HCCs after investigation, and the improvement measures taken by SWD after each accident?

Question 5
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Procuring dental services from the Mainland

Hon Paul TSE to ask:

Many members of the public who are not civil servants have relayed that in recent years, there has been a shortage of dental manpower and that the fees for dental consultations and surgeries have risen sharply, which are unaffordable for both the grass roots and the middle class. There are views that the Government should study the implementation of a scheme, which is similar to the one proposing to procure dental services from the Mainland for civil servants, to procure dental services from the Mainland or provide subsidies for members of the public who are not civil servants, so as to alleviate the plight of members of the public with dental problems through a two-pronged approach. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as there are views pointing out that dental services affordable for members of the public are limited and that the main service targets of government dental clinics are civil servants, why the Government procures dental services from the Mainland only for civil servants and not for the general public at the same time;
- (2) of the estimated expenditure, service quotas, scope of treatment and implementation timetable of the scheme under consideration to procure dental services from the Mainland for civil servants; whether it has assessed the manpower in government dental clinics that can be released to serve members of the public who are not civil servants upon the implementation of the scheme, as well as the estimated number of beneficiaries; and
- (3) as some members of the public opine that the Government's procurement of dental services from the Mainland for members of the public will yield more immediate results and serve the public in a more practical way than spending hundreds of millions of dollars on organizing the courtesy campaign, Chubby Hearts Hong Kong and the "teamLab: Continuous" exhibition, the actual economic benefits of which are doubtful and they are even expendable, whether the Government will, from the perspective of addressing the pressing needs of the public, at least procure dental services for members of the public of Hong Kong from the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area while studying the procurement of dental services from the Mainland for civil servants, so as to give members of the public an additional option?

Question 6
(For oral reply)

(Translation)

Antimicrobial resistance of bacteria

Hon CHAN Hak-kan to ask:

It has been reported that the United Nations Environment Programme has warned that by 2050, up to 10 million people may die each year due to antimicrobial resistance. In addition, a study conducted by a local university has found that Shing Mun River, Kai Tak River and the waters near various landfills contain residual medicines (including antibiotics). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council, whether it conducted tests on the content of antimicrobial medicines such as antibiotics in local aquatic products in the past three years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; of the measures in place to prevent the content of antimicrobial medicines in local waters, rivers and aquatic products from exceeding the prescribed limits?

Question 7
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Adverse possession of land

Hon Kenneth FOK to ask:

There are views that with the progressive development of the Northern Metropolis, the value of the land in the area has increased significantly, and the situation of adverse possession of land has aroused concern. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of litigation cases of adverse possession of land involving land in the New Territories in the past three years and, among them, the respective numbers of cases in which the persons in possession of someone else's land have been granted court orders to establish their adverse possession and cases which are still being processed;
- (2) whether it has considered formulating measures or mechanisms to enable landowners to, by non-litigation means, enforce recovery of land which has not yet been in someone else's possession for 12 years, so as to avoid unnecessary litigations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) whether it will consider adding provisions to the Limitation Ordinance (Cap. 347) to lay down a clear definition of "malicious occupier" and deny such persons the right to apply to the court for an order to establish their adverse possession, so as to better safeguard the properties of members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 8
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Prevention of road subsidence incidents

Hon Kenneth LAU to ask:

It has been reported that during the onslaught of tropical cyclone Maliksi on Hong Kong early this month, road subsidence measuring around eight metres by twelve metres in area and around four metres in depth occurred at the junction of Hai Tan Street and Kweilin Street in Sham Shui Po. It has been preliminarily assessed by the Government that one of the causes of the road subsidence incident may be soil erosion intensified by the heavy rains early this month. In addition, a number of road subsidence incidents also occurred in Hong Kong when the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal was in force on 8 September last year, arousing wide public concern. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information in respect of the road subsidence reports received by the Government in each of the past three years: (i) the number of reports, (ii) the locations of the incidents, (iii) the causes of road subsidence, (iv) the damage, (v) the numbers of persons or underground facilities affected, and (vi) the remedial and follow-up measures taken;
- (2) whether the Government has carried out regular inspections of the underneath of roads across the territory over the past three years to prevent sudden occurrence of road subsidence; if so, of (i) the number of inspections in each year, (ii) the inspection locations, (iii) the inspection results, and (iv) the situations of the follow-up actions taken on the roads with underground distress; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as it has been preliminarily assessed that the road subsidence incident early this month was caused by soil erosion intensified by heavy rains, and rainstorms have become increasingly frequent amid extreme weather in recent years, of the measures taken by the Government to prevent sudden occurrence of road subsidence;
- (4) in respect of road construction in new development areas (e.g. the Northern Metropolis), of the measures put in place by the Government to strengthen the condition of the underneath of roads and underground conduits, so as to minimize road subsidence caused by soil erosion or water mains bursts amid extreme weather; and
- (5) whether it has studied if there are early signs of road subsidence and educated members of the public about the actions they should take when unusual settlement of road surfaces is noticed?

Question 9
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Combating frauds involving deepfake

Dr Hon TAN Yueheng to ask:

A study has reportedly found that the number of scams involving deepfake in Hong Kong in the first quarter of this year has scored a 10-fold increase year-on-year, which is among the highest in the Asia-Pacific region, and the rate of deepfake identity fraud involving the fintech industry in Hong Kong is the highest in the Asia-Pacific region. On the other hand, some members of the public are worried that there is no way to guard against law-breakers who have in recent years successfully committed frauds by making use of deepfake technology to create highly realistic faces and voices. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of proactive investigations conducted and reports received by the Government in each of the past three years in respect of fraudulent activities using deepfake technology, and set out for each case the type of fraud and amount of money involved; the detection rate of such cases;
- (2) whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the measures introduced by the Government to combat fraud cases involving deepfake-generated false information; and
- (3) of the measures in place to enhance the regulation of the application of deepfake technology, and what new measures are in place to step up efforts to combat the dissemination of disinformation on the Internet and social media?

Question 10
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Electronic Health Record Sharing System

Hon Nixie LAM to ask:

In the discussion paper on “eHealth+ Development” submitted to the Panel on Health Services of this Council in February this year, the Government pointed out that there were a total of some six million people who had registered with the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (“eHealth”) last year, but the electronic health records uploaded by private healthcare institutions remained extremely low in quantity, representing less than 1%. In addition, eligible cancer patients receiving treatment under the Hospital Authority (“HA”) can join the Project on Enhancing Radiological Investigation Services through Collaboration with the Private Sector (“the Radi Collaboration Project”), and be referred to private healthcare institutions for receiving radiological diagnostic examinations. However, quite a number of members of the public have relayed that after they undergo radiological diagnosis examinations at private healthcare institutions (e.g. private doctors, private hospitals, clinics or radiological examination centres), the relevant radiology images and medical records are not uploaded to eHealth in a timely manner, which affects their subsequent follow-up consultations in public hospitals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the usage of and waiting time for Computed Tomography, Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Ultrasonography and Positron Emission Tomography in various hospital clusters, as well as the respective numbers of patients who underwent radiological diagnosis examinations under the Radi Collaboration Project and at their own expense in each of the past five years;
- (2) of the current number of private healthcare institutions which have registered to participate in eHealth;
- (3) among the current electronic health records uploaded to eHealth, of the number of those uploaded by private doctors, and its proportion in the total number of electronic health records; and
- (4) of the current number of eHealth users who have given “sharing consent” to private healthcare institutions for accessing and uploading their medical records, as well as its proportion in the total number of registered eHealth users; whether private healthcare institutions are currently required to upload their patients’ medical records to eHealth or HA’s Clinical Management System within a specified time limit; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 11
(For written reply)

Complaints handled by the Ombudsman

Hon Doreen KONG to ask:

Section 10(2)(d) of The Ombudsman Ordinance (Cap. 397) stipulates that the Ombudsman may in his discretion decide not to undertake or continue an investigation into a complaint, if he is of the opinion, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, that any investigation or further investigation is for any other reason unnecessary. There are views pointing out that, notwithstanding this provision which requires the Ombudsman to consider all the circumstances of each case before exercising his discretionary power, the Office of the Ombudsman (“OTO”) states on its website that OTO usually does not investigate complaints about actions taken fully in line with a policy which is made with proper authority following a due process. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows how the Ombudsman defines government “policy” and government “policy decision” when handling complaints;
- (2) whether it knows if it is the case that (i) actions taken fully in line with policies made with proper authority following a due process and (ii) all administrative decisions made thereunder will not be considered by the Ombudsman as having constituted “maladministration” as defined in section 2(1) of Cap. 397 anyway, irrespective of whether the Ombudsman has given due regard to all the circumstances of the cases concerned, and the Ombudsman’s justifications for that; and
- (3) as I have received a complaint from a member of the public pointing out that the internal procedures of OTO for reviewing its original decision do not conform to the principle of natural justice because (i) only the government department under complaint (and not the complainant) is entitled to comment on the draft review and (ii) the review is handled by the same officers who made the original decision (and not by other officers) before submitting to the Ombudsman for final decision, whether the Government knows how such procedures can be improved?

Question 12
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Sister School Scheme

Hon Lillian KWOK to ask:

Under the Sister School Scheme (“the Scheme”), many schools in Hong Kong have formed sister school pairs (“SSPs”) with schools in Mainland cities. Through exchanges and cooperation, SSPs have deepened students’ understanding of Mainland and Hong Kong cultures, and promoted advancement in the quality of education. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of SSPs formed between Hong Kong and Mainland schools, together with a tabulated breakdown by type of schools (i.e. secondary, primary and special schools) and finance type (i.e. public, Direct Subsidy Scheme and private);
- (2) of the number of schools which successfully applied for the grant under the Scheme in each of the past 10 years, as well as the number and types of activities organized by the schools with the approved grant; and
- (3) whether it will consider extending the scope of the grant under the Scheme to include international schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 13
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Promotional work on the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance

Dr Hon Kennedy WONG to ask:

The Department of Justice stated earlier that it would explain and promote the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (“SNSO”) to local and international communities in collaboration with relevant policy bureaux and enhance the understanding of SNSO among the public and different sectors of the community through various channels in a timely manner. Regarding the promotional work on SNSO, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) given that SNSO has taken effect for three months, of the relevant work undertaken by the Government to promote and explain SNSO to overseas countries, and whether the Government has at present a team dedicated to promoting SNSO to overseas countries; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) given that some foreign media and politicians have made unfounded and misleading or scaremongering reports and remarks about SNSO, and it has been reported that a resigned overseas non-permanent judge of the Court of Final Appeal has recently written in foreign press to criticize Hong Kong’s legislation on national security, how the relevant policy bureaux evaluate the impacts of the aforesaid reports and remarks on the image of Hong Kong’s rule of law, and the corresponding countermeasures that have been taken; and
- (3) of the specific operation of the work undertaken by relevant policy bureaux to explain and promote SNSO to local and international communities (including the government departments and the resources involved), and whether consideration will be given to working with the business sector to promote the positive messages regarding SNSO in another way of communication, and conducting the explanation work by means such as written articles and promotional clips; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 14
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Intake of public housing projects

Dr Hon CHOW Man-kong to ask:

