

# LCQ19: Quality of pool water at public swimming pool complexes

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

A university conducted a sample test last year on the pool water at six public swimming pool complexes (complexes) and the findings revealed the presence of urine in the pool water at five of the complexes. Among them, the outdoor toddlers' pool at the Kowloon Park Swimming Pool had the highest quantity of urine, which was as high as 82.1 litres (equivalent to 411 times of urine discharges by adults). The findings of another study revealed that the chemical reaction between urine/sweat and chlorine in the pool water mix would generate carcinogenic substances such as trihalomethane. On the other hand, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has refused to include urine and trihalomethane contents as parameters for monitoring the quality of pool water on the grounds that the World Health Organization has no such practice. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether LCSD will consider afresh including urine and trihalomethane contents as parameters for monitoring the quality of pool water; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it will conduct a comprehensive review of the Swimming Pools Regulation (Cap 132CA), which has been in operation for many years, to ensure that the requirements pertaining to pool water quality, changing of water and emptying of swimming pools, etc., keep pace with the times; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) whether LCSD implemented in the past three years water quality improvement measures (such as enhancing the pool water filtration system) at complexes with higher attendances; if so, of the details and the effectiveness of those measures;
- (4) whether it will make reference to the experience of other jurisdictions and introduce specific measures to reduce urine and sweat contents in pool water, such as (i) advising parents and swimming coaches to encourage children to exit the water and go to the toilet every 30 to 60 minutes, and (ii) stepping up publicity to call upon swimmers to rinse their body before entering the water and not to urinate in the swimming pool; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (5) as there are views that some complexes are often full, resulting in deteriorating pool water quality and swimmers not being able to swim freely, whether LCSD has reviewed if the supply of swimming pools in the districts

housing the three complexes with the highest attendances last year (i.e. Kwun Tong Swimming Pool, Kowloon Park Swimming Pool and Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool) meets the standards stipulated in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG); if LCSD has reviewed and the result is in the negative, of the details; whether the Government will, apart from making reference to HKPSG, take the attendance at the existing complexes as one of the considerations for supplying additional complexes?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the water quality of public and private swimming pools. Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages its public swimming pools while the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) licenses and regulates private swimming pools. My reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (3) LCSD has drawn up parameters for monitoring the water quality of its public swimming pools by making reference to the Guidelines for Safe Recreational Water Environments Volume 2 issued by the World Health Organization (the Guidelines) and in accordance with the advice from the Department of Health. Such parameters include, among other things, the free residual chlorine, pH value, total bacteria count, E. coli, Vibrio cholerae and turbidity of pool water, etc. According to the Guidelines, neither urea content nor trihalomethanes content is one of the parameters to be monitored for pool water. The current parameters for monitoring the water quality of public swimming pools are providing appropriate protection for swimmers. LCSD will continue to closely monitor the quality of pool water in its swimming pools and conduct reviews whenever necessary.

Well-developed filtration and sterilisation systems are in place in the 44 public swimming pools under LCSD. Water of the swimming pools is continuously circulated, filtered and sterilised throughout the opening hours. To ensure that the hygiene of pool water is up to standard, apart from taking water samples for testing of residual chlorine levels and pH value on an hourly basis during opening hours, LCSD has also assigned accredited laboratories to conduct testing on the pool water of its swimming pools on a weekly basis to ascertain that the water quality is up to the relevant standard. Furthermore, to maintain proper functioning of the filtration and sterilisation systems of the swimming pools, the works departments concerned have been providing assistance to LCSD in facilitating proper maintenance of the swimming pools, including comprehensive inspection on the filtration system in the filtration plant during annual maintenance and timely replacement of equipment and spare parts. For example, the heavily patronised Kowloon Park Swimming Pool and Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool had the chemical dosing system replaced and spare parts of the ozone generator replaced by phases in the past two years, as an effort to maintain the performance of the filtration system.

(2) FEHD licenses and regulates private swimming pools, including those

operated by clubs, institutions, associations or other organisations and those serving 20 or more residential units, under the Swimming Pools Regulation (Cap 132CA).

