

LCQ7: New Industrialisation and Technology Training Programme

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Ms Lillian Cheong, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It has been reported that between August 2022 and August 2024, a course provider, after successfully registering a number of courses supported by the New Industrialisation and Technology Training Programme (NITTP), allegedly obtained by fraud training grants using false trainee information, and was eventually granted a total of \$1.89 million under NITTP. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of cases of fraud or abuse of training grants reported by members of the public and organisations, and those discovered through investigations initiated by the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) and the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Secretariat of NITTP, in each year since the launch of NITTP in 2018;

(2) whether ITC and VTC currently have any task force or department responsible for preventing and investigating cases of fraud and abuse of training grants; if so, of the relevant staffing establishment, and the measures in place to prevent the recurrence of fraud and abuse; and

(3) as the Government has earlier indicated that its target is to roll out the business version of "iAM Smart" progressively from the end of 2026 onwards, whether it will, on the premise that personal privacy is protected, verify the information (e.g. tax returns) of NITTP applicants or organisations in the system, so as to assist the relevant departments in vetting and approving NITTP applications as well as eradicating fraud or abuse?

Reply:

President,

To nurture local innovation and technology talents, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) launched the New Industrialisation and Technology Training Programme (NITTP) under the Innovation and Technology Fund in August 2018, which subsidises, on a 2 (Government):1 (enterprise) matching basis, local enterprises for training their staff in advanced technologies, especially those related to "new industrialisation". Since the launch of the NITTP, the ITC has all along appointed the Vocational Training Council (VTC) as the Secretariat. Currently, the Secretariat has an establishment of 14 staff. My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the information provided by the VTC, a total of 15 complaints related to the NITTP have been received in the past five years (i.e. from August 2018 to October 2024), covering issues on the quality of course providers/training courses, the administrative arrangements of the NITTP, as well as cases involving unscrupulous practices and false information. The VTC has referred eight cases with initial evidence suggesting of suspected illegal activities (including unscrupulous practices, identity thefts or submission of false information) to law enforcement agencies for follow-up. The VTC has immediately suspended the processing of these cases and stopped all relevant disbursements of training grants.

(2) According to the latest Guidance Notes for Training Grant Applications (Training Grant Guide), employees nominated by companies applying for training grants must be under full-time employment of the company with the necessary background/experience relevant to the advanced technology concerned. The nominated trainee should hold a bachelor degree/higher diploma/diploma or above qualification (Qualification Framework level 3 or above) with at least one year of work experience relevant to the advanced technology of the subject nominated course. The NITTP also requires the applicant company to provide, among other things, a copy of the Hong Kong Identity Card of the relevant employees, records of Mandatory Provident Fund contribution of past three months, documentary proof of academic qualifications and proof of full-time work experience to the NITTP Secretariat before the commencement of training course. After completion of training course, the company should submit to the VTC all supporting documents required for disbursement of training grant, including confirmation of training completion and payment, as well as trainees' survey. The VTC will verify the relevant supporting documents submitted by the company after completion of training course, and will only disburse training grant upon confirming that the documents submitted by the company are complete and the trainees have met the attendance requirement of the relevant courses.

Separately, according to the Guidance Notes for Public Course and Tailor-made Course Applications and Training Grant Guide of the NITTP, the VTC may conduct surprise visits on any registered training courses without prior notice to the course providers to ensure that the training courses are conducted in compliance with the requirements of the relevant guidelines. In accordance with established procedures, the VTC will conduct independent surprise class visits on training courses organised by different course providers under the NITTP every month according to the relevant mechanisms. The surprise class inspection aims to assist in verifying that the registered courses are conducted in accordance with the approved course proposals. In this regard, surprise inspection personnel will confirm the identity of the trainer, check the course content and monitor the course duration. The manpower establishment provided by the VTC includes surprise inspection personnel. Since the VTC personnel involved are also responsible for other administrative duties, there is no breakdown on the number of personnel dedicated to carrying out surprise inspections.

At the same time, the ITC and the VTC have formulated guidelines for on-

site visits to companies applying training grant under the NITTP, covering the circumstances under which on-site visits shall be conducted, the criteria for inspections during on-site visits, the points-to-note for inclusion in the visit reports, as well as follow-up actions required in case of non-compliances found during the visit. The VTC will identify applicant companies of which on-site visits would be conducted on a risk-based approach.

The ITC, together with the VTC, will continue to closely monitor the operation and effectiveness of the NITTP, review the application, registration and approval mechanisms of the NITTP in a timely manner and make amendments as and when necessary.

(3) The Digital Corporate Identity (CorpID) Platform provides various functions, including corporate identity authentication, digital signing, pre-filling of forms and storage of digital licences and permits. Same as the personal digital identity authentication application "iAM Smart", the CorpID Platform itself does not store data of other government systems (such as tax returns). When a corporation applies for or uses the CorpID for online services, the Platform will verify the information provided by the corporation (such as the name of the organisation, owners and directors, and the Unique Business Identifier) against the information registered with the relevant departments and check its status. If a department wishes to access the applicant corporation's data stored in other government systems, it may do so through the Consented Data Exchange Gateway in compliance with existing laws and regulations.

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will

continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on November 5 to noon today (November 6), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 247 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 98 572 samples of food imported from Japan (including 62 833 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 21 910 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ20: Provision of sports and recreation facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Chun-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It is learnt that while the brilliant results of the national team and the Hong Kong, China delegation in the recently concluded 2024 Paris Olympic Games are heartening and have roused an instant craze for sports in Hong Kong, the shortage of sports venues in Hong Kong has all along been subjected to criticism. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities (Five-Year Plan) and the 10-year Development Blueprint for Sports and Recreation Facilities (10-year Blueprint) put forth in the 2017 Policy Address and the 2022 Policy Address respectively, of the Government's concrete plans to expedite the construction progress of the uncompleted projects therein;

(2) apart from the projects covered by the Five-Year Plan and the 10-year Blueprint, of the Government's other plans to increase the provision of district sports facilities; and

(3) whether it will consider converting some vacant markets into multi-purpose government buildings for the provision of facilities such as sports complexes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Lee Chun-keung is as follows:

(1) The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) strive to secure resources for implementing various projects for sports and recreation facilities as announced in the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities (Five-Year Plan) and 10-Year Development Blueprint for Sports and Recreation Facilities (10-Year Blueprint). The projects are planned in accordance with public works procedures, including conducting technical feasibility studies (TFS), undertaking design, consulting District Councils and relevant stakeholders, tendering and seeking funding approval.

Out of the 26 projects under the Five-Year Plan, 21 projects have obtained funding approval. Among which, 13 projects have been opened or partially opened for public use and eight projects have their pre-construction activities/construction works commenced. Four projects are in the early stage of planning and one project has been incorporated in a redevelopment project in the district concerned. The 10-Year Blueprint involves 31 projects. For the 16 projects for implementation under Phase 1, two projects have obtained funding approval with related works in progress, 11 projects have completed the TFS and are pending funding application. The remaining three projects are in the planning stage prior to the TFS. As for the 15 projects recommended for conducting the TFS, one has been completed and is pending funding application. The Government will advance the progress of various projects subject to allocation of financial resources.

(2) The Government endeavours to provide quality and diversified sports and recreation facilities to the public for meeting their needs. Other than the Five-Year Plan and the 10-Year Blueprint, the Government will continue to plan for new sports facilities and improve existing facilities, taking into account various factors including the current provision of sports facilities

across Hong Kong and at the district level, policy objectives of sports development, utilisation of existing facilities, demographic changes, views of the District Councils and relevant stakeholders, site availability, technical feasibility and allocation of financial resources. The LCSD also collaborates with other policy bureaux (such as the Harbour Office and the Invigorating Island South Office under the Development Bureau) and government departments (such as the Civil Engineering and Development Department) to jointly plan and implement sports and recreation facilities under other works projects (such as Public Open Space at East Coast Park Precinct at North Point) to cater for public needs.

(3) The Government is planning to convert some floors of the Kwun Chung Municipal Services Building into an Urban Sports Centre with a view to providing venues suitable for activities such as sport climbing, breakdancing, and skateboarding. Upon completion of the TFS of the project, the Architectural Services Department has commenced the design preparatory work since July this year. In addition to the plan for the conversion of some floors of the Kwun Chung Municipal Services Building, the Government will also review other existing facilities of relatively low utilisation (such as vacant markets) and explore the possibility of using those sites to provide appropriate sports facilities for promoting sports.

LCQ12: Sealing up corridor-facing louvres of public rental housing flats

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It has been reported that in recent months, the Housing Department (HD) has posted notices in some public rental housing (PRH) estates, stating that the HD must undertake fire safety improvement works pursuant to the requirements of the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572), including sealing up all domestic flat louvres facing common exit corridors with fire-resisting boards in phases starting from next year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of PRH estates and domestic flats involved in the aforesaid works, as well as the implementation schedules;

(2) as some PRH tenants are worried that their flats will become poorly-lit due to the lack of lighting penetration from the corridors after the relevant works, whether the HD has studied the alternative options, including

allocating resources to seal up the louvres with fire-resisting glasses instead of fire-resisting boards, so as to retain the effect of light penetration; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will assist PRH tenants who have modified their louvres on their own to remove externally-attached objects and carry out reinstatement works, with a waiver of the relevant expenses; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will step up publicity and explanation efforts, so that the affected PRH tenants can gain an understanding of the procedures and implementation progress of the relevant works; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Buildings Department (BD) and Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit is set out below:

According to the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) (the Ordinance), composite and domestic buildings constructed on or before March 1, 1987, or with the plans of the buildings works first submitted to the Building Authority for approval on or before that day (the target buildings) are required to upgrade the fire safety standards to meet modern fire protection requirements. Currently, under the Housing Authority, there are 477 public rental housing (PRH) blocks in 64 estates regulated by the Ordinance.

Since the Ordinance came into effect on July 1, 2007, the Housing Department (HD) has been in close liaison with the BD and FSD to formulate feasible fire safety improvement proposals and implementation details for the target buildings, including conducting assessments of the target buildings; appointing fire engineering consultants to study the works details; as well as liaising with the BD and FSD on the vetting and acceptance processes, etc. The HD has been implementing the improvement works taking into account the difficulty and priority of the projects and basing on the acceptance progress of improvement proposals, scope of works, and co-ordination with other maintenance programmes of the target buildings concerned. In fact, shortly after the Ordinance took effect, some improvement works which are comparatively easy to implement, such as replacement of fire doors and installation of emergency lighting systems, have commenced by phase. Considering the large number of target buildings with varying architectural layout and designs, the HD, BD and FSD have been in close liaison in conducting joint inspections to each target building by phase to determine the required scope of fire safety improvement works for each building. The HD also submitted fire safety improvement proposals based on the requirements and subsequently arranged the necessary improvement works at once upon receipt of the acceptance from the BD and FSD.

With regard to the louver enclosure works at the older PRH blocks, the fire engineering consultant pointed out that the domestic flats concerned are with louvers facing the internal corridor, which is not separated from the escape staircases. Therefore, in the event of fire accidents, the louvers of these flats could not resist fire and smoke, leading to proliferation of fire and smoke through the louvers to the internal corridor or other flats. Notwithstanding that some tenants had adopted different materials and methods to enclose the louvers on their own in the past years for privacy, sound insulation or security concerns, these materials or methods might not render effective fire resistance. The HD is aware that tenants may have different views on the louver enclosure works. Therefore, upon confirmation of the necessity of the enclosure works to enhance fire protection in 2018, the HD requested fire engineering consultants to conduct an in-depth investigation to explore the feasibility of using various materials or methods to formulate the most suitable approach.

Our reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

- (1) The enclosure works involved around 240 PRH blocks in 53 estates of around 136 000 domestic flats. The HD first commenced the enclosure works in Fu Shan Estate in late October 2024, and the enclosure works will be progressively arranged in other estates concerned.
- (2) After a thorough study on the feasibility and safety of the enclosure works, upon on-site inspections and multiple discussions with the BD and FSD, the HD has decided to enclose the louver windows facing internal corridors with fire-resisting boards to enhance fire protection. In selection of enclosure materials, the HD has taken into account a wide range of criteria including the impact on the width of internal corridor as the means of escape, the specifications, supply of materials, cost, fire resistance, installation procedures, future maintenance, impact on tenants, etc. In fact, sufficient natural lighting and ventilation has been provided for all relevant domestic flats through balconies and windows.
- (3) The HD has deliberated on the specification details and work procedures of the enclosure works. Generally, works could be carried out outside domestic flats. Tenants are not required to attend or bear any cost. If tenants have enclosed the louvers on their own, no reinstatement by tenants is required. The HD will provide necessary assistance to residents for removal of their belongings hung on louvers.
- (4) In order to familiarise tenants with the arrangement details of the louver enclosure works, before the commencement of works in Fu Shan Estate, the HD posted notices and photos at the lift lobby on the ground floor and at the lobby on all floors in the PRH blocks concerned, displayed the mock-up of the enclosed louver in the estates, issued letters to affected households, and briefly introduced the progress of the works in Estate Newsletter. During the period of late September to early October 2024, the HD met with a number of Wong Tai Sin District Council members respectively to introduce and answer the enquiries about the relevant fire safety improvement works. In early

October 2024, the HD also convened a briefing session on fire safety improvement works with the BD and FSD for tenants of Fu Shan Estate to introduce the Ordinance and the relevant works arrangement. Through the aforesaid publicity and explanatory work, the louver enclosure works in Fu Shan Estate has been implemented smoothly and no complaint related to the relevant works was received during the works period.

The HD will make reference to the practice of Fu Shan Estate in conducting the publicity and explanatory work to PRH tenants in proceeding relevant improvement works in other PRH estates in future.

[LCQ16: Short-term parking arrangements for delivery couriers](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Kingsley Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It has been reported that the new communities of Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court in Fanling, with a population of more than 30 000, have great demand for the services of online delivery platforms. However, some of the relevant trade unionists have reflected that the management offices of these housing estates have not considered the need of delivery couriers for short-term parking of their motorcycles. Not only have the management offices failed to provide temporary parking spaces, they have also stepped up their efforts to impound motorcycles and have even lodged complaints with the Police about motorcycles obstructing roads, resulting in delivery couriers often having to pay impounding charges and fines for penalty tickets. Such trade unionists hope that the relevant estate management offices and the Police can take into account the principles of legality, reasonableness and compassion in their actions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views about the varying standards of the management offices of different public housing estates in managing the short-term parking of delivery couriers' motorcycles in the housing estates, which has left delivery couriers at a loss, whether the authorities will consider providing guidelines for all parties to follow; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will keep abreast with the need to develop the platform economy by using the housing estates with recent population intakes (e.g. Queen's Hill Estate) as pilot estates to provide "designated motorcycle

parking spaces for delivery" within or near the housing estates to allow delivery couriers to park their motorcycles for short periods; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will follow the practice of the Mainland and set up "courier posts" in various districts to provide areas for resting, eating and using toilets, equipped with facilities such as water dispensers and first-aid kits, so as to improve the working conditions and well-being of delivery couriers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has estimated the latest number of local delivery couriers accepting orders through online platforms?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Transport and Logistics Bureau, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), a consolidated reply to the Hon Kingsley Wong's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) In general, establishing designated motorcycle parking spaces for delivery services in public housing estates or on public roads nearby requires effective management measures to ensure that these parking spaces are used as intended, such as restricting the parking purpose and limiting the parking duration based on the circumstances of each public housing estate to avoid prolonged occupancy. At present, motorcycle parking spaces on public roads are open for public use, including food delivery motorcycles. There are no restrictions on the parking use of the parking spaces. The Transport Department endeavours to increase the supply of motorcycle parking spaces on public roads to meet with the keen demand of motorcyclists through various means. It is initially assessed that the feasibility in establishing designated motorcycle parking spaces for a specific purpose is relatively low.

Overall speaking, loading/unloading bays are provided around the domestic blocks in most of the housing estates/courts under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) for vehicles, including delivery motorcycles, to load/unload goods or pick-up/drop-off passengers. Taking into account the prevalent need for short-term parking by various types of vehicles to load/unload goods and pick-up/drop-off passengers, the HA has waived the parking fees for vehicles parked in its loading/unloading bays in all housing estates/courts under the HA's management for up to 30 minutes.

In addition, for roads other than the loading/unloading bays, the Housing Department (HD) or the authorised staff of the housing estates/courts/car park operators will exercise discretion with regard to the actual situation in handling short-term parking by delivery motorcycles and other vehicles in a reasonable and compassionate manner. Given that the specific circumstances and road design vary in different housing

estates/courts, the staff concerned will, in handling the matter, consider the needs of delivery couriers and will strike a balance among various factors such as estate management, the impact on other residents and road users, as well as whether the road section concerned is an emergency vehicular access which has to be kept clear at all times for fire appliances, police vehicles or ambulances to carry out rescue and other operations. In general, the staff will first issue a verbal/written warning to request the driver concerned to drive off the illegally parked vehicle. Only when the warning goes unheeded, the driver will receive fixed penalty tickets or have the vehicle impounded in accordance with the law. Couriers can use the loading/unloading bays adjacent to the domestic blocks for short-term parking of their motorcycles to facilitate their delivery services, and the estate staff will handle short-term parking by delivery motorcycles in a reasonable and compassionate manner according to the actual situation. The above arrangements took into account the needs of all the stakeholders.

Queens Hill Estate is a public rental housing estate under the HA, while the neighbouring Shan Lai Court is a sold housing court under the "Home Ownership Scheme". Lung Ma Road and Lung Chun Road, the major roads serving Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, are restricted roads within Queens Hill Estate. No parking is allowed at any time on these two roads which are under the control of the HD. The housing estate and court concerned are provided with emergency vehicular access to various domestic blocks, each of which is provided with loading/unloading bays in the vicinity with free parking offer for the first 30 minutes to allow short-term parking by vehicles (including motorcycles). At present, seven and six loading/unloading bays are provided adjacent to the domestic blocks in Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court respectively. These facilities provide spaces for free temporary parking, enabling couriers to promptly deliver services. In addition, 11 hourly motorcycle parking spaces are provided in Queens Hill Estate for visitors (including couriers).

It is noted that some motorcycles/vehicles are parked on Lung Ma Road and Lung Chun Road, of which parking is prohibited at all times, or on the adjacent pedestrian footpaths. There are even vehicles parked illegally on emergency vehicle access in the housing estate/court, posing danger to other road users and pedestrians. Therefore, enforcement actions must be taken. The management agency appointed by the HA is authorised to carry out enforcement actions. Warning banners have been put up in prominent areas on roads to remind drivers that illegal parking will result in their vehicle impounded or issuance of fixed penalty tickets. If illegal parking is identified, the staff will warn the driver on-site to drive away the vehicle as soon as possible; and issue a warning notice if the driver is not present. Should the warning be unheeded, the vehicles concerned will be impounded. According to the record, most of the impounded vehicles were prolonged parking vehicles rather than short-term parking by delivery motorcycles. It can thus be seen that the aforementioned enforcement actions have been carried out in a lawful, reasonable and compassionate manner, and the impact on couriers has been minimal. It is observed that the situation has now been improved and in general couriers would temporarily park their motorcycles on the loading/unloading bays adjacent to the domestic blocks for delivery services.

As for the supply of motorcycle parking spaces, the HD has provided seven additional monthly motorcycle parking spaces in the carpark of Queens Hill Estate since January 2024 having regard to the demand for motorcycle parking spaces and technical feasibility. All these parking spaces have been rented out. The implementation of the above integrated measures has greatly improved the illegal parking situation within Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, leading to a drop in the number of impounded vehicles.

In view of the limited public spaces in housing estates and the requirement for the provision of emergency vehicular access, loading/unloading bays, pedestrian links as well as the recreational, leisure and greening facilities in accordance with the planning standards, it is not feasible to provide additional "designated motorcycle parking spaces for delivery".

(3) and (4) Commissioned by the Labour Department (LD), the C&SD has contracted out in September 2023 a Thematic Household Survey to collect information on, among others, the characteristics and working conditions of digital platform workers engaging in food and goods delivery services. The household survey is the first of its kind and fieldwork has been completed. Data processing and analysis are underway. The C&SD expected that the key findings of the relevant survey will be available in early 2025.

The Government has always supported the development of different industries. With the rapid development of platform economy, the Government is very concerned about the working conditions and protection for delivery couriers and digital platform workers. The LD has set up a Liaison Group to facilitate the communication among major food and goods delivery platform operators and labour organisations as well as to encourage platform companies to adopt good practices for enhancing the working conditions and protection for platform workers.

Should there be any measures related to the platform economy, the HD will spare no effort to provide necessary support.