

LCQ11: Support provided for the ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Kwong Chun-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

The Government has commissioned non-governmental organisations to run six support service centres for the ethnic minorities (EMs) and two sub-centres (support centres). The services provided by the support centres include organising language classes for EMs. One of these centres, namely the CHEER Centre operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, also provides interpretation and translation services for EMs using public services. Regarding the support provided for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which the various policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds) arranged interpretation and translation services for EMs using public services, with a breakdown by (i) B/D, (ii) name of service provider, and (iii) EM language;

(2) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which the various B/Ds engaged the interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre, with a breakdown by (i) service category (i.e. telephone interpretation service, on-sight interpretation service, on-site (escort) interpretation service, simultaneous interpretation service, written translation service and proofreading service) and (ii) EM language;

(3) of the following details of the Cantonese classes and English classes offered by each support centre in each of the past three years: (i) number of classes offered, (ii) medium of instruction, and (iii) number of students enrolled (with a breakdown by ethnicity); and

(4) of the current population of EM who are aged 65 or above, and the number of those who are receiving the various types of allowances under the Social Security Allowance Scheme, with a breakdown by (i) type of allowances and (ii) ethnicity?

Reply:

President,

In 2010, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau issued the "Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality" (Guidelines) to provide guidance to relevant bureaux and departments to promote racial equality and ensure equal access by ethnic minorities (EMs) to public

services in the key areas concerned, and to take this into account in the formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures.

After consulting the relevant bureaux and departments, the consolidated reply to the question raised is as follows:

(1) Various bureaux and departments will provide interpretation services for EMs in need to ensure their equal access to public services. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau is conducting a review on the Guidelines. To enhance the provision of interpretation services by bureaux and departments, the Bureau is exploring the feasibility of including guidance on the provision of interpretation services in the Guidelines.

The number of interpretation services for EMs arranged by bureaux, departments and public organisations under the scope of application of the Guidelines in the past three years and names of service providers are shown in Annex 1. The above bodies have not provided the breakdown of the number of interpretation services by EM languages.

(2) The Home Affairs Department provides support services for EMs to help them integrate into the community. Major services include the provision of language learning classes and integration programmes through six support service centres for EMs and two sub-centres. One of these centres, namely the CHEER Centre operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, also provides interpretation and translation services in seven EM languages (Note) for non-specialised areas. Bureaux and departments and EMs are welcome to make use of these services. Interpretation services include mainly instant telephone interpretation services. Subject to the availability of resources, on-site or simultaneous interpretation services can also be arranged. From 2019-20 onwards, the Home Affairs Department will enhance the interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre, including the introduction of interpretation services in Vietnamese.

The usage of CHEER Centre's interpretation and translation services with breakdowns by bureaux, departments, public organisations and EMs as well as by EM languages in the past three years are shown in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.

(3) The support service centres for EMs and sub-centres of the Home Affairs Department provide Cantonese classes and English classes with the aim to help EMs meet the needs in their daily social lives and strengthen their capability and confidence to integrate into the community. The languages of instruction for Cantonese classes in the centres are mainly English and Cantonese, while English is the primary language of instruction for English classes. The centres will, depending on the situation, arrange EM teaching assistants to assist the teachers.

The number of Cantonese classes and English classes organised in the centres and the number of participants by ethnicities in the past three project years are shown in Annex 4.

(4) According to the information of the 2016 Population By-census by the

Census and Statistics Department, there are 20 124 EMs (excluding foreign domestic helpers) who are aged 65 or above in Hong Kong, including 2 838 Indian, 713 Nepalese, 633 Pakistani, 1 256 Filipino, 1 400 Indonesian and 1 011 Thai. The total population of EMs who are aged 65 or above for the above-mentioned six ethnicities is 7 851. The Social Welfare Department does not collect information on the ethnicity of the recipients of the Social Security Allowance Scheme.

Note: The seven EM languages are Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu.

LCQ17: Sponsors and listing applications

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

In recent months, a number of sponsors were reprimanded, fined and/or had their licences suspended by the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) for failing to discharge their obligations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

(1) the respective numbers of complaints or reports about sponsors failing to discharge their obligations (i) received, (ii) an investigation into which was launched and (iii) the investigation of which was completed, as well as the number of cases in which disciplinary sanctions were imposed on sponsors found guilty of misconduct (and the details of each case), by SFC in each of the past five years;

(2) if SFC has studied new measures to make issuers of listed securities, their directors and underwriters shoulder greater responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the contents of the prospectuses, so as to avoid such responsibilities being borne solely by sponsors; and

(3) if SFC maintained, in the past three years, communication with the various parties involved in the issue of listed securities, with a view to understanding their needs and adjusting from time to time the measures concerned; if SFC did, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) During the period from January 2014 to May 2019, the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) received a total of 113 complaints or reports related to alleged sponsors failures. The details are set out in Table 1 of the Annex. During the same period, the SFC has taken 16 disciplinary actions against the failures of sponsors and/or sponsor principals (including cases that are originated from complaints or reports received outside the said period). The respective penalties of these cases are set out in Table 2 of the Annex.

