

LCQ3: Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Environmentally Friendly Linkage System for Kowloon East (EFLS) proposed by the Government is an elevated monorail which will start and end respectively at the Kowloon Bay Station and the Kwun Tong Station of the MTR Kwun Tong Line, run through the Kai Tak Development Area and connect the Kai Tak Station of the Shatin to Central Link. The Government is currently conducting the second-stage detailed feasibility study for EFLS. As the passenger throughput of the Kwun Tong Line during peak hours has reached the maximum capacity at present, some members of the public are worried that the Kwun Tong Line can hardly cope with the additional patronage to be brought about by EFLS upon its commissioning. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the estimated passenger throughput and passenger loading of the Kwun Tong Line during the peak hours between 2019 and 2021; whether it has requested the MTR Corporation Limited to conduct a study on increasing the carrying capacity of the Kwun Tong Line; if so, of the details of the study;
- (2) whether the study for the next stage to be conducted for EFLS will comprise simulation tests for estimating the capabilities of Kowloon Bay Station, Kai Tak Station and Kwun Tong Station in coping with additional passenger flows; and
- (3) of the respective expected dates for the completion of the study for the next stage, confirmation of the final proposal, works commencement and commissioning for EFLS; when it will submit the relevant funding applications to the Finance Committee of this Council?

Reply:

President,

The Kai Tak Development (KTD) is a mega-scale project in the urban area. The Government has been taking forward the implementation of various infrastructure projects in phases to cope with the new population intake and various development needs in the district. We have also incorporated an indicative alignment of the Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) within the KTD in the approved Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan.

In 2009, the Civil Engineering and Development Department conducted a preliminary feasibility study on the EFLS. Public consultation on the

proposed initial scheme of elevated monorail system was conducted between 2012 and 2014. While general support to implementation of the EFLS was received, there were concerns about its impacts on the existing facilities and environment during the construction and operation periods, as well as the relevant financial burden.

To address public concerns, we commenced in 2015 a two-staged Detailed Feasibility Study (DFS) for the proposed EFLS with a view to formulating a scheme that could meet the relevant statutory and technical requirements, as well as coming up with a cost-effective scheme generally acceptable to the stakeholders.

In mid-2017, we conducted the interim public consultation on the findings of the first stage of the DFS to solicit public views on the proposal of adopting elevated modes for developing the EFLS. We had also consulted the relevant District Councils and obtained their general support. Some members expressed concern over the development and operation costs involved in the said system. Some members also suggested the Government to evaluate whether other modes of environmentally friendly transport, such as electric buses, travellers, etc., could be adopted.

In the course of conducting the DFS, we encountered more-than-expected complicated challenges, thus requiring more time to review and explore feasible solutions. For example, how the proposed system could be efficiently constructed and operated under the constraints of limited road space and urban environment overcrowded with people and vehicles in the areas; and how the tracks and associated structures of the EFLS could be planned and constructed. Besides, we also need to consider how a balance could be struck, within the limits of practicality, on the multi-faceted opinions and aspirations of the public and stakeholders over the recommended alignment and site selection for various stations of the proposed EFLS. Currently, we are conducting the second stage of the DFS for the proposed system, including its coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. We will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently, so as to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed EFLS. Upon completion of the Study, the Government will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project.

Regarding the passenger carrying capacity and passenger carrying rate of the MTR Kwun Tong Line (KTL), the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have been monitoring closely the situation. In this regard, the MTRCL is carrying out signal upgrading works of the MTR KTL, and will carry out improvement works to specific stations, in order to allow smooth passenger flow within stations. On the question of the possible implication of the proposed EFLS in the Kowloon East (KE) on the concerned MTR stations, we will conduct assessment as situation demands in the next phase of the study.

Our response to the questions raised by the Hon Wilson Or, having taken into account the inputs of relevant policy bureau and departments, are as follows:

(1) According to the MTRCL, the average loading during morning peak hours for critical link (Shek Kip Mei to Prince Edward) of the KTL in 2018 was 51 200 people. Making reference to the design carrying capacity of train compartment, i.e. an average accommodation of up to six persons (standing) per square metre (ppsm), the loading of the KTL was 72 per cent. If the actual loading of each train is calculated on the basis of four ppsm, the KTL was considered fully loaded during morning peak hours.