In accordance with the Regulation, a licensee of a swimming pool shall, at all times during which the swimming pool is in use by swimmers, cause the water therein to be completely changed by circulation through a filtration system or by renewal from source. In the case of a covered pool, not less than once in every four hours; and in the case of an open air pool, not less than once in every six hours. In short, the Regulation requires water changing by circulating through a filtration system or by renewing from source to ensure that all water re-entering the swimming pool has been filtered or renewed from source.

With regard to the quality of water, the Regulation stipulates that the licensee of a swimming pool shall maintain the water quality of the swimming pool to a standard that E. coli is absent in pool water samples of 100 millilitre each and the total bacterial count does not exceed 200 bacteria per ml of pool water samples. Moreover, the licensee shall ensure that the water in the swimming pool complies with the standard of clarity (including the turbidity and colour of water) and the standard of pH value of not less than 7.0 and not more than 7.8 specified in the Regulation. FEHD will take water samples at swimming pools for examination regularly to ensure that the pool water complies with the quality standard sets out in the Regulation.

Licensed swimming pools generally open in summer seasons. The Regulation stipulates that the licensee of a swimming pool shall cause the pool to be emptied of water not less than once in every year and at such other times as the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene may require. In addition to ensuring that the licensee will thoroughly cleanse the swimming pool, the requirement will also facilitate the licensee to carry out maintenance works.

As mentioned above, the existing provisions under the Regulation coupled with regular examination of swimming pool water by FEHD offer appropriate protection for swimmers in terms of the quality and purity of pool water in licensed swimming pool. FEHD will continue to closely monitor the quality and purity of the pool water in licensed swimming pool, including the standard of bacteriological quality and standard of clarity, and initiate review whenever necessary.

(4) Publicity efforts have all along been stepped up by LCSD through different channels, including publication of swimmers' handbook, display of posters and banners, departmental webpage, broadcasts of messages at swimming pools and announcements in the public interest, etc., to urge swimmers to observe personal hygiene, remind them not to pollute pool water and to go through a shower and visit the toilet before swimming, etc.

(5) The three most heavily patronised swimming complexes (i.e. Kwun Tong Swimming Pool, Kowloon Park Swimming Pool and Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool) last year are located at Kwun Tong District, Yau Tsim Mong District and Sham Shui Po District respectively. The numbers of swimming complexes provided in

these three districts meet or stand above the standard provision suggested in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG).

When planning new sports facilities (including swimming complex) and improving the existing ones, apart from making reference to the standards set out in HKPSG, the Government will also take into consideration other relevant factors such as the current provision of sports facilities at the territory-wide and district levels, the policy objectives of sports promotion, utilisation rates/attendances of existing facilities, demographic changes, views of District Councils, site availability and technical feasibility, etc.

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## LCQ 20: Handling of fallen trees and broken branches

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

It is now nearly two months since the onslaught of super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong, but fallen trees and broken branches awaiting clearance can still be seen in various places throughout Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of workers involved in handling fallen trees and broken branches at public places after the onslaught of Mangkhut, with a breakdown by (i) the work procedure which they perform/performed (e.g. sawing trees, removing trunks and branches), (ii) the government department and the service contractor engaged by the government department under which such workers are/were employed, and (iii) whether such workers are/were additional manpower recruited;

(2) of the types and quantities of tools and machines currently used by various government departments and their service contractors for handling fallen trees and broken branches; and

(3) whether it will consider procuring advanced machines (e.g. large chippers) to save the manpower and time needed for clearing fallen trees and broken branches?

Reply:

President,

Super-typhoon Mangkhut has caused extensive damage to trees, and over 60 800 tree failure reports have been received. After the typhoon, various government departments worked in close collaboration to clean up fallen trees and broken branches. The clean-up work is mainly undertaken by the government departments managing the land or facilities where the trees are located, including, among others, the Highways Department (HyD), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) and the Lands Department (LandsD). Different methods are used in handling fallen trees depending on their size and specific locations. Workers have to cut large fallen trees with thick trunks and branches into small logs with chain saws before removing them. For collapsed trees at constrained locations that are not accessible to engineering vehicles, the work and logistics involved are more complicated, hence taking longer time for their removal.