The SFC will take follow-up actions on every complaint and report received. However, the position of the follow-up actions of the complaints and reports and the progress of investigations are details that are subject to the secrecy provisions of the Securities and Futures Ordinance (SFO). The SFC cannot disclose such information.

(2) The existing legislation has already prescribed the respective responsibilities of the sponsors, listing applicants and their directors involved in an initial public offering. Following the established practice in strictly adhering to the provisions of the SFO, the SFC may object to listing applications that contain false or misleading information and prosecute the persons involved, including listing applicants and their directors.

According to the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, directors of a listing applicant shall bear legal liability in respect of the contents of the prospectus.

According to the Securities and Futures (Stock Market Listing) Rules, the SFC may object to a listing application on certain grounds, including that if it appears to the SFC that the listing applicant has provided false or misleading information regarding a material fact (or through the omission of a material fact).

In addition, according to the SFO, if the SFC has reasonable cause to believe that a person (including the directors of a listing applicant) has knowingly or recklessly provided false or misleading information in its statutory filing with the SFC, the SFC may conduct investigation against that person. Where appropriate, the SFC may prosecute the offenders.

(3) The SFC conducts regulatory supervision of sponsors based on its risk-based supervisory approach, and with particular attention to the possible deficiencies in their due diligence work. During the regulatory supervision, the SFC communicates with the sponsors about the concerns that it may have on the sponsors' work. The SFC also provides the industry with examples of cases that fall short of the expected standards through publishing circulars or thematic reports. For example, the SFC issued a thematic report in March 2018 which draws the industry's attention to specific deficiencies and the instances of non-compliance as observed by the SFC during its regulatory supervisions. The report also highlights the practices that meet the SFC's expected standards. In addition, the SFC issued a circular in March 2018 to remind licensed corporations engaging in sponsors work of the SFC's expected

standards on conduct and due diligence practices and to urge them to critically review and enhance their internal system and control measures.

LCQ7: Elderly persons receiving specialist outpatient services

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

In 2015, around 75 per cent of the elderly persons (i.e. persons aged 65 or above) in Hong Kong suffered from chronic illness. Some patient groups have pointed out that elderly patients with a number of chronic illnesses at the same time have to make a lot of efforts attending specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) in various public hospitals on different dates for treatment. Besides, they may not have the ability to sort out the medications prescribed by different doctors in order to take the medications according to schedule. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows in the past 12 months,
 - (i) the median and maximum numbers of SOPCs attended by the various elderly patients;
 - (ii) the number of elderly patients attending SOPCs for treatment, with a breakdown by the number of SOPCs attended by them (i.e. one to two, three to four, five to six, and seven or more) and the relevant percentages;
 - (iii) the median and maximum numbers of public hospitals visited by the various elderly patients for attending SOPCs for treatment; and
 - (iv) a breakdown of the number of elderly patients attending SOPCs for treatment by the number of public hospitals visited by them (i.e. one to two, three to four, five to six, and seven or more), and the relevant percentages;
- (2) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, (i) for how many days on average were medications prescribed for each elderly patient by SOPCs, and (ii) the number of elderly patients who were prescribed five or more medications and the percentage of that number in the total number of such patients;
- (3) given that under the Drug Refill Services E-Fill pilot programme launched by the Hospital Authority (HA), patients' prescriptions are split into smaller and manageable quantities, and pharmacists will review and reaffirm the latest condition of the patients before each refill, whether the Government knows the current number of patients covered by the pilot programme; and

(4) given that while elderly patients who suffer from a number of chronic illnesses have to attend a number of SOPCs for treatment and take a number of medications, they may not have adequate care support and the ability to manage the medications, whether it knows if HA will consider providing health management services for such patients under a case approach; if HA will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Helena Wong is as follows:

(1) In 2018-19, the number of patients aged 65 or above who attended specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) of the Hospital Authority (HA) was about 687 000 (provisional figure), about 80 per cent of them received treatment by one to two specialties. The HA does not maintain statistics on the median and maximum number of specialties attended by each elderly patient and the number of public hospitals each elderly patient has visited for specialist treatment.