The MTRCL is currently upgrading the signalling system of the KTL with a view to enhancing the overall passenger capacity. The upgrading works for the KTL is expected to be completed by 2020. Furthermore, to smoothen passenger flow at stations of the KTL which are particularly busy, the MTRCL will improve station facilities, enhance management on platforms, and improve train door devices.

The patronage and loading of the KTL during 2019-2021, as asked, would be affected by various factors, including increased frequency of trains after signalling system upgrade, and change in patronage by community developments along the KTL, which would affect its passenger loading. The Government and the MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the situation.

(2) As mentioned above, we are conducting the second stage of the DFS for the proposed EFLS in KE, including its network coverage, alignment and station locations, etc. We will also make reference to the latest development and experiences in the field of environmentally friendly transportation technology at home and abroad, with the associated technical and financial assessments being carried out concurrently, so as to ascertain the feasibility of the EFLS.

On the question of the possible implication of the proposed EFLS on the concerned MTR stations, we will conduct assessment as situation demands in the next phase of the Study.

(3) The DFS of the proposed EFLS is under way. Upon completion of the Study, we will formulate the way forward for the proposed EFLS project. The precise implementation programme is not available at this stage.

LCQ12: Support to transitional housing projects

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Government has earlier set up a task force to provide one-stop support for various community-led transitional housing projects. In addition, the Financial Secretary has set aside \$2 billion in the Budget for the next financial year to support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in taking forward transitional housing projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will set a specific target on the number of transitional housing projects commencing within the coming three years;
- (2) whether it will consider providing NGOs with loan guarantees to facilitate their raising funds for transitional housing projects;
- (3) whether it knows the current unit cost of and the time needed for converting the existing housing units into transitional housing; of the measures in place to assist NGOs in persuading more property owners to let their idle units be used as transitional housing and expediting the relevant conversion works;
- (4) whether it knows the current unit cost of modular transitional housing built by modular integrated construction methods; how the Government currently assists NGOs financially and technically in saving construction costs and expediting the works, and whether it will consider helping those NGOs jointly procure prefabricated parts in order to reduce costs;
- (5) how the Government financially supports the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Urban Renewal Authority to take forward transitional housing projects; whether the aforesaid task force will provide any assistance to such projects; and
- (6) whether it will formulate a long-term policy that regards transitional housing as a supplementary source of housing for the short and medium terms, and make relevant legislative amendments to provide for the technical standards for the construction, specifications and safety standards in respect of transitional housing?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been striving to address the housing problem faced by the low-income families with poor living conditions by increasing the supply of housing. It takes time to identify land for housing construction. Therefore, on top of the long-term housing policy and measures, the Government will support and facilitate the implementation of various short-term initiatives put forward and carried out by the community to provide transitional housing for alleviating the hardship faced by families awaiting Public Rental Housing and other inadequately housed households. To this end, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has set up a task force to provide one-stop coordinated support to facilitate the implementation of transitional housing projects by the community, including offering advice on relevant administrative or statutory procedures, and assisting them in applying for

appropriate funding, etc. Regarding the enquiries as raised by Hon Alice Mak, the consolidated replies are as below:

In view of the short-term nature, different details and objective situation of each transitional housing project, setting a fixed target for transitional housing (such as the number of units or the estimated completion year, etc) is not realistic and does not contribute to the work of non-government organisations (NGOs). Nevertheless, we will continue to adopt an open attitude to facilitate the provision of more transitional housing, and offer necessary support on each of the transitional housing projects, including the technical requirements and procurement of modular housing units etc. With a view to lowering the capital cost, the projects should be in line with the principles of efficiency, and effectiveness in facilitating the provision of more transitional housing. Transitional housing may come in different arrangements and with different ideas. We hope to bring together community efforts, especially allowing different NGOs to extend their creativity to provide various kinds of transitional housing projects. The task force has also conducted three meetings among relevant bureaux and departments to explore ways to overcome obstacles related to the prevailing policies, technical guideline, requirements and safety guideline so as to expedite the provision of transitional housing.