Various major tree management departments have made every effort to remove the fallen trees. Some public works contractors also expanded their designated clean-up areas to speed up the removal of obstacles caused by fallen trees and broken branches. In addition, employees of some contractors and tool suppliers formed volunteer teams to help clear fallen trees. To expedite the clearance operations, the Fire Services Department suspended all training courses and redeployed 180 members to such operations. The Civil Aid Services was also mobilised to remove fallen trees from blocked thoroughfares. In addition to the 10 000-odd people mobilised by the Government each day to take part in the clearance operations, volunteers from various sectors across the community, including the disciplined services, also joined in clearing fallen trees and debris.

Government departments clean up fallen trees in three stages. Clearance of fallen trees blocking pedestrian and traffic flow has been completed, allowing the society to quickly resume operations and citizens to get on with their normal life. Government departments are now cleaning up areas frequented by the public (such as parks, cycle tracks, hiking trails, etc.), which will be progressively completed by the end of this year. Areas that do not affect the daily activities of the public (such as roadside slopes and remote areas in the country parks) will be progressively cleared by the first quarter of 2019.

My reply to the three-part question raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) After the passage of Typhoon Mangkhut, government departments deployed some 15 262 workers (including contractors' workers) to clear fallen trees and broken branches. Breakdown is as follows:

Government departments	Number of workers involved in clearing tree debris
Housing Department	2 950

HyD	1 200
LCSD	900
Civil Engineering and Development Department	900
Drainage Services Department	326
ArchSD	258
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	250
Water Supplies Department	128
LandsD	350
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	8 000
Total	15 262

Government departments and their contractors adopt a one-stop service approach and work in collaboration to clean up fallen trees and broken branches. They adjust manpower deployment according to operational needs. The number of manpower involved in or additionally recruited for various work processes is not documented. The departments set out above have hired more than 90 service contractors in total.

(2) The fallen trees vary in size and are in different locations. Therefore, government departments need to use different machinery and equipment to cater for different situations when clearing fallen trees. For example, grab lorries or crane lorries are used for collapsed trees along public roads to speed up clearance work, while only smaller equipment can be used in locations without vehicular access. The machinery and equipment used by the Government and its contractors for clearance of fallen trees include handsaws, chain-saws, pole saws, powered pole saws, tree felling grapples, grab lorries, hydraulic platform vehicles and crane lorries, etc. We have not kept statistics on the use of each type of machinery and equipment.

(3) Government departments will bring in appropriate tools to facilitate tree management work having regard to actual conditions and operational needs. Large shredders, which generate noise during operation, can only be used away from residential areas. At present, the HyD has taken the lead in testing the use of wood chippers on the roads. Besides, the review of the response and recovery work in respect of Typhoon Mangkhut coordinated by the Security Bureau has commenced. The Government will review the response and recovery work, including the adequacy of equipment and machinery, in light of the experience gained in tackling Typhoon Mangkhut.

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# LCQ10: Operating arrangements for Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Following is a question by the Hon Tanya Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

The land needed for the operation of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) and the related interests have been vested in the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) by the Government. KCRC has granted the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) a concession to operate XRL under a supplemental agreement to the service concession agreement (SSCA). On August 23 this year, the Government submitted to the Panel on Transport of this Council a paper on the operating arrangements for XRL (the Paper), and MTRCL issued, on the same day, an announcement explaining the relevant arrangements (the Announcement). Details of the operating arrangements for XRL include: (i) the average daily patronage (patronage) forecast for XRL in 2018 is 80 100 (set out in Annex 2 to the Paper), (ii) the projected operating profit and operating margins of XRL based on the patronage forecasts in Annex 2 to the Paper are set out in Annex 5 to the Paper, (iii) SSCA has provided for a "Patronage Cap-and-Collar Mechanism", i.e. if the actual patronage deviates from the projected patronage by more than 15 per cent, MTRCL and KCRC will bear the risk or share the return according to a specified ratio, (iv) the total amount of Additional Concession Payments to be paid by MTRCL to KCRC over the ten-year concession period will be a net of \$2.7 billion, which comprises an amount of \$10.7 billion to be paid by MTRCL to KCRC, and an amount of around \$8 billion to be paid by KCRC to MTRCL, and (v) SSCA provides that the Additional Concession Payments will be paid in the form of "fixed annual payments" and "variable annual payments". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the daily patronage of XRL since its commissioning on September 23 this year, with a tabular breakdown by whether the passengers were (i) Hong Kong residents, (ii) business visitors, and (iii) travelling northbound or southbound;

