

# LCQ17: Provision of ancillary facilities for staff of franchised bus companies

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 12):

Question:

Regarding the regulator kiosks, rest rooms and toilets provided for use by bus captains and regulators of franchised bus companies (bus companies), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of bus termini not provided with toilets (such as public toilets provided by the Government or toilets provided by bus companies) therein and within 50 metres therefrom, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) of the number of public transport interchanges (PTIs) currently not provided with toilets and their locations (set out the relevant information by DC district); as the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines stipulates that essential facilities such as toilets and regulator kiosks should be provided at PTIs, whether the Government will, in its future planning for PTIs, provide such facilities across the board;

(3) given that currently bus companies have to obtain the consent of government departments (such as the Transport Department, the Lands Department and the Highways Department) before installing latrines fitted with a chemical closet fitment for bus captains' use, of (i) the respective numbers of the relevant applications received, approved and rejected by the Government and (ii) the average and longest processing time taken in respect of the approved cases, in each of the past five financial years, as well as the current number of such applications being processed (with a breakdown by name of bus company);

(4) whether it will require that bus termini to be constructed in the future be provided with regulator kiosks, rest rooms and toilets; and

(5) whether the bus companies have to pay the Government nominal rents or market rents for the sites occupied by the aforesaid facilities of the bus termini; if the latter is the case, of the amount of rents paid by each bus company in each of the past five financial years; whether the expenditures concerned are included in the operating costs of the bus companies?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the Hon Wu Chi-wai's question is as follows:

The Transport Department (TD) and franchised bus companies have been striving to provide an appropriate working environment for the staff of the franchised bus companies, including providing ancillary facilities such as rest rooms and toilets at bus termini and public transport interchanges (PTIs). Depending on the size and locations of the proposed facilities, franchised bus companies will submit applications for the provision of regulator kiosks, staff rest rooms and chemical toilets to the TD, other government departments or private organisations. Since 2017, the TD has set up a task force, comprising representatives from relevant government departments (e.g. Government Property Agency, Lands Department and Housing Department) and franchised bus companies, to monitor the progress of these applications. The TD will continue to follow up and co-ordinate with relevant government departments for processing these applications to facilitate the early provision of these facilities for the convenience of the staff of the franchised bus companies.

As for the newly planned bus termini and PTIs, regulator kiosks, staff rest rooms and toilets are already classified as basic facilities. The Government will arrange for the provision of these basic facilities in the planning of new bus termini and PTIs with a view to creating a better working environment for the staff of the franchised bus companies.

At present, there are 298 bus termini and PTIs across the territory, of which 287 (about 96 per cent) of them are provided with toilets within a walking distance of three minutes (or within the site of the bus termini or PTIs), while the rest are served by toilets located within a walking distance of around four to seven minutes (Note 1). The figures concerned with a breakdown by District Council district are set out at Annex 1.

Notwithstanding the provision of toilets within or near the bus termini and PTIs, the franchised bus companies will still seek to provide chemical toilets where necessary for further convenience of their staff. The number of applications for the provision of chemical toilets processed by the TD in the past five years is set out at Annex 2.

Upon receipt of an application from a franchised bus company, the TD will consult relevant government departments and the local community. The TD has to pursue co-ordination work if there are objections from the local community. Where necessary, the TD will also work with the franchised bus companies to draw up revised proposal for further consultation. Records show that in general the average time taken for the TD to process these applications was about six to seven months. The approval process may take longer for more complicated cases. The longest time required to process a case in the past was about 23 months, and that case was approved in July 2016.

In general, any facilities provided by the franchised bus companies on government land are charged with market rents. The amount of rentals paid by each franchised bus company in the past five years to the Government for the facilities installed at bus termini and PTIs is at Annex 3. Such rentals

constitute part of the operating costs. Nonetheless, franchised bus companies have offered concessionary half fares to elderly passengers through the Elderly Concessionary Fare Scheme (ECFS) since 1993. Under the ECFS, franchised bus companies are exempted from the annual vehicle licence fees and receive reimbursement of rentals paid in respect of government land so as to facilitate their introduction or continuous provision of fare concessions to the elderly (Note 2). In other words, franchised bus companies are reimbursed for the rentals that they paid to the Government (Note 3).

Note 1: The only exception is the bus terminus located at the Aircraft Maintenance Area of the Airport, which is currently used by one bus route (i.e. Citybus route no. S52 plying between Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung and the Aircraft Maintenance Area of the Airport). No toilet facility is provided in the vicinity of the bus terminus due to security and safety concerns. However, a round trip of the bus route only takes about 22 minutes, and the bus captains can use the toilet facilities at the other terminating point of the route (i.e. Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung) where necessary. The TD will continue to keep in view the situation of this bus terminus.