(2) In each of the years between 2016 and 2018, the average prescription duration for HA patients aged 65 or above attending SOPCs with prescribed medications is around 94, 96 and 98 days respectively. The numbers of prescriptions involving five or more items were around 870 000, 900 000 and 940 000 in the past three years, accounting for about 40 per cent of the total number of prescriptions for the above-said patients in each year respectively.

(3) Since December 2017, the HA has implemented the Drug Refill Services "E-Fill" pilot programme in phases at the Prince of Wales Hospital, the Tuen Mun Hospital and the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital. Currently, the pilot programme covers about 25 000 Medical SOPC patients aged 60 or above who are typically prescribed with relatively more drug items. The HA will review and refine the scope and operation workflow of the programme in a timely manner and extend its coverage to other hospitals progressively in order to benefit more patients.

(4) At present, medication review clinics are set up in a number of public hospitals where clinical pharmacists provide individual patients in need and their care-givers with medication consultation, counselling and related drug education as needed so as to enhance patient compliance in use of drugs.

LCQ21: Works for substandard aided schools

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Earlier on, the Education Bureau indicated that it had set aside \$1 billion for implementing a programme under which funding would be provided, for carrying out minor internal conversion works, to those aided schools whose premises had facilities not up to the current standards for school premises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the objectives and the following details of the aforesaid programme: (i) the respective numbers of secondary schools, primary schools and special schools expected to benefit from the programme, and (ii) the number of conversion works projects in respect of which each school may apply for funding and the maximum amount of funding which may be allocated to each school;

(2) of the specific differences in the nature of the works projects carried out under the programme and those under the regular Aided Schools Applications for Capital Subventions: Major Repairs/ Alterations (major works); the number of schools which applied for subvention for major works, the number and nature of the alteration works projects involved in such applications, the number of alteration works projects for which subvention was granted and the total amount of subvention involved, and the percentage of that amount in the relevant estimated expenditure of that year, in each of the past five school years, together with a breakdown by type of schools (namely secondary school, primary school and special school);

(3) whether that \$1 billion funding was included in the budgeted expenditure for the 2019-2020 financial year; if so, of the head and subhead of the expenditure, and the percentage of the funding in the total amount of expenditure under the relevant subhead; if not, the financial resources from which the funding was drawn and whether approval by the Finance Committee of this Council is required;

(4) why it is stipulated that schools may submit applications for the programme only within this year and next year; whether it has assessed if the contractors concerned can cope with the conversion works to be carried out by a large number of schools in these two years; if it has assessed, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) of the expected number of schools whose premises will meet the current standards for school premises upon completion of the conversion works, as

well as the types of school facilities that can be upgraded up to the current standards (together with a breakdown by type of schools); and

(6) whether the priority accorded to, and the success rate of, the schools' applications for (i) subvention for major works and (ii) redevelopment/reprovisioning will be affected as a result of the funding allocated to the schools under the programme?

Reply:

Mr President,

The reply to the six questions asked by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen is as follows:

At present, there are about 900 public sector schools (including special schools) in the territory. Their premises were built in different periods in accordance with the building standards at the time of construction and facilities in the premises vary. While the standards have been changing over the years, existing school premises in operation are required to comply with prevailing statutory requirements. As at May 2019, about 200 of them were built according to prevailing standards.

Over the years, the Education Bureau (EDB) has put in place various measures to enhance school facilities. These measures include the School Improvement Programme implemented between 1994 and 2006, where over 700 public sector schools built according to the planning standards when the schools were constructed have their school facilities enhanced (e.g. through provision of additional or conversion of classrooms and special rooms) as far as technically feasible. The EDB have also sought to address shortfall in space and school facilities through reprovisioning and redevelopment programmes.

In addition, the EDB is providing school premises maintenance and repair support to some 840 aided schools (including special schools) through the annual Major Repairs (MR) and Emergency Repairs (ER) mechanism. For the scope of works under the mechanism, apart from providing repairs to impaired items, the EDB also seek to improve school premises facilities through, for example, retrofitting of lighting systems, paving of non-slip floor tiles, improvement of ventilation systems, replacement of surfacing materials, etc. In the recent five financial years (i.e. 2015/16 to 2019/20), an annual average of about 840 aided schools submitted MR applications. When the EDB considers the allocation of funding for taking forward MR requests from schools, priority will be accorded to those works items that are required under the law and ought to be carried out from the repairs angle (i.e. must-repair items), e.g. items related to safety, health and hygiene or those that are statutorily required. During these five financial years, applications for must-repair items have all been approved. And, with the increase in resources allocation in recent years (the relevant non-recurrent subvention provision has increased from \$1 billion in 2015/16 to \$1.5 billion in 2019/20), on average, about 50% of the MR applications for other repairs and improvement works were approved in the recent two years. The total approved project

estimates of approved MR works has increased from some \$560 million to over \$1 billion in the recent five financial years.