(2) whether the patronage forecasts adopted in SSCA (the former) are consistent with the patronage forecasts in Annex 2 to the Paper (the latter); if not,

(i) set out the former in a table of the same format as that in Annex 2 to the Paper; if such figures may not be disclosed, whether the patronage forecasts for 2018, 2021 and 2031 in SSCA are lower than the corresponding figures in Annex 2 to the Paper, as well as of a rough estimate of the extent

of the difference between the two;

(ii) of the method for arriving at the former and the reasons for adopting such a method;

(iii) of the purpose and effect of setting out in Annex 2 to the Paper patronage forecasts which are different from those in SSCA;

(iv) of the relation between these two sets of figures;

(v) of the reasons why an account of the difference between the two was not given in the Paper; and

(vi) of XRL's projected operating profit and operating margins based on the former (set out in a table of the same format as that in Annex 5 to the Paper); if such figures may not be disclosed, whether XRL's projected operating profit and operating margins based on the former are lower than the projected figures in Annex 5 to the Paper and whether they are positive figures, as well as of a rough estimate of the extent of the difference between the two;

(3) of the respective upper and lower limits under the Patronage Cap-and-Collar Mechanism as set out in SSCA; the respective numbers of days on which the patronage touched the upper or the lower limit during the first 30 days of operation of XRL; for how long the patronage touching the upper or the lower limit has last before MTRCL and KCRC will bear the risk or share the return according to the specified ratio;

(4) as it is mentioned in the Paper that MTRCL will pay KCRC \$10.7 billion, whether that amount is equivalent to the total "variable annual payments" to be paid by MTRCL to KCRC each year during the ten-year concession period, as calculated by the method set out in the Announcement; whether the method for arriving at that amount is based on the patronage forecasts in SSCA or the patronage forecasts in Annex 2 to the Paper; and

(5) as it is mentioned in the Paper that the total amount of Additional Concession Payments to be received by KCRC from MTRCL will be a net of about \$2.7 billion, whether that amount is equivalent to 90 per cent of the Discounted Net Cashflow of the XRL project; whether the method for arriving at the amount of around \$8 billion of "fixed annual payments" to be paid by KCRC to MTRCL is as follows: by deducting from the aforesaid \$10.7 billion an amount equivalent to 90 per cent of the Discounted Net Cashflow of the XRL project?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) officially came into operation on September 23, 2018 and has been operating smoothly in general. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) as its operator will keep improving various operating arrangements (such as ticketing, station facilities and services). Meanwhile, passengers are also



getting used to using XRL as a cross-boundary transport mode.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Tanya Chan's question is as follows:

(1) Since the commissioning of the West Kowloon Station, the Hong Kong Section of the XRL has a total patronage of 1 985 937, comprising 954 172 outbound passengers and 1 031 765 inbound passengers as at October 31, 2018. During this period, the average daily patronage for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL was 50 921 and the highest patronage for a day (October 5, 2018) was 80 020. Hong Kong passengers accounted for about 30 per cent of the total patronage while those from the Mainland and other nationalities about 70 per cent. We will compile statistics on the types of passengers and purposes of travel (such as business or tourism) for the XRL as well as the patronage of other cross-boundary transport modes and announce in due course.

XRL is a brand new cross-boundary transport mode for Hong Kong. Passengers will need time to adapt to this new means of travelling. We cannot make a conclusive forecast on the long-term demand for XRL just on the basis of the patronage and the proportion of Hong Kong passengers for around the first six weeks after the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. We trust that patronage will increase progressively with increasing number of passengers enjoying the convenient services of XRL.

(2) The Government's earlier forecast of the average daily patronage at the initial commissioning stage (i.e. 2018) and 2021 of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL would be 80 100 and 95 000 respectively. Based on an established transport model, we have input the latest figures and considered the latest planning data and development of Hong Kong and the Mainland to forecast the daily patronage for the XRL. Since the XRL is a brand new cross-boundary transport mode, for the purpose of ensuring the financial stability of the operation of Hong Kong Section of the XRL, the Government, the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) and the MTRCL has adopted a more prudent daily patronage forecast for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL in the business case (including the Patronage Cap-and-Collar Mechanism) for the Supplemental Service Concession Agreement (SSCA) As the MTRCL is operating on commercial principles, it would not be appropriate to disclose the commercially-sensitive financial projection method and data in the SSCA. The Government had explained the matters in detail when announcing the operating arrangements for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL on August 23, 2018.