There are views that in recent years, the intakes of public housing projects of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (“HA”) are often concentrated at the end of the year (or near the Lunar New Year), making it difficult for tenants to arrange timely removals or diminishing owners’ motivation to carry out decoration works. This indirectly affects downstream industries such as decoration, transport and logistics, and interior design (“the industries”) in terms of service demand and operation, and is not conducive to the businesses of small and medium-sized enterprises and recovery of the economy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on public rental housing (“PRH”), Green Form Subsidized Home Ownership Scheme (“GSH”) and other subsidized sale flats completed in the past five years under HA: (i) project title, (ii) number of flats provided (with a breakdown by flat size), (iii) date of completion (year and month), and (iv) date of intake (year and month), and set out in Table 1 a breakdown by the three regions, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, as well as District Council district;

Table 1 Year: _____

Region	District Council district	Project	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
Hong Kong Island						
Kowloon						
New Territories						

- (2) of the following information on PRH, GSH and other subsidized sale flats being constructed under HA: (i) project title, (ii) number of flats to be provided (with a breakdown by flat size), (iii) expected date of completion (year and month), and (iv) expected date of intake (year and month), and set out in Table 2 a breakdown by the three regions, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, as well as District Council district; and

Table 2 Year: _____

Region	District Council district	Project	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
Hong Kong Island						
Kowloon						
New Territories						

- (3) whether it will review the dates of intake of PRH, GSH and other subsidized sale flats under HA, and evenly distribute the dates across different months of the year, so as to spur market growth by boosting the demand for domestic sales across different industries in Hong Kong, thereby creating strong impetus for growth in the industries; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 15
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Management of water resources

Hon YUNG Hoi-yan to ask:

It has been reported that the Water Supplies Department (“WSD”) is studying the adjustment of water charges, which has aroused concerns among various sectors of the community. Regarding the management of water resources, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has considered options other than adjusting water charges to improve the operating conditions of WSD; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) of the criteria based on which WSD determines the rate of adjustment of water charges;
- (3) of the following information on flushing water in each of the past five years:
 - (i) the daily per capita flushing water consumption (set out by sea water and fresh water for flushing);
 - (ii) the respective proportions of the population using sea water and fresh water for flushing;
 - (iii) the respective costs (per cubic metre) of using sea water and fresh water for flushing;
 - (iv) the daily per capita unaccounted-for flushing water; and
 - (v) the expenditures on the construction, expansion, upgrading and maintenance of sea water flushing supply infrastructure and details of the relevant projects;
- (4) of the following information on the supply and consumption of fresh water:
 - (i) the daily per capita domestic fresh water consumption in each of the past five years (set out by Dongjiang water and local yield);
 - (ii) the respective total amounts and proportions of fresh water supplied from Dongjiang and local yield in the past year;
 - (iii) the respective costs (per cubic metre) of fresh water supplied from Dongjiang and local yield in each of the past five years;
 - (iv) the respective proportions of the expenditures on purchasing and processing Dongjiang raw water to the cost of fresh water supplied from Dongjiang in each of the past five years; and
 - (v) the annual quantity of overflow from reservoirs since 2022;

- (5) of the following information on unlawful taking of water in each of the past five years:
 - (i) the respective numbers of reports and complaints received by the Government;
 - (ii) the number of convicted cases;
 - (iii) the amount of water involved in those convicted cases where water was unlawfully taken; and
 - (iv) the amount of fresh water contaminated as a result of unlawful water taking;
- (6) since the commissioning of the first stage of the Tseung Kwan O Desalination Plant (“TKODP”) on 22 December last year, of (i) the actual daily fresh water production capacity of TKODP, (ii) the proportion of the relevant production capacity to Hong Kong’s overall fresh water demand, and (iii) the actual average cost per cubic metre of fresh water produced by TKODP;
- (7) of the total length of water mains in Hong Kong which have been in use for more than 30 years at present; (i) the expenditures on the construction, upgrading and maintenance of water mains and the details of the relevant projects, and (ii) the leakage rate of fresh water mains and the amount of fresh water loss involved, in each of the past five years;
- (8) of the number of cases of water mains anomalies detected by WSD’s Water Intelligent Network (“WIN”) and the associated amount of fresh water loss, as well as the number of cases of water mains anomalies misreported by WIN, in each of the past five years; and
- (9) whether the Government has plans to further reduce water mains leakage and bring down the cost of fresh water; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Question 16
(For written reply)