Note 2: Under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme) introduced in 2012, franchised bus companies will only receive reimbursement for the difference between the \$2 fare and the concessionary half fare. They still have to absorb any fare revenue forgone arising from the provision of fare concessions for the elderly under the \$2 Scheme (i.e. the difference between full fare and the concessionary half fare)

Note 3: The amount of reimbursement will not exceed the amount shouldered by the franchised bus company in the provision of fare concessions for the elderly.

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## [LCQ13: Ensuring polling staff to properly discharge duties](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (December 12):

Question:

The Legislative Council Kowloon West Geographical Constituency By-election was held on the 25th of last month. It has been reported that on the morning of that day when a candidate and some members of his electioneering team were conducting canvassing activities in a Chinese restaurant in Shek Kip Mei, a Presiding Officer told the candidate that the premises were within a No Canvassing Zone (NCZ) and demanded that he immediately stop his

canvassing activities and leave. However, the Presiding Officer did not make the same demand to another candidate who was present at the premises at the time. The Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission subsequently met the media and advised that there was no problem for candidates to canvass for votes on non-street level storeys within NCZs. On the other hand, section 40(17) of the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Legislative Council) Regulation (Cap. 541D) provides that a person may, on polling day, canvass for votes, without obstructing any person, on the storeys above or below street level in a building within NCZ provided that the person's entry to the building for canvassing votes is allowed and the building has no polling station inside it. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has gained an understanding of the reasons for the aforesaid Presiding Officer to adopt different approaches for handling the conduct of canvassing activities by the two candidates; whether personal political orientations were involved; if so, of the authorities' further measures to ensure that polling staff will act in an impartial manner; and

(2) whether it has reviewed if the training on electoral legislation and relevant guidelines currently provided to polling staff is sufficient; if it has, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President:

My reply to Hon Andrew Wan's question is as follows:

(1) In accordance with the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Legislative Council) Regulation (Cap. 541D), door-to-door canvassing and, for the purpose of such canvassing, the display or wearing of propaganda materials, will be allowed on the storeys above or below street level in a building within a No Canvassing Zone (NCZ) other than a building in which there is a polling station, provided that permission has been obtained for entry to the building for canvassing votes, and that obstruction is not posed to others and no sound amplifying device is used.

Apart from this, no other canvassing activities will be allowed within a NCZ except for static display of election advertisements mounted at designated spots approved by the Returning Officer. On the polling day, Presiding Officers (PROs) will make their best endeavour to ensure that no person carries out the aforesaid canvassing activities in the NCZ in respect of their polling stations. Any person found to have conducted canvassing activities prohibited in the NCZ will be asked to leave the area.

The Electoral Affairs Commission has already received the complaint mentioned in the question, and will follow up on the case in accordance with the established practice.

According to the existing mechanism, the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) will, as far as possible, avoid deploying polling staff to work

in the polling station where they would cast their votes. The REO will also require each staff to disclose if he/she had any close relationship with any candidates, and if so, he/she would not be assigned to work at any of the polling stations concerned, such that the election can be conducted in a neutral and fair manner.

(2) There were around 2,700 electoral staff responsible for polling and counting duties on the polling day in the by-election. As in previous elections, the REO arranged briefing sessions for all polling staff (including the PROs, Deputy Presiding Officers and all polling and counting staff) of the by-election, so as to ensure that the polling stations would be operated in a smooth and effective manner. Besides, polling management training which covered important provisions of the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Legislative Council) Regulation, crisis management, quality polling service, complaint handling and training on emotional quotient, as well as experience sharing workshops was organised by the REO for staff at the supervisory level. Staff deployed to compile statistical returns on the polling day was provided with specialised training on statistical work.

The PROs must follow a set of working guidelines, so as to ensure that the entire election is conducted in an open, honest and fair manner.