(3) Since the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL, the patronage has never touched the lower limit under the Patronage Cap-and-Collar Mechanism as set out in SSCA. In other words, the KCRC does not need to pay any compensation to MTRCL. The said mechanism is calculated on the basis of a calendar year and will not be triggered by the patronage fluctuation of individual days.

(4) and (5) Our overall target is that the Hong Kong Section of the XRL should be financially healthy and stable over the ten-year concession period, so that it does not require subsidises from KCRC on the one hand, and enable the MTRCL as a listed company to obtain reasonable commercial return, on the

other. The net revenue (i.e. additional concession payments) is calculated entirely according to the established mechanism under the Operating Agreement, viz. calculated by taking 90 per cent of the Discounted Net Cashflow of each year of the new project (i.e. the Hong Kong Section of the XRL) during the concession period. The MTRCL will only retain the remaining 10 per cent. In this regard, it is estimated that the KCRC will receive about \$10.7 billion of total concession payment (i.e. Variable Annual Payment) from the MTRCL over the ten-year period. This estimate is based on the patronage forecast as set out in SSCA. For accounting purpose, the KCRC has to pay a fixed amount of about \$8 billion to the MTRCL for meeting the expenses for the asset replacement of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL. According to the terms of SSCA, even if adopting the more prudent daily patronage forecast as set out in SSCA, the KCRC will still be able to receive a net revenue (i.e. additional concession payments) of \$2.7 billion over the ten-year period. The Hong Kong Section of the XRL will also see positive overall operating profit (in terms of earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) and positive operating margin during the ten-year period.

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## **LCQ 18: Repair and maintenance works for lifts in public rental housing estates**

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

### Question

Quite a number of households in public rental housing (PRH) estates have relayed that the lifts in the buildings in which they live have been in use for many years and are often out of service pending repairs. On the other hand, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department promulgated in 2011 the Guidelines for Modernising Existing Lifts (the Guidelines), introducing improvement proposals on enhancing the safety level of aged lifts and recommending the retrofitting of safety devices to aged lifts. Regarding the repair and maintenance of lifts in PRH buildings, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of lifts (i) for which replacement works were carried out and (ii) to which safety devices were retrofitted according to the Guidelines, in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by name of estate);
- (2) of the current number of aged lifts to which safety devices have yet to

be retrofitted (with a breakdown by name of estate); whether it has plans to carry out the relevant works for such lifts; if so, of the anticipated completion date; and

(3) whether it will (i) specify a requirement on the minimum number of hours to be spent on carrying out routine repair and maintenance works for each lift by registered lift contractors (the contractors), (ii) require the contractors to regularly record the conditions of the core safety components of lifts, and (iii) engage independent third parties to review the quality of such repair and maintenance works; if so, of the details?

Reply

President,

Having consulted the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), I set out the consolidated reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Ho Kai-ming as follows:

According to the "Guidelines for Modernising Existing Lifts" promulgated by the EMSD, it is difficult to establish a unified minimum work time for maintenance works as the time for maintenance of each lift depends on the maintenance requirements by the lift manufacturer, its design, number of service floors, rated speed, rated load, and conditions of lift car, etc. In 2014, the EMSD discussed with the trade about the work time for lifts/escalators maintenance. The trade generally agreed that Registered Lift/Escalator Contractors should allow sufficient time for workers to carry out maintenance works properly. In this regard, the EMSD also issued a notice to Registered Contractors in the same year to remind them that if they were to allocate maintenance works of more than six lifts/escalators for any worker to handle on one day, they should carefully consider the work allocation and ensure that the relevant works could be carried out safely and properly.

According to the "Code of Practice for Lift Works and Escalator Works" (the Code) issued by the EMSD, Registered Lift Contractor, Registered Lift Engineer and Registered Lift Worker should record details of lift works, incident handling, emergency repairs, examinations and maintenance related matters on the logbook of the concerned lift on the day when the works are completed, including details of the replaced critical components of the lift. The Responsible Person should also monitor the completion of works by the Registered Lift Contractor in accordance with the Code, the contractual requirements of both parties, etc., and countersign the logbook for confirmation.