(Translation)

UNESCO Creative Cities Network

Hon YIM Kong to ask:

It is learnt that the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (“UCCN”) seeks to promote cooperation with cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development, with a view to placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of the regional development plans. UCCN represents seven fields, including Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music. As at October last year, a total of 350 cities had joined UCCN. There are views that Hong Kong’s accession to UCCN will help promote the development of the city’s cultural and creativity industries, facilitate exchanges between the enterprises and practitioners concerned and their international counterparts, as well as align with the goal of developing Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange as set out in the National 14th Five-Year Plan. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it has proactively considered seeking Hong Kong’s accession to UCCN; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, (i) the specific details and progress of the related work, (ii) whether the authorities have considered the fields through which Hong Kong’s creativity and characteristics to be showcased, and (iii) in addition to the fields mentioned in (ii), whether the authorities have considered the fields to be levelled up to international standards in a bid to develop Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange?

Question 17
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Traffic and crowd control measures for mega events

Hon Rock CHEN to ask:

Hong Kong is vigorously promoting a mega event economy and developing mega event tourism, with over 100 mega events to be held in the second half of this year. On the other hand, a drone show featuring Japanese cartoon characters held in Tsim Sha Tsui last month (“the Drone Show”) attracted viewing by many members of the public and tourists, resulting in large crowds and temporary road closures in various parts of Tsim Sha Tsui. Regarding the traffic and crowd control measures for mega events, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as some members of the public have relayed that on the day of the Drone Show, as a result of temporary road closures in the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront area, many motorists and members of the public had to make detours, and in particular, severe traffic congestions in Canton Road and Kowloon Park Drive had seriously jammed outgoing traffic from the Western Harbour Crossing heading towards Canton Road after turning right from Austin Road, whether the authorities had communicated with the organizer in advance to estimate the pedestrian and traffic flow for formulating appropriate traffic control measures; of the authorities’ improvement plan in future;
- (2) as it is learnt that the Drone Show was organized by a commercial organization, with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau being just a supporting organization, and the organizer only announced the relevant details shortly before the event, affecting the relevant arrangements of the Government and other organizations, how the authorities will cooperate with the local travel industry in future, such as whether advanced publicity and promotion will be conducted for mega events organized by commercial organizations, and proper coordination be made with the relevant government departments (e.g. the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Fire Services Department) beforehand; and
- (3) whether there is a standard procedure for assessing the attractiveness of mega events, as well as the anticipated number of visitors and traffic flow; whether the authorities will, on the premise of mega events being assessed to be popular, model on the special traffic and transport arrangements for the Lunar New Year Fireworks Display (including adjusting the service frequencies and routes of public transport), notify members of the public, motorists and visitors of the

relevant road closures, as well as implement and announce crowd control measures in advance?

Question 18
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Mechanism for vetting the eligibility of applicants
for admission adopted by higher education institutions

Hon TANG Fei to ask:

It has been reported that a university has recently found that some students have provided fraudulent documentary proof of academic qualifications when applying for admission. There are views that the incident has brought potential impact on Hong Kong's reputation as an international hub for post-secondary education. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

- (1) the specific measures taken by various higher education institutions to ensure the authenticity and validity of documentary proof of academic qualifications submitted by applicants for admission; and
- (2) whether various higher education institutions will enhance their mechanisms for vetting the eligibility of applicants for admission to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents, thereby ensuring the quality of their students; if so, of the specific details?

Question 19
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Employment of Non-Civil Service Contract staff

Dr Hon NGAN Man-yu to ask:

The Non-Civil Service Contract Staff (“NCSC”) Scheme, introduced by the Government in 1999, provides Heads of Departments with a flexible means of employing staff on fixed term contracts outside the civil service establishment to cope with the changing operational and service needs of policy bureaux/government departments (“B/Ds”). In addition, B/Ds set quotas for the number of NCSC staff to be employed. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the quotas set by various B/Ds for the employment of full-time NCSC staff and the number of such staff employed in each of the past five years;
- (2) of the criteria adopted by various B/Ds for setting the quotas, and whether they have regularly reviewed the effectiveness of the quotas concerned and the necessity of the posts concerned; and
- (3) as it has been reported that the current vacancy rate in the civil service is about 10%, of the approach adopted by the Government for maintaining the level of public services (e.g. by filling vacancies, creating new posts or outsourcing the relevant work to personnel employed by contractors); the criteria adopted by the Government for determining whether the newly created posts are civil service posts or NCSC posts?

Question 20
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers

Hon Carmen KAN to ask:

Regarding the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers (“GPRS”), will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following monthly information about GPRS since its full implementation on 1 May last year (set out in a table):
 - (i) the respective numbers of applications for registration as suppliers received and approved;
 - (ii) the respective numbers of applications for waste disposal licence for glass container received and granted;
 - (iii) the total amount of container recycling levy (“the levy”) collected;
 - (iv) the operating expenditure; and
 - (v) the number of cases received involving the distribution of glass-bottled beverages in Hong Kong by non-registered suppliers;
- (2) given that the two government-appointed glass management contractors (“GMCs”) have been providing waste glass container collection services since 2018, of the following information about the services (set out in a table):
 - (i) the current number of glass bottle collection points across the territory (broken down by District Council district);
 - (ii) the quantity of waste glass containers collected and the recovery rate in each of the past seven years, as well as their respective year-on-year rates of change;
 - (iii) the quantity of waste glass containers turned into recycled glass materials and the year-on-year rate of change in each of the past seven years; and
 - (iv) the current applications of recycled glass materials and their respective percentages;
- (3) given that registered suppliers with their own reuse arrangements may apply to the Environmental Protection Department for exemption from the levy, of the current number of registered suppliers granted with exemption from the levy, as well as the recovery rate (the share of recovered quantity in distributed quantity) of each of such registered suppliers;

- (4) given that while a government-led approach has been adopted for GPRS, the authorities indicated in February this year the proposed establishment of a common legislative framework applicable to different products for various Producer Responsibility Schemes under a market-led approach, whether the authorities will review GPRS with a view to aligning its adopted approach with the proposed common legislative framework; of the progress of legislative work for the establishment of the common legislative framework, and whether an implementation timetable has been drawn up;
- (5) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on 27 October 2021, the Government indicated that the two GMCs were expected to gradually increase the quantity of waste glass containers recovered to 50 000 tonnes a year, and in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Secretary for Environment and Ecology indicated that the total quantity of waste glass containers recovered by the two GMCs fell short of the authorities' target in each year from 2019 to 2022, what measures the authorities have in place to boost the quantity of waste glass containers recovered;
- (6) given that registered suppliers must fulfil their statutory obligations, including submission of returns, keeping records relating to the returns, payment of the levy and submission of annual audit reports, how such statutory obligations are being fulfilled by registered suppliers; how the authorities monitor their implementation, and whether relevant information will be published to enhance the transparency of GPRS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (7) as there are views that the establishment of glass bottle collection points at retail outlets and in common areas of properties can help boost the recovery rate of waste glass containers, whether the authorities will require registered suppliers to set up a recycling network with retail outlets and common areas of properties as the backbone to facilitate the return of waste glass containers by members of the public to registered suppliers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (8) given that the first term of the glass management contracts ended in the fourth quarter of last year, whether the authorities have reviewed if the two GMCs have met the operational requirements under their contract; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the negative, whether penalties have been imposed on the GMC with subpar performance by the authorities, and whether the GMC concerned is eligible to bid for the contract afresh; whether the authorities will consider examining the reward and penalty mechanism under the contract, such that GMCs will do a good job in waste glass container recovery?