The EDB understand that the community is concerned about the conditions of facilities at old school premises. As provided in our response to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Education Panel on March 19, 2019 (Note 1), as well as in our reply to the question raised by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen about improvements to existing school premises in examining the Estimates 2019-20 (Note 2), based on the consensus reached with LegCo and the sector earlier on, the EDB is carrying out improvement works for those primary schools operating in "matchbox-style school premises" (Note 3), with a focus on addressing the problems arising from the unique architectural design of those premises. Under this programme, our works consultants have also explored technically feasible means for more flexible use of existing space, such as minor internal conversion and installation of movable partition walls to turn existing facilities into temporary special rooms, with a view to improving the teaching and learning environment. Such minor internal conversion works were well received by the schools concerned.

Taking into account the experience from the aforementioned "matchbox-style school premises" improvement programme and views of different stakeholders (including the Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association and the Subsidized Primary School Council), the EDB are working on a programme to conduct similar minor internal conversions at the other 600 odd aided school premises (including special schools) constructed according to past building standards to facilitate more flexible use of existing space by schools, thereby enhancing the teaching and learning environment and efficacy.

The EDB have reserved \$1 billion under the Capital Works Reserve Fund (CWRP) to take forward this time-limited minor conversion works programme (the Programme). Individual schools may submit works proposals to the EDB this year and next (i.e. 2019 and 2020) having regard to their premises conditions and school-based needs. The works consultants and contractors engaged by the EDB will continue to help take forward the Programme. They have sufficient capacity and experience in handling the works concerned. The EDB arranged briefing sessions in April 2019 for the schools concerned to explain the detailed arrangements of the Programme and to share the experience from similar improvement works in "matchbox-style school premises" for the schools' reference. Over 480 schools attended the briefing session and the feedbacks were very positive. The 2019 application period was just closed on June 6. Since the premises conditions and school-based needs of individual schools vary, the conversion works applied for and in turn the related works schedule and costs would vary. The EDB are now processing the applications received, and will follow up with the schools concerned on the proposed works and related arrangements as soon as practicable. The EDB will also follow the established mechanism to seek the LegCo Finance Committee's approval with regard to the annual cashflow requirements for the Programme under the CWRP Block Votes allocation.

Meanwhile, the EDB will continue to enhance school facilities and improve the teaching and learning environment in accordance with the schools'

needs through the various on-going measures, including the annual MR and ER mechanism, reprovisioning and redevelopment arrangements.

Note 1: Re LC Paper No. CB(4)666/18-19(01).

Note 2: Re Reply Serial No. EDB506.

Note 3: The so-called "matchbox-style school premises" are cuboidal-shaped premises constructed between mid-1960s and 1980 in public housing estates for primary school use. Following the reprovisioning of one public sector primary school previously operating in "matchbox-style school premises" to a vacant school premises (VSP) in September 2018, there are at present 27 public sector primary schools operating in "matchbox-style school premises". Among these 27 schools, 6 have been allocated with new school premises or VSP through School Allocation Exercises for reprovisioning or expansion.

LCQ14: Work of civil service lifeguards

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Regarding the work of civil service lifeguards under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that candidates for civil service lifeguards must pass a trade test of skin-diving to a depth of two metres,

(i) of the current number of public swimming pools with a depth of more than two metres, broken down by District Council (DC) district in which the pool is situated and name of the public swimming pool complex to which the pool belongs; and

(ii) of the current number of public beaches provided with beach rafts, and set out a breakdown of such number and the names of the beaches concerned by DC district;

(2) of the rank of the officers who are currently responsible for supervising lifeguards in performing skin-diving and scuba-diving at beaches for carrying out duties such as search and rescue operations, as well as inspections of seabed conditions and clearance of objects after the onslaught of typhoons;

(3) whether LCSD has ensured that the supervising officers mentioned in (2) meet the qualification requirements for a diving supervisor (including having an adequate knowledge of the required diving mode and underwater work, possessing the experience required of a diver, as well as having received

training on first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation and possessing the relevant experience); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the regular drills of lifeguards include skin-diving or scuba-diving to a depth of five metres; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) of the respective standard protective gear provided by LCSD for lifeguards for their (i) handling oil pollution and (ii) carrying out post-typhoon clearance work?