To enhance the safety of aged lifts and the protection of public safety, the EMSD requested the full implementation of the following two measures before February 1, 2019 through the promulgation of the new Code (2018 Edition) which was gazetted on August 10, 2018:

(1) Contractors shall conduct at least two special maintenance works each

year for important protective components (including brakes, traction machines and landing doors) of aged lifts that have yet undergo modernisation works.

Contractors are also required to submit to the EMSD the scheduled date, time and inspection results of the special maintenance works via an online platform so as to enable the EMSD to strengthen the corresponding spot checks; and

(2) Contractors shall record maintenance works on logbooks with an improved format to list out the type and details of work involved in each round of maintenance works so as to facilitate more effective supervision over contractors' maintenance works by the EMSD and the Responsible Persons for lifts.

In addition, the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance (the Ordinance) stipulates that the Responsible Person for a lift must ensure that the lift and all its associated equipment or machinery are being kept in proper state of repair and in safe working order. The Responsible Person shall engage a Registered Lift Contractor to undertake the maintenance works of the lift and ensure that periodic maintenance is carried out in respect of the lift at intervals not exceeding one month. The Responsible Person shall also ensure that the lifts would be thoroughly examined by a Registered Lift Engineer at intervals not exceeding 12 months. The EMSD adopts a risk-based approach and strengthens surveillance checks of those lifts with higher risk factors, such as with longer in-service years and frequent complaints or failures, so as to monitor the maintenance works and check against contraventions of the Ordinance.

The EMSD also encourages Responsible Persons to appoint independent Registered Lift Engineers to review the maintenance work of their appointed contractors, and a "Sample Specifications for Engagement of Independent Registered Lift Engineer for Lift Maintenance Audit" is provided in the EMSD's website for Responsible Persons' reference.

For the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), all lifts in HA's public rental housing (PRH) estates, irrespective of their servicing ages, are maintained and repaired by Registered Lift Contractors in accordance with the Ordinance, relevant Codes of Practice and the requirements of the maintenance contracts.

There are stringent requirements in HA's maintenance contracts, for example, lift maintenance contractors have to submit a quarterly report and record the conditions of major safety devices in the lifts. They also have to conduct routine maintenance on a weekly basis to ensure that the lifts are in safe working order.

All repair and maintenance works for lifts are carried out not only under the monitoring by HA's engineering staff, but are also regularly audited by the Lift Inspection Focus Team of the Independent Checking Unit under the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing).

With a view to improving the service standards of the lifts, HA has been implementing the Lift Modernisation Programme which covers the installation of safety devices up to the latest standard. In the past five years (i.e. from 2013/14 to 2017/18), HA launched the modernisation works of 309 lifts in PRH estates under the Programme. Details are at Annex I.

In coming five years, HA will continue to implement the Programme and schedule to tender for the modernisation of some 440 lifts in PRH estates in stages. In 2018/19 and 2019/20, HA will launch lift modernisation works for 78 and 88 lifts respectively. Details are at Annex II.

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## LCQ9: Import and food surveillance of hairy crabs

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

Some hairy crab sellers have relayed to me that while hairy crabs are in season each year after the Mid-Autumn Festival, this year up to early this month, no hairy crabs (save for a small batch of hairy crabs in August) were issued with approval documents by the Mainland authorities for export to Hong Kong. This has greatly affected the sellers' business. On the other hand, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) found, during sampling checks conducted on hairy crabs in 2016, that two of the samples contained an excessive level of dioxins, and hence prosecuted two hairy crab sellers by summons. The magistrate acquitted the sellers and cited an expert's advice that only if, within four months, an ordinary person consumed 47, or one with high health risk consumed 10, hairy crabs involved in the cases which had an excessive level of dioxins, would there be adverse effects on such person's health, not to mention that ordinary people would not consume the aforesaid quantities of hairy crabs with an excessive level of dioxins. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as I have learnt that the Mainland authorities have been issuing approval documents for export of hairy crabs to other places, whether it has gained an understanding from the Mainland authorities as to why they have not issued this year approval documents for export of hairy crabs to Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has maintained good communication and negotiated with the Mainland authorities with a view to resolving, as soon as possible, the

issues concerning the supply of hairy crabs to Hong Kong; if so, of the details as well as the policy bureaux and government departments responsible for such work;