Regarding the funding issue, it is noted that there are a variety of arrangements for different transitional housing projects in the community. For instance, the Community Housing Movement operated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) has launched a number of projects with operating expenses funded by both the Community Chest of Hong Kong and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund. For the Modular Social Housing Scheme on a private site at Nam Cheong Street in Sham Shui Po, the HKCSS has secured funding support from the Community Care Fund.

The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the Government's proposal in January 2019 to set up a \$1 billion fund to support NGOs in facilitating the gainful use of vacant government sites. The fund can also provide funding support to applicable transitional housing projects and the Development Bureau has commenced to receive funding applications. To further increase the funding support, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2019-20 Budget that \$2 billion would be set aside to support NGOs in constructing transitional housing. The THB will consider the experience in transitional housing and views from the community to map out the detailed arrangements. If all the preparatory work proceeds smoothly, the Government hopes that funding proposals can be submitted to the Legislative Council in 2019. Before the implementation of the scheme, the NGOs may apply the aforementioned funding for gainful use of the vacant government sites so as to expedite the provision of transitional housing. Until now, there is no request from community organisations regarding the loan guarantee arrangement by the Government.

Based on the information about the Community Housing Movement as provided by HKCSS, the estimated capital cost and time required to renovate/convert an existing residential unit into a transitional housing

unit at about \$0.12 million and 6 months respectively including the construction and invitation of service operators. For old domestic buildings with genuine planning and design constraints, in particular those old tenement houses with deep footprint and narrow frontage, the Buildings Department (BD) will consider granting modification/exemption regarding the application of the regulation under the Buildings Ordinance to eligible transitional housing projects in the said buildings. This will facilitate their implementation subject to the project proponent's agreement to operate effectively and implement the compensatory measures continuously. For example, the Building (Planning) Regulations requires the provision of windows in living areas to provide natural ventilation and lighting. If there are difficulties for eligible transitional housing projects to fully comply the requirements under the Regulations because of the building design, the BD will consider granting exemptions. At the same time, the BD will require the project proponents to provide artificial lighting and mechanical ventilation systems, as well as communal living areas that meet the relevant natural ventilation and lighting requirements and to ensure that the compensatory measures can be sustained.

Regarding the Modular Social Housing at Nam Cheong Street, the construction of modular housing through assembly of synthetic building technology must meet the safety requirements for housing under the existing law and regulations. The project will last for about two years. The pilot scheme's total funding provision is \$35.74 million and is expected to benefit about 88 households. With a view to facilitating a wider use of Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) technology for constructing transitional housing by community organisations, the BD has set up a pre-acceptance mechanism for granting in-principle acceptance to MiC systems / components or prototype.

LCQ12: Support to transitional housing projects

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Government has earlier set up a task force to provide one-stop support for various community-led transitional housing projects. In addition, the Financial Secretary has set aside \$2 billion in the Budget for the next financial year to support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in taking forward transitional housing projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will set a specific target on the number of transitional housing projects commencing within the coming three years;
- (2) whether it will consider providing NGOs with loan guarantees to facilitate their raising funds for transitional housing projects;
- (3) whether it knows the current unit cost of and the time needed for converting the existing housing units into transitional housing; of the measures in place to assist NGOs in persuading more property owners to let their idle units be used as transitional housing and expediting the relevant conversion works;
- (4) whether it knows the current unit cost of modular transitional housing built by modular integrated construction methods; how the Government currently assists NGOs financially and technically in saving construction costs and expediting the works, and whether it will consider helping those NGOs jointly procure prefabricated parts in order to reduce costs;
- (5) how the Government financially supports the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Urban Renewal Authority to take forward transitional housing projects; whether the aforesaid task force will provide any assistance to such projects; and
- (6) whether it will formulate a long-term policy that regards transitional housing as a supplementary source of housing for the short and medium terms, and make relevant legislative amendments to provide for the technical standards for the construction, specifications and safety standards in respect of transitional housing?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been striving to address the housing problem faced by the low-income families with poor living conditions by increasing the supply of housing. It takes time to identify land for housing construction. Therefore, on top of the long-term housing policy and measures, the Government will support and facilitate the implementation of various short-term initiatives put forward and carried out by the community to provide transitional housing for alleviating the hardship faced by families awaiting Public Rental Housing and other inadequately housed households. To this end, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has set up a task force to provide one-stop coordinated support to facilitate the implementation of transitional housing projects by the community, including offering advice on relevant administrative or statutory procedures, and assisting them in applying for appropriate funding, etc. Regarding the enquiries as raised by Hon Alice Mak, the consolidated replies are as below:

In view of the short-term nature, different details and objective situation of each transitional housing project, setting a fixed target for transitional housing (such as the number of units or the estimated completion year, etc) is not realistic and does not contribute to the work of non-

government organisations (NGOs). Nevertheless, we will continue to adopt an open attitude to facilitate the provision of more transitional housing, and offer necessary support on each of the transitional housing projects, including the technical requirements and procurement of modular housing units etc. With a view to lowering the capital cost, the projects should be in line with the principles of efficiency, and effectiveness in facilitating the provision of more transitional housing. Transitional housing may come in different arrangements and with different ideas. We hope to bring together community efforts, especially allowing different NGOs to extend their creativity to provide various kinds of transitional housing projects. The task force has also conducted three meetings among relevant bureaux and departments to explore ways to overcome obstacles related to the prevailing policies, technical guideline, requirements and safety guideline so as to expedite the provision of transitional housing.

Regarding the funding issue, it is noted that there are a variety of arrangements for different transitional housing projects in the community. For instance, the Community Housing Movement operated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) has launched a number of projects with operating expenses funded by both the Community Chest of Hong Kong and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund. For the Modular Social Housing Scheme on a private site at Nam Cheong Street in Sham Shui Po, the HKCSS has secured funding support from the Community Care Fund.

The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the Government's proposal in January 2019 to set up a \$1 billion fund to support NGOs in facilitating the gainful use of vacant government sites. The fund can also provide funding support to applicable transitional housing projects and the Development Bureau has commenced to receive funding applications. To further increase the funding support, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2019-20 Budget that \$2 billion would be set aside to support NGOs in constructing transitional housing. The THB will consider the experience in transitional housing and views from the community to map out the detailed arrangements. If all the preparatory work proceeds smoothly, the Government hopes that funding proposals can be submitted to the Legislative Council in 2019. Before the implementation of the scheme, the NGOs may apply the aforementioned funding for gainful use of the vacant government sites so as to expedite the provision of transitional housing. Until now, there is no request from community organisations regarding the loan guarantee arrangement by the Government.

Based on the information about the Community Housing Movement as provided by HKCSS, the estimated capital cost and time required to renovate/convert an existing residential unit into a transitional housing unit at about \$0.12 million and 6 months respectively including the construction and invitation of service operators. For old domestic buildings with genuine planning and design constraints, in particular those old tenement houses with deep footprint and narrow frontage, the Buildings Department (BD) will consider granting modification/exemption regarding the application of the regulation under the Buildings Ordinance to eligible transitional housing projects in the said buildings. This will facilitate

their implementation subject to the project proponent's agreement to operate effectively and implement the compensatory measures continuously. For example, the Building (Planning) Regulations requires the provision of windows in living areas to provide natural ventilation and lighting. If there are difficulties for eligible transitional housing projects to fully comply the requirements under the Regulations because of the building design, the BD will consider granting exemptions. At the same time, the BD will require the project proponents to provide artificial lighting and mechanical ventilation systems, as well as communal living areas that meet the relevant natural ventilation and lighting requirements and to ensure that the compensatory measures can be sustained.

Regarding the Modular Social Housing at Nam Cheong Street, the construction of modular housing through assembly of synthetic building technology must meet the safety requirements for housing under the existing law and regulations. The project will last for about two years. The pilot scheme's total funding provision is \$35.74 million and is expected to benefit about 88 households. With a view to facilitating a wider use of Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) technology for constructing transitional housing by community organisations, the BD has set up a pre-acceptance mechanism for granting in-principle acceptance to MiC systems / components or prototype.