Question 21
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Spinal muscular atrophy

Hon Michael TIEN to ask:

It is learnt that spinal muscular atrophy (“SMA”) is a group of hereditary neuromuscular disorders and that the common forms of SMA can be classified into SMA type 1, type 2 and type 3. Some patient groups have indicated that the Hospital Authority (“HA”) has imposed restrictions on the eligibility for the drugs “Nusinersen” and “Risdiplam”, which are for the treatment of SMA, under the Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes (“the Assistance Programmes”), and that most of the SMA patients who can receive treatment under the Assistance Programmes are patients with SMA type 1 or type 2, resulting in a considerable number of other SMA patients being unable to apply for drug subsidies or undergo treatment for years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the number of persons who were granted subsidies under the Assistance Programmes for the purchase of (i) Nusinersen and (ii) Risdiplam and their average age in each of the past three years, and set out in the table below a breakdown by type of SMA suffered by persons who were granted subsidies (i.e. (I) type 1, (II) type 2 and (III) type 3) and by age group (i.e. (a) minors and (b) adults);

Year: _____

Drug	Age group	Number of persons who were granted subsidies		Average age of persons who were granted subsidies
(i)	(a)	(I)		
		(II)		
		(III)		
	(b)	(I)		
		(II)		
		(III)		
(ii)	(a)	(I)		
		(II)		
		(III)		
	(b)	(I)		
		(II)		
		(III)		

- (2) given that the age limit for applying for the Assistance Programmes is not set out on HA’s website, and in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the 12th of this month, the Government indicated that having reviewed the findings of a drug treatment study on Risdiplam and made reference to overseas medication guidelines and international arrangements on disease management and on subsidies for the drug concerned, the HA Expert

Panel on SMA considers it inappropriate to subsidize drug treatment for adult SMA patients aged above 25 to receive drug treatments, whether the Government knows if the Assistance Programmes have set the same age limit for applying for Nusinersen; if they have, of the reasons for that; if not, the reasons for the difference in the eligibility criteria for these two types of drugs; and

- (3) as some patient groups have indicated that the Mainland currently has no age limit in its medication standards for SMA patients, who are provided with drug subsidies for treatment regardless of the type of SMA they suffer from, and that some Mainland experts have found through their actual treatment experience that Nusinersen and Risdiplam could have significant efficacy on patients with SMA type 3, whether the Government knows the reasons for the discrepancy in the medication standards between HA and Mainland organizations?

Question 22
(For written reply)

(Translation)

Enhancing the efficiency of travellers' immigration clearance at Luohu

Dr Hon Dennis LAM to ask:

It has been reported that the Shenzhen Municipal Government has recently stated that it is planning to redevelop the Luohu Port and hopes to collaborate with the HKSAR Government to bring the MTR East Rail Line (“ERL”) into Luohu and implement “co-location arrangement” at the Luohu Port. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the average time taken for travellers to cross the Luohu Port in each of the past three years;
- (2) given that in reply to my question on 10 April this year, the Government pointed out that in planning for the redevelopment of existing boundary control points (“BCPs”) and the development of new BCPs in the future, the Government would actively explore the adoption of new clearance mode to enhance passenger clearance efficiency, including implementing the “collaborative inspection and joint clearance” mode in new land BCP projects, whether the Government will discuss with the relevant Mainland authorities the implementation of the said mode at the redeveloped Luohu Port to enhance the efficiency of travellers' immigration clearance;
- (3) whether it has projected the amount of time savings for travellers crossing the Luohu Port after completion of its redevelopment; and
- (4) as it has been reported that the Luohu District's Three-year Action Plan for the Development of a Shenzhen-Hong Kong Integrated Development Demonstration Zone for Attracting Global Resources has unequivocally stated that Shenzhen and Hong Kong will join hands to develop a cooperative demonstration park in Lot B1 of the transit land adjacent to the Luohu Port, whether the Government has estimated the benefits to be brought to the lot's development by bringing ERL into Luohu?