Reply:

President,

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently manages 44 public swimming pools and 41 gazetted beaches. Lifeguard services are provided at all public swimming pools and 38 gazetted beaches. The reply to the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is as follows:

(1) Currently, the vast majority of LCSD's public swimming pools are swimming pools of two metres or less in depth, except diving pools and individual pool facilities. A breakdown of the pool facilities with a depth of more than 2 metres by District Council (DC) district is tabulated at Annex 1. Raft facilities are provided at 18 gazetted beaches managed by LCSD. A breakdown of these beaches by DC district is tabulated at Annex 2.

(2) and (3) The major responsibilities of civil service lifeguards of LCSD include lifesaving and first aid, assisting in law enforcement and maintaining order as well as assisting in cleansing work. The major responsibilities of senior civil service lifeguards include deputising for Amenities Assistants, supervising lifeguards in performing daily tasks, leading and performing lifesaving and first aid duties, providing training to lifeguards, assisting in implementing departmental drill programmes, etc. The entry requirements for senior lifeguards, include the compulsory attainment of a valid Beach Lifeguard Management Award and Pool Lifeguard Management Award or above from the Hong Kong Life Saving Society within the last three years, and the possession of a valid first aid certificate issued by the St. John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross or Auxiliary Medical Service. They are also required to possess five years of lifesaving experience in public swimming pool, beach or water sports centre. Hence, they should have adequate knowledge and experience to lead rescue operations.

Underwater rescue by skin-diving is one of the basic skills and responsibilities of lifeguards' daily lifesaving work. Lifeguards deploy skills taught and assessed in the training associated with lifeguard qualifications, including underwater rescue by skin diving, etc., in drowning incidents. Upon receiving a report of suspected missing swimmer in beach water, lifeguards will carry out a search operation and the officer in-charge of the venue will report to the Police and ask the Fire Services Department (FSD) to deploy firemen to the scene to provide support. In addition to skin

diving used in underwater rescue operations, trained and qualified lifeguards may carry out emergency underwater search for missing victim(s) using scuba diving equipment under the supervision of senior lifeguard and continue assisting in the rescue operation upon arrival of diving personnel of FSD where necessary.

Scuba diving is not a daily duty of lifeguards of LCSD. Contractors are normally hired by LCSD for tasks requiring diving for prolonged periods (e.g. underwater inspection or maintenance of facilities, etc.). For instance, two professional contractors have been engaged for the inspection and maintenance of shark prevention nets respectively, which involve the deployment of professional divers to carry out the work. Diving tasks involved in the inspection of seabed conditions and the clearance work in the aftermath of the passage of Typhoon Mangkhut in September 2018 were undertaken by outsourced contractors.

(4) LCSD has established guidelines requiring all lifeguards to participate in regular rescue drills and drills for mobilisation plans at their workplace to ensure that they are familiar with the corresponding rescue operation under different circumstances. In addition to drills on swimming and physical fitness, emergency operation plan, resuscitation skills, use of first aid equipment, etc., the regular drill programme for lifeguards also includes rescue by skin-diving into the deep end of a pool or deep-water zone of a beach.

(5) One of the major responsibilities of lifeguards is to assist in cleansing work. In performing their daily cleansing work, lifeguards may be required to assist in cleaning up oil spill occasionally found at beaches or clearance work of beaches in the aftermath of typhoons. When LCSD is notified by the Marine Department of any oil spill incident near beach area or when department staff find signs of oil contamination of beaches, officers-in-charge of the beaches will lead lifeguards and venue staff to assist in handling oil spill, including monitoring whether beaches will be contaminated with oil spills, assisting and advising swimmers to go back to the shore, preventing dispersion of oil to beaches as far as possible with the use of materials such as oil absorbent strips, in accordance with LCSD's contingency plan for oil pollutions. Where oil spill is found in beach area, the officer-in-charge of the beach will contact and seek professional assistance from relevant departments in cleaning up the contaminated sand on the beach. Besides, LCSD will provide appropriate personal protective equipment, such as plastic gloves and boots, for lifeguards to carry out these tasks. All oil-contaminated waste, such as used oil absorbent strips and contaminated sand, etc., will be disposed of by contractors of the department concerned. Service contractors will be hired by LCSD to carry out inspection of the seabed conditions and the clearance work following serious damage caused to beaches by typhoons.