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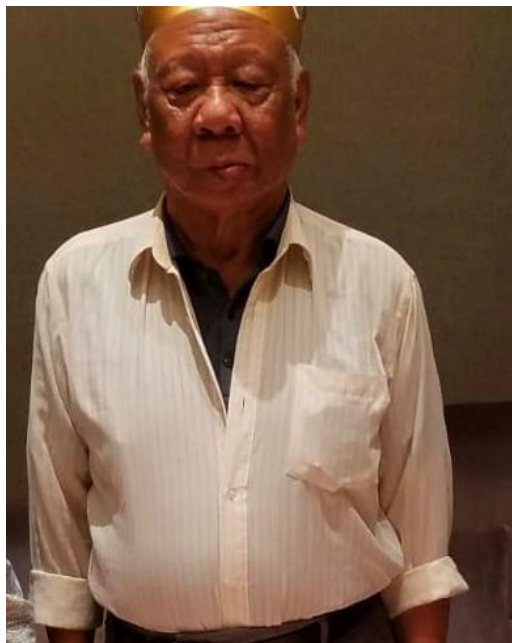
## [Appeal for information on missing man in Tsing Yi \(with photo\)](#)

Police today (December 12) appealed to the public for information on a man who went missing in Tsing Yi.

Shek Ming-kwun, aged 81, went missing after he left his residence in Cheung Wang Estate yesterday morning (December 11). His family made a report to Police on the same day.

He is about 1.68 metres tall, 77 kilograms in weight and of fat build. He has a round face with yellow complexion and short white hair. He was last seen wearing a black long-sleeved shirt, grey trousers and carrying a black shoulder bag.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing man or may have seen him is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of New Territories South on 3661 1173, 9480 3644 or email to [rmpu-nts-2@police.gov.hk](mailto:rmpu-nts-2@police.gov.hk), or contact any police station.



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## [LCQ1: RTHK as a public service broadcaster](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (December 12):

Question:

The Report on Review of Public Service Broadcasting in Hong Kong published in 2007 has pointed out that the status and structure of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) as a government department does not fit the bill of a public service broadcaster in full. It has been reported that in August this year, the Director of Broadcasting prohibited the News and Current Affairs of RTHK from televising live a speech delivered by the Convenor of the Hong Kong National Party. Some members of the public have queried that the incident has reflected that the Director of Broadcasting, in his capacity as a department head, can hardly safeguard the editorial independence of RTHK as a public service broadcaster, simply by virtue of the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong (the Charter) signed by RTHK with the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority. On the other hand, the Government submitted a funding proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee of this Council at the end of 2013 for the construction of a New Broadcasting House to replace the existing three buildings which were aging, had obsolete facilities and had run out of space, and for RTHK to implement new services and projects to fulfill its mission as a public service broadcaster, but the funding proposal was subsequently negated. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is stated in the Charter that RTHK will adhere to the editorial principles of being impartial in reflecting views and immune from commercial, political and/or other influences, whether the Government has assessed if the aforesaid act of the Director of Broadcasting has violated the spirit of the Charter; whether it will demand the Director of Broadcasting to undertake to continue to safeguard RTHK's editorial independence and keep RTHK immune from external interferences;

(2) of the measures in place to ensure that RTHK is provided with sufficient resources to fulfill its mission as a public service broadcaster; the follow-up work undertaken by the Government on the construction of the New Broadcasting House and the latest progress made; and

(3) whether it has studied the disestablishment of RTHK from the government structure and giving RTHK financial and operational autonomy, with a view to ensuring that RTHK will adhere to the editorial principle of being immune from political and commercial influences; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Report on Review of Public Service Broadcasting in Hong Kong published in 2007 mentioned in the Hon Hui Chi-fung's question was prepared by the Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting, which had been appointed by the Government in 2006 to review the future development of public service broadcasting in Hong Kong. After extensive discussion and consultation, the Government made its decisions on the matter. In September 2009, the Government announced the way forward for Hong Kong's public service broadcasting and decided that Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) would undertake the work of Hong Kong's public service broadcaster and maintain its status as a Government department. Subsequently, in August 2010, the Government promulgated the Charter of RTHK (the Charter), which specifies the public purposes and mission of RTHK, the key programme areas of activities undertaken by RTHK and the modes of service delivery, thereby strengthening RTHK's governance.

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Hui Chi-fung is as follows:

(1) Aside from stipulating that RTHK is editorially independent and that it must adhere to the editorial principles of being impartial in the views it reflects and being immune from commercial, political and/or other influences, the Charter also clearly states that the Director of Broadcasting is RTHK's Editor-in-chief. RTHK has all along been committed to providing professional radio, television and new media services to the Hong Kong people in accordance with the Charter. As RTHK's Editor-in-chief, the Director of Broadcasting has been responsible for making the final editorial decisions in RTHK and accountable for editorial decisions taken by RTHK programme producers.