LCQ11: Seasonal influenza vaccination

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Pierre Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Government provides eligible groups with free and subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination through the Government Vaccination Programme and the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) respectively. In addition, the Department of Health (DH) introduced in October last year the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme (Pilot Programme) as well as the Enhanced Vaccination Subsidy Scheme Outreach Vaccination (Enhanced VSS) under VSS, to enhance the seasonal influenza vaccination uptake rate among school children. Regarding the provision of seasonal influenza vaccination to members of the public, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective up-to-date numbers of primary schools which have (i) participated in and (ii) conducted vaccination activities under the Pilot Programme in the current school year; the average number of days between the submission of applications for joining the Programme and the conduct of vaccination activities at schools by healthcare workers;

(2) of the respective up-to-date numbers of (a) primary schools and (b) kindergartens/child care centres which have (i) participated in and (ii) conducted vaccination activities under Enhanced VSS in the current school year; the average number of days between healthcare workers' receiving invitations and their conducting vaccination activities at schools;

(3) of (i) the amount of expenditure incurred by the Government for procuring seasonal influenza vaccines (SIV) and (ii) the total amount of subsidy claimed by private doctors participating in VSS, in the past five years;

(4) of the respective numbers of persons from the various groups set out in the table below who received injectable SIV and their uptake rates, in each of the past five years (set out separately in tables of the same format as the table below);

Year:

Group	Number of people receiving vaccinations	Uptake rate
Children between 6 months and 5 years old		
Children aged between 6 and 11		
Persons aged between 12 and 49		
Persons aged between 50 and 64		
Persons aged 65 or above		
Pregnant women		
Persons with chronic health problems		
Overall population		

(5) of (i) the quantity of nasal SIV procured by DH and the amount of expenditure so incurred and (ii) the respective numbers of persons from the various groups set out in the aforesaid table who received such SIV, since April last year; whether it has compared the efficacy of injectable SIV with nasal SIV, and whether it will switch to using nasal SIV in providing influenza vaccination services for children;

(6) of (i) the quantities, general expiry dates and the stock to date of the SIV procured and (ii) the quantities of expired or damaged SIV discarded, by DH and the Hospital Authority respectively in each of the past five years; and

(7) whether it has stipulated in the procurement contracts for SIV that the Government has the rights to (i) return to the suppliers a certain quantity/percentage of unused vaccines and (ii) adjust the quantity of the vaccines procured on the basis of actual needs; if so, of the quantities

concerned?

Reply:

President,

Vaccination is one of the effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. It also reduces the risks of flu-associated in-patient admission and mortality. Therefore, the Government has all along been encouraging the public to receive vaccination as early as possible. Under the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) and the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS), the Government provides free and subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) respectively for eligible high-risk groups. To increase the SIV coverage rate among school children, the Department of Health (DH) launched the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme (Pilot Programme) and the Enhanced Vaccination Subsidy Scheme Outreach Vaccination (Enhanced VSS) under the VSS in 2018/19 to actively assist schools and private medical practitioners in organising outreach influenza vaccination activities at schools. In consultation with the DH, the reply to the seven parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Under the Pilot Programme, the DH arranges a Government Outreach Team or a Public-Private Partnership Team to provide free SIV for the school children of each participating school. As at March 3, 2019, 184 participating primary schools received the vaccination service under the Pilot Programme.

Under the Enhanced VSS, primary schools not participating in the Pilot Programme, primary sections of special schools, kindergartens and child care centres may invite participating doctors to provide free SIV for their school children at schools. As at March 3, 2019, 221 primary schools and 184 kindergartens/child care centres received the vaccination service under the Enhanced VSS and the VSS.

To encourage interested primary schools/kindergartens and child care centres to participate in the Pilot Programme and the Enhanced VSS, the DH held a briefing in March 2018 and subsequently assigned participating primary schools to doctors in May 2018. In addition, the DH held briefings for primary schools/kindergartens and child care centres, as well as participating VSS doctors, in June and July 2018 respectively to explain the details of the Enhanced VSS. Various programmes had commenced in the new school year since October 2018.

(3) The expenditure incurred by the DH for procuring the SIV under the GVP and the Pilot Programme, and for subsidising the vaccination provided by private doctors under the VSS in the past five years are detailed in Annex 1.

(4) The numbers of persons from the eligible groups receiving SIV under the GVP, the VSS and the Pilot Programme and their coverage rates in the past five years are detailed in Annex 2. Since some members from the eligible groups might have received SIV by arrangement other than Government's vaccination programmes, the figures related to these persons are not

reflected in Annex 2.

(5) Currently, the DH uses inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) under various vaccination programmes which it administers. The department has kept in view the scientific evidence and development of various types of SIV, and the recommendations and experience of overseas health authorities. While overseas studies and clinical experience have generally indicated that nasal live attenuated influenza vaccine (nasal LAIV) is safe and effective, there is currently no evidence to support that priority should be given to nasal LAIV. In fact, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection of the DH reviewed the scientific evidence on nasal LAIV in 2018, and noted that data from the United States had revealed that the effectiveness of nasal LAIV against influenza A H1N1 in individual seasons was far lower than that of IIV among persons aged below 18. Moreover, nasal LAIV has not been used widely in Hong Kong. Compared with IIV, nasal LAIV is not recommended for a relatively larger group of persons*. Therefore, the recommendations made by the SCVPD in April 2018 stressed that healthcare professionals providing SIV should pay attention to those factors if they choose to use nasal LAIV. In this regard, the DH has not procured or used any nasal LAIV under the GVP and the Pilot Programme. Private doctors participating in the VSS may decide whether they would use nasal LAIV, the amount of subsidy of which is the same as IIV.

The DH noted that more scientific data regarding the use of nasal LAIV in preventing Influenza A H1N1 will be available later this year. The SCVPD will then review the relevant scientific evidence and make recommendations in relation to SIV for the 2019/20 influenza seasons. The Government will decide with reference to the recommendations whether it is suitable to use nasal LAIV under its vaccination programmes in the future.

[* Note: Including persons with history of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or history of severe allergic reaction after receiving any influenza vaccination; children and adolescents receiving concomitant aspirin or salicylate-containing therapy; children aged between two and four years receiving a diagnosis of asthma, or having wheezing or asthma as pointed out by healthcare personnel during the preceding 12 months, or having a medical record indicating a wheezing episode during the preceding 12 months; persons who are immunocompromised due to any cause; persons who have close contacts with severely immunosuppressed persons who require a protected environment; pregnant women; and persons receiving influenza antiviral medication within previous 48 hours.]

(6) and (7) Before ordering the vaccines for annual vaccination programmes, the Government will make estimates based on the number of persons eligible for the programmes during the year and the coverage rates in the past. However, due to the time required for production and delivery, and in view of sudden surge in the demand for SIV by the public during the past influenza peaks, the Government had to order more vaccines for better preparation. Nevertheless, when tendering for the procurement of vaccines in accordance with the established requirements and procedures, the Government normally includes in the tender conditions a flexible clause to ensure that the

quantities to be ordered can be appropriately adjusted after the signing of the contract. Vaccine suppliers have to supply sufficient quantities of influenza vaccines for the programmes according to the contract terms. The DH has been monitoring the vaccination statistics under Government's programmes and the stocks of vaccines procured for the programmes so as to assess the situation and maintain close liaison with vaccine suppliers.

The DH is responsible for procuring the vaccines under the GVP and the Pilot Programme, including those used by the Hospital Authority. In general, the vaccines can last for one year. The quantities of vaccines that the DH procured in the past five years and the information on the stocks of expired, unused, and/or damaged doses are set out in Annex 3.

CSSA caseload for February 2019

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in February showed a drop of 531 cases, representing a decrease of 0.2 per cent compared with that of January, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (March 20).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of February stood at 225 339 (see attached table), with a total of 320 294 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases and single parent cases registered month-to-month decreases of 1.2 per cent and 0.4 per cent to 3 491 cases and 24 435 cases respectively. Old age cases fell by 0.3 per cent to 141 834 cases while ill health cases dropped by 0.2 per cent to 23 038 cases.

Unemployment cases edged up by 0.4 per cent to 11 742 cases. Permanent disability cases remained steady at 16 663 cases.