(3) given that the action level adopted by FEHD's Centre for Food Safety for dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls in hairy crabs stands at 6.5 picograms toxic equivalent per gram of the sample, whether it knows how this action level compares with those relevant levels adopted by the Mainland and other jurisdictions (set out in a table); whether there are differences between the levels adopted by those jurisdictions for the hairy crabs cultured locally and for those imported; and

(4) given the aforesaid expert advice, whether the Centre for Food Safety has studied relaxing the aforesaid action level; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) stipulates that all food for sale in Hong Kong must be fit for human consumption. Food safety is our prime concern in the surveillance and testing of imported food.

Regardless of their places of origin, hairy crabs can be imported into Hong Kong provided that they meet Hong Kong's food safety requirements and each consignment is accompanied with a health certificate issued by the relevant authorities of the exporting economies. The source of supply of hairy crabs to Hong Kong is essentially determined by the market.

In the hairy crab season of 2016, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department detected that the levels of dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (hereafter referred to as dioxins) of some hairy crab samples exceeded its action level. To maintain public confidence on the safety of hairy crabs available for sale in Hong Kong, CFS has implemented an arrangement since 2017 to hold up hairy crabs at import level and take samples for testing of dioxins. The importers concerned may make available the hairy crabs for sale in the market only after they are informed by CFS of satisfactory testing results. This hold-and-test arrangement is still in use by CFS.

For the hairy crab season this year, the import of hairy crabs so far is as follows:

(a) in mid-August, a consignment of hairy crabs totalling about 100 kg imported from the Mainland and accompanied with a health certificate was released to the market after the test results on the samples were found satisfactory by CFS;

(b) since September, 13 consignments of hairy crabs totalling about 3 100 kg imported from Japan and accompanied with health certificates were made

available to the market for sale after the test results on the samples were found satisfactory by CFS; and

(c) since the end of October, eight consignments of hairy crabs from the Mainland totalling about 7 000 kg, which were imported from Korea and accompanied with health certificates, were made available to the market for sale after the test results on the samples were found satisfactory by CFS.

Regarding the various parts of the question, our reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Mainland authorities monitor the quality of hairy crabs for supply to Hong Kong at source. They have their established approval procedures regarding the issuance of authorisation documents for the export.

We understand that hairy crabs are seasonal fresh food. In this regard, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and CFS have been liaising closely with the relevant Mainland authorities on the import arrangements of hairy crabs from the Mainland into Hong Kong this year, with a view to striking a better balance between food safety protection and business facilitation. FHB and CFS have also been informing the trade from time to time of issues relating to the import and testing arrangements of hairy crabs this year. If there are any new arrangements, we will inform the trade immediately.

(3) Dioxins are highly toxic carcinogens. The Government has started testing the levels of dioxins in food since 1999 and in hairy crabs since 2014. Taking into account the regulatory arrangements of economies which had set standards on the levels of dioxins in crabs (the EU and Taiwan) and the local dietary habits on hairy crabs, CFS set an action level of 6.5 picograms (pg) toxic equivalent per gram of the food sample (wet weight) for dioxins in edible portion of hairy crabs in 2016. The standards of the EU and Taiwan are as below:

Economies	Per gram of crab sample (wet weight)	Total maximum level of dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (pg toxic equivalent)
The EU	Muscle meat from appendages	6.5
Taiwan	Whole edible portion	

(4) Food is the main source of human intake of dioxins. Dioxins are fat-soluble, not easily broken down, accumulate in fatty tissues, and may accumulate in human bodies through the food chain.

CFS has assessed the health risks of consuming hairy crabs containing dioxins. The results showed that the health risks vary depending on the background exposures to dioxins of individuals and the levels of dioxins of hairy crabs consumed. In any case, the higher the levels of dioxins of hairy

crabs, the less the amount that can be consumed safely. Individuals with high background exposures to dioxins are more likely to have higher health risks than those with average background exposures if the same amount of hairy crabs containing the same levels of dioxins are consumed.

CFS will continue to keep in view the latest development in the regulation of dioxins in food in other economies, the local dietary habits and other factors, and constantly review its regulatory arrangements for the levels of dioxins in hairy crabs, including the action level.