(2) The Government attaches great importance to public service broadcasting, and has allocated quite a lot of resources to RTHK to provide radio, television and new media services and to implement new development projects, including the launch and enhancement of digital terrestrial television broadcasting and the implementation of the Community Involvement Broadcasting Service. RTHK's expenditure rose from \$469.9 million in 2010-11 to an estimated \$1,012.5 million in 2018-19, representing an increase by 115 per cent. This is higher than the overall increase by 85 per cent in the Government's expenditure for the same period. As for manpower, RTHK's civil service posts of 738 in 2018-19 represent an increase by 41 per cent (or 215 posts) as compared with 2010-11. This is in comparison to an increase by 14 per cent in the Government's entire civil service establishment for the same period.

As for the New Broadcasting House (New BH) project, the Government had submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee of the Legislative Council in December 2013 a funding application of \$6 billion for the construction of the New BH in Tseung Kwan O. However, the application was negated by the Legislative Council. Subsequently in January 2014, the Government reduced the cost to \$5.3 billion in response to the request of the Subcommittee Members. Unfortunately, it was ultimately not supported by the majority of Subcommittee members. As such, the New BH project was unable to proceed on schedule as planned.

RTHK and the Architectural Services Department have been examining the proposal, having regard to the views and concerns of the Legislative Council over the cost estimate and scope of the New BH project, with a view to working out a proposal that meets RTHK's operational requirements and can address Members' views.

As the option of constructing a joint-user building is more cost-effective than an independent New BH, we have been exploring along this direction.

(3) With respect to Part 3 of the Hon Hui's question, the Government has no plan to conduct such a study.

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## **HKMC Annuity Plan Introduces Enhancement Measures and Continuous Sales Model**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

HKMC Annuity Limited (HKMCA), wholly-owned by The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited (HKMC), announces today (December 12) that it will



introduce enhancement measures and year-round continuous sales model for the HKMC Annuity Plan (Plan).

The enhancement measures, which come into effect today, are applicable to both existing and new customers. Details are set out as follows:

(1) 100 per cent lump-sum death benefit payment: In the unfortunate death of the insured, the designated beneficiary can choose to immediately get back all the premium paid in a lump-sum less the cumulative guaranteed monthly annuity payments paid, without extra discount. This means that there will no longer be financial loss in the case of lump-sum death benefit payment, which should enable customers to apply for the Plan with a greater sense of security.

(2) Special withdrawal to meet medical and dental expenses: The policyowner can apply for special withdrawal for medical and dental expenses in Hong Kong. The withdrawal amount would be the lower of:

(i) 50 per cent of the premium paid; or

(ii) the premium paid less the cumulative guaranteed monthly annuity payments paid.

Special withdrawal is subject to a maximum amount of HK\$300,000 and can only be made once. The usage of the withdrawal is not confined to specified critical illnesses, and can be used for surgery, medical treatment or examination considered necessary by doctors. After the special withdrawal, the guaranteed monthly annuity payments will be reduced proportionally without extra discount.

(3) Relaxation of maximum premium amount per person: The maximum premium amount per person will be increased from HK\$1 million to HK\$2 million. For example, if an applicant aged 65 has paid a premium of HK\$2 million, HK\$11,600 and HK\$10,600 of guaranteed monthly annuity payment will be paid to a male and female policyowner respectively.

In addition, the Plan will from now on adopt a continuous sales model throughout the year and open for eligible persons who are Hong Kong permanent residents aged 65 or above. Interested persons can make sales appointment with the HKMCA directly through the HKMCA's Customer Service Hotline (2512 5000) or website ([www.hkmca.hk](http://www.hkmca.hk)) and come to the HKMCA's sales office\* located on Hong Kong Island or in Kowloon to complete the application procedures. The HKMCA will have licensed sales staff to introduce the product and conduct Financial Needs Analysis with the customers during the application process. Customers can directly submit the application to the HKMCA after consideration and will receive their first guaranteed monthly annuity payment within one month after the application.

The Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the HKMCA, Mr Edmond Lau, said, "We notice that there have been different opinions in the market about the product features and sales arrangement since the launch of the HKMC Annuity Plan. We believe that the enhancements introduced will offer a greater protection and flexibility to the customers, thereby enabling them to apply for the Plan with a greater sense of security. The adoption of the continuous sales model can also enable customers to experience a more

convenient and efficient application process and have a clearer understanding of the product features."

The first tranche of the Plan records a total of 9 410 registrations of subscription intention, among which over 5 500 applicants have already completed the application procedures with an average premium amount of HK\$506,000. The HKMCA will follow up the uncompleted cases under the continuous sales model and continue to implement and strengthen the marketing and promotion activities.

\* Hong Kong Island: 35/F, Cosco Tower (High Block), Grand Millennium Plaza,  
183 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong  
Kowloon: 22/F, 909 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon