

LCQ18: Prevention and treatment of herpes zoster

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

It is learnt that the chickenpox virus may remain latent in the human nervous system of patients recovered from chickenpox, and reactivate in times of weakened immune system as herpes zoster (HZ) (commonly known as "shingles"). There are views pointing out that the diverse complications, complicated treatment process and exorbitant associated medical cost of HZ will greatly affect the emotions, work and quality of life of patients. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current HZ morbidity rate, HZ vaccination uptake rate, as well as the hospitalisation rate, average number of days of hospitalisation and average medical cost of HZ patients in Hong Kong, with a breakdown by age group;

(2) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on May 4, 2022, the Government indicated that the last study on the conditions of HZ inpatients was conducted by the Department of Health way back in 2014, whether the authorities will expeditiously collect and analyse the data in recent years, so as to grasp the latest trend and put in place corresponding plans at an early stage; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health indicated last year that it considered that locally available HZ vaccine was safe and effective, and individual older adults and adults with immunocompromised conditions might consider receiving vaccination in consultation with their doctors, whether the authorities will draw up a timetable and roadmap for providing HZ vaccination to members of the public in phases as early as possible, so as to tie in with the direction "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" set out in the Primary Healthcare Blueprint; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as there are views that the cost of two doses of HZ vaccination is no small sum for grass-roots families and low-income persons, whether the authorities will launch a pilot assistance programme under the Community Care Fund to provide subsidies for HZ vaccination to ultra-high-risk and low-income persons aged 65 or above, so as to reduce the relevant medical expenses of such persons; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Herpes Zoster (also known as Shingles) is an infectious disease that causes belt-like, painful skin rash with blisters. It is caused by varicella-zoster virus which is also responsible for varicella (also known as Chickenpox). The virus resides in the nervous system of patients recovered from Chickenpox and may induce Herpes Zoster in times of weakened immune system due to ageing or stress. Herpes Zoster is not serious in general and the risk of serious complications or death is not high. Early treatment can reduce the severity of symptoms and the risk of complications. Antiviral medications can speed up the healing of blisters and ease pain.

In consultation with the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA), the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Pui-leung is as follows:

(1) In general, the DH maintains statistics on statutorily notifiable infectious diseases under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap 599). The Government will consider a number of factors in determining whether a particular infectious disease should be statutorily notifiable, such as the prevalence and severity of the disease or condition, risks of outbreak, existence of a reliable diagnostic method. As Herpes Zoster is not a statutorily notifiable infectious disease, the DH does not maintain statistics on the incidence of Herpes Zoster in the local population. Currently, there is no statutory requirement for healthcare providers to upload vaccination record to the Electronic Health Record Sharing System. The Government Vaccination Programmes also do not cover Herpes Zoster vaccines. Therefore, the DH does not maintain local statistics on Herpes Zoster vaccination.

At present, patients with symptoms of Shingles generally consult their family doctors, General Out-patient Clinics or Accident and Emergency Departments. Antiviral drug can shorten the recovery time of Herpes Zoster patients and it is optimal to take it within three to five days of the onset of the disease. Therefore, if citizens are in doubt, they should seek medical consultation as soon as possible and take the medicine according to doctor's instructions. Maintaining a comfortable room temperature, applying a soothing ointment to the affected area or taking analgesic drug can also alleviate the itch and pain. Moreover, patients should keep the affected skin clean and dry and should not break the blisters, or it may induce bacterial infection for the second time. Patients should also avoid coming into contact with frail persons, such as pregnant women and children, to prevent transmission of disease to them. The HA generally does not maintain statistics on the incidence, hospital admission rate, average length of stay or average healthcare cost in relation to Herpes Zoster. Therefore, relevant figures are not available.

(2) to (4) In general, incorporation of a new vaccine for use in vaccination programmes is based on scientific evidence, taking into account multiple public health factors including the overall disease burden on the society, vaccine efficacy and safety, availability of other effective preventive measures, and cost-effectiveness of large-scale vaccination.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH reviewed and analysed public hospital admission data related to Herpes Zoster from September 1999 to August 2014 and published the relevant findings in a scientific journal in 2018. The CHP, with special support from the HA, collected and collated relevant public hospital admission data from 2017 to 2022 for deliberation by experts of the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the CHP regarding the use of Herpes Zoster vaccines in September 2023.

When deliberating relevant issue at the SCVPD in September 2023, the experts considered that locally available Herpes Zoster vaccines were safe and effective. Older adults and adults with immunocompromised conditions may consider receiving Herpes Zoster vaccine in consultation with their doctors to protect themselves against Herpes Zoster and its complications. At the same time, the SCVPD also considered that more local data from a cost-benefit analysis would be required for future consideration on whether to include Herpes Zoster vaccine in the Government Vaccination Programmes. Having regard to the latest relevant recommendations made by the SCVPD, the Government currently has no plan to provide Herpes Zoster vaccines for the members of the public through government programmes or in the form of subsidies (including the Community Care Fund).

Meanwhile, the Government is committed to enhancing district-based primary healthcare services in a bid to shift the emphasis of the present healthcare system and changing people's mindset from treatment-oriented to prevention-oriented. Initiatives include promoting the Life Course Preventive Care Plan through District Health Centres to formulate personalised health management plans to address the health needs of citizens across different life stages according to personal factors such as their gender, age and family history. Family Doctors and primary healthcare professionals will closely collaborate to provide health advice and education on chronic disease and cancer screening, healthy lifestyle and vaccination (including Herpes Zoster vaccine), etc. Individuals should take responsibility for personal health. While particular preventive measure may be beneficial to personal health, it does not necessarily mean the measure would worth Government funding from a public health or medical policy perspective.

LCQ12: Combating abuses of public rental housing resources

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

On combating abuses of public rental housing (PRH) resources, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on cases of combating the abuse of PRH units by the Housing Department (HD) in the past two years :

- (i) the number of reports received;
- (ii) the number of cases investigated on the HD's initiative;
- (iii) the number of substantiated cases and the percentage of such number in the total number of PRH tenants in Hong Kong; and
- (iv) the total amount of assets concealed by PRH tenants who abused their tenancy;

(2) among the substantiated cases of abuse of PRH units mentioned in (1)(iii), of the respective numbers of the various abuses of PRH units (including non-occupation of flats, subletting of flats, engaging in illegal activities inside flats and making false declarations on assets, etc.), as well as the respective numbers of tenants who had their PRH units forfeited, were prosecuted, and were sentenced to a fine or imprisonment in each year;

(3) of the distribution of PRH units recovered in the past five years due to tenancy abuse and breach of tenancy agreement or housing policies (set out by the 18 districts across the territory);

(4) as it has been reported that last year, the HD required, for the first time and on a large scale, PRH tenants with admission to PRH for two years or more to declare their assets, and that it also required well-off PRH tenants to do so in April this year, of the respective numbers of PRH units recovered by the HD after these two rounds of declarations (including those surrendered by tenants voluntarily);

(5) given that since the middle of last year, the HD launched a data matching and verification mechanism with the Land Registry to check if PRH tenants own domestic properties in Hong Kong, of the Government's similar specific measures in place to follow up and prevent PRH tenants from making false declarations on income or total household assets, as well as owning properties in the Mainland or overseas;

(6) given that the Hong Kong Housing Authority will launch the "Cherish Public Housing Resources Award Scheme" (Award Scheme) in January next year, and by then non-anonymous informants who provide concrete intelligence that leads to successful recovery of abused PRH flats will be awarded a cash reward of \$3,000 and a certificate of appreciation, how the authorities will ensure the confidentiality and prevent the leakage of information relating to the non-anonymous informants; whether the authorities will stop dealing with anonymous reports after the implementation of the Award Scheme; and

(7) how the authorities will strike a balance in the implementation of the relevant policies after the launch of the Award Scheme, so as to avoid a backstabbing culture among neighbours and undermining neighbourhood relationship?

Reply:

President,

The consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Kenneth Lau is as follows:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has all along adopted multipronged and risk-based measures, including prevention, detection, investigation, publicity, education, etc., to combat abuse of public rental housing (PRH) on all fronts. Apart from gathering information on suspected PRH tenancy abuse through complaints or reports, estate management staff detect tenancy abuse and verify whether there are false declarations through daily estate management (including conducting regular home visits to check the occupancy status of tenants and vetting various applications and declarations submitted by tenants). Suspected tenancy abuse identified will be referred to the Public Housing Resources Management Sub-section (PHRM), the central dedicated team of the Housing Department (HD), for investigation. Moreover, PHRM also conducts in-depth investigation of random cases with higher chance of PRH tenancy abuse.

All in all, the HD identifies or are informed of suspected PRH tenancy abuse cases through various means, including reports from the public, findings from daily estate management work, home visits and patrols by frontline staff, as well as random inspection of high-risk suspected cases. While the HD does not collate or analyse the number of tenancy abuse cases detected from public reports or other sources, broadly speaking, there are two types of information sources, namely proactive investigation by PHRM and by referral. Regardless of the information sources, the HD will conduct thorough investigation into PRH tenancy abuse cases in the same manner. Regarding the types of PRH tenancy abuse, given the possibility of multi-fold breaches (such as rent arrears and non-occupation at the same time) as well as the complexity involved, the HD classifies the cases broadly under two categories: (i) occupancy status-related and (ii) income and asset declaration-related. Tenancy abuse cases related to occupancy status mainly include non-occupation, occupancy by unauthorised persons, non-domestic usage, voluntary surrender of PRH flats by the households concerned, tenancy abuse investigations triggered by rent arrears or death of the tenant, etc.

To effectively apply information technology to assist the administrative and monitoring work and to tie in with the Cherish Public Housing Resources Award Scheme to be launched in January 2025, the HD has taken forward the development of a new information technology system this year for combating PRH tenancy abuse to facilitate case follow-up and data analysis.

The numbers of cases investigated by the HD in the past two years (i.e. from 2022/23 to 2023/24) after obtaining sufficient information are as follows:

Year	(a) No. of Investigation Cases Initiated by PHRM [^] (approximate number)	(b) No. of Referral Cases (including Reports/Complaints) [^] (approximate number)	(c) No. of Households required to Make Declarations (approximate number)	Percentage of Cases Investigated After Obtaining Sufficient Information to No. of Households required to Make Declarations [(a)+(b)] / (c)	Percentage of Cases Investigated After Obtaining Sufficient Information to Total No. of PRH Households in Hong Kong (about 800 000 households)
2022/23	9 400	5 600	250 000	6%	1.88%
2023/24	11 800	4 300	310 000*	5.2%	2.01%

[^] Number of cases investigated after obtaining sufficient information

* Including over 220 000 households which were required to declare income and assets (including domestic property ownership in Hong Kong, if any) under Well-off Tenants Policies in April 2023; and about 88 000 households who had resided in PRH for two to eight years as the first batch to declare occupancy status and domestic property ownership in Hong Kong, if any, in October 2023.

The types and numbers of cases investigated as mentioned above are as follows:

Year	(a) Occupancy Status-related (approximate number)	(b) Income and Asset Declaration-related [@] (approximate number)	Total (a)+ (b)
2022/23	6 800	8 200	15 000
2023/24	8 400	7 700	16 100

[@] The HD does not keep statistics on the total income/total amount of assets concealed by the tenants concerned.

In the past two years, the HA recovered about 2 200 and 2 800 PRH flats respectively arising from PRH tenancy abuse and breach of tenancy agreement or housing policies. In total, 5 000 units were recovered in these two years in view of tenancy abuse and breach of tenancy agreement or housing policies, equivalent to building a medium-sized housing estate like Chun Yeung Estate. The results are prominent. In 2024, as at end September, there were already about 1 400 flats recovered in view of tenancy abuse and breach of tenancy agreement or housing policies.

In the past two years, there were 389 cases prosecuted for contravening the Housing Ordinance, 344 cases of which were convicted, and seven tenants were sentenced to imprisonment (including suspended sentences). The two cases of which received the heaviest sentences were sentenced to immediate

imprisonment for 30 days and two weeks respectively. The HA does not keep statistics on the breakdown of recovered flats due to tenancy abuse and breach of tenancy agreement or housing policies by District Council districts.

Since October 2023, the HA has rolled out a series of effective new measures, which include requiring tenants to declare their occupancy status and ownership of domestic property in Hong Kong every two years since admission to PRH. As at October 2024, among the first two batches of some 340 000 tenants who were required to make declaration (i.e. the October 2023 and April 2024 batches), a total of about 4 000 tenants have voluntarily surrendered their flats or have had their flats recovered for various reasons.

Under the Well-off Tenants Policies, households owning land/properties (including domestic and non-domestic properties) outside Hong Kong are required to declare such assets. The HD will carry out investigation on suspected cases or upon receipt of reports. The HD will enquire with the Mainland local authorities if detailed information such as a specific address in a certain province or city in the Mainland is available. In the past year, the HD has written to authorities of different provinces or cities in the Mainland and Macao, and confirmed that 16 households had concealed their ownership of properties in the Mainland when applying for PRH. Since the net asset value of the tenants concerned had exceeded the limits for PRH applications, the HA issued Notices-to-quit to them. As for PRH applicants, HA has stepped up the random checks on PRH applicants on the Waiting List regarding property ownership in the Mainland. If PRH applicants are found to have concealed their income/assets, their applications will be cancelled and they will be barred from re-applying for PRH for a period of five years. In the future, we will take a more proactive approach to enhance communication with the Mainland authorities/agencies to facilitate the gathering of information on tenants' ownership of properties in the Mainland.

The HA will launch the Cherish Public Housing Resources Award Scheme (the Award Scheme) in January next year to offer rewards to non-anonymous informants who provide concrete intelligence that leads to identification of substantiated tenancy abuse of PRH. Personal particulars of informants will be kept strictly confidential. Apart from designated the HA or HD staff directly involved in handling the Award Scheme, no other person will be informed of the identity of the informants or the source of information.

The HA has all along gathered intelligence through various channels. In handling reports or referrals of tenancy abuse, the HD adopts the same approach irrespective of whether the case is anonymous or not. As long as there is basic information or are clues in the case enabling follow-up actions, the HD will initiate an investigation and will not miss any opportunity to combat tenancy abuse.

Regarding views that the Award Scheme may be a detriment to neighbourhood relationship, the HA believes that PRH residents would not welcome PRH abusers in their neighbourhood, as tenancy abuse would bring

injustice, or even affect the living environment of PRH and bring nuisance. In order to reduce abuse of reporting and ensure the accuracy of the information provided, informants participating in the Award Scheme must make non-anonymous reports and be interviewed by dedicated personnel. In fact, the Award Scheme is generally supported by the community. It is believed that the Award Scheme can play an encouraging role and enhance the awareness of the need to cherish resources and the effectiveness of combatting PRH tenancy abuse.

LCQ2: Feed-in Tariff Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

Under the Feed-in Tariff Scheme (the Scheme), which was introduced by the Government in collaboration with the two power companies in 2018, people who install solar energy generation systems (solar energy systems) at their premises can sell the power they generate to the two power companies. The Scheme will end in 2033. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the introduction of the Scheme, of the volume of electricity respectively purchased by the two power companies and their proportion to the electricity demand in Hong Kong; of the gap between such volume and the target set under the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 that solar energy would be able to meet around 1 per cent to 2 per cent of Hong Kong's electricity demand by 2035;

(2) as it has been reported that the payback period for investment in solar energy systems spans at least six to seven years, whether the Government has assessed if the public's incentive to invest in solar energy systems will be affected in the next few years as the Scheme is set to end in nine years, and whether it will consider extending the Scheme; whether the Government has compiled statistics on the number of solar energy systems with generating capacity over the cap of 1 megawatt under the Scheme, and whether it will consider removing such cap, with a view to encouraging individuals and even large enterprises to continuously participate in the Scheme and scale up their solar energy systems; and

(3) given the current height restriction of 2.5 metres on solar photovoltaic systems installed on rooftops of village houses and the height restriction of 1.5 metres on those in general private buildings, whether the Government will consider again relaxing the relevant height restrictions so that more members

of the public may participate in the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The objectives of the Government's energy policies are to ensure energy needs of the community are met safely, reliably and efficiently at reasonable prices, to minimise the environmental impact of energy production and use, and to promote the efficient use and conservation of energy. Under the targets of halving carbon emissions by 2035 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, the Government will review and take forward measures for promoting renewable energy (RE) having regard to actual circumstances, and will explore the development of a diversified fuel mix and increase the supply of zero-carbon energy and its share in the fuel mix for electricity generation, taking into account four important factors, namely safety, reliability, affordability and environmental performance.

Moving towards "net-zero electricity generation" is one of the four major decarbonisation strategies set out in the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050. Under this strategy, the Government's target of developing local RE is to increase the share of RE in the fuel mix for electricity generation to 7.5-10 per cent by 2035 and to 15 per cent gradually thereafter.

In consultation with the Development Bureau, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Lau is as follows:

(1) The Government launched the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) Scheme in collaboration with the two power companies in 2018. The power companies purchase the RE generated by members of the public at a rate higher than the normal electricity tariff rate. In the decade prior to the launch of the FiT Scheme, only some 200 private RE systems were connected to the power grid in Hong Kong. Following the launch of the Scheme, some 26 000 applications have been approved by the CLP Power Hong Kong Limited (CLP) and the Hongkong Electric Company Limited (HKE) as at September 2024. Upon completion of installation of the systems approved, it is estimated that about 399 million and 15 million kilowatt hour (kWh) of electricity can be generated for the CLP and the HKE respectively each year, accounting for about 0.85 per cent and 0.03 per cent of the two power companies' fuel mix for electricity generation, which is sufficient to meet the electricity demand of about 126 000 households.

In respect of the public sector, the Government has been optimising the favourable conditions of government buildings or premises to take the lead in developing RE, including raising the requirements of applying RE in new government buildings, as well as taking forward large-scale solar energy generation projects at restored landfills and other suitable locations. Besides, the Government has earmarked a total of \$3 billion for installing RE facilities at government buildings and facilities since 2017-18, of which about \$2.2 billion has been approved for more than 250 projects, which are

expected to generate a total of about 26 million kWh of electricity annually. In 2024, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department has also launched the Pilot Scheme on Building-Integrated Photovoltaics at its headquarters to explore the application of relevant technologies on the facades of buildings.

In addition, to complement the FiT Scheme, the Government has introduced a series of supporting measures, such as relaxing the requirements for the installation of solar energy generation systems on the rooftops of New Territories Exempted Houses (village houses), as well as facilitating the installation of solar energy generation systems at open car parks by the private sector, etc, with a view to providing incentives and facilitation to encourage the private sector to develop RE projects. Coupling these with the projects implemented through inter-departmental collaboration and optimising the use of space in the public sector, we are confident in achieving the target of meeting 1-2 per cent of Hong Kong's electricity demand with solar energy by 2035.

(2) The FiT Scheme is implemented under the Scheme of Control Agreements (SCAs) entered into between the two power companies and the Government. As the SCAs run till December 31, 2033, FiT is offered throughout the project life of the RE systems that have joined the FiT Scheme until the day when the term of the SCAs expires.

As RE technologies are becoming mature, the trends in the Mainland and the international arena are to gradually reduce and cease subsidies for RE. For instance, our country has cancelled the central financial subsidies for various newly-constructed RE projects and implemented RE grid parity three years ago since 2021, whereby the FiT rates are determined according to the prices of local coal-fired electricity generation or by the market, while state subsidies are no longer available. The FiT in Hong Kong will last until 2033, and the prevailing rates range from \$4 to \$2.5 per kWh. In contrast with the local tariff, the FiT Scheme in Hong Kong is currently one of the most attractive schemes among similar ones worldwide. Looking ahead, as the Mainland and many places in the world have completely ceased subsidising RE, the chance of the FiT Scheme being extended beyond the expiration of the SCAs in 2033 is believed to be slim. Nevertheless, individuals who have installed RE systems can generate electricity to offset their expenditure on electricity tariff. Apart from helping reduce carbon emissions, it is believed to continue to bring about economic benefits in the future in view of the development trend of RE technologies.

As regards RE systems exceeding one megawatt, they are not merely small-scale distributed RE systems, but perform the functions of power-generating infrastructure and normally involve additional laying of the power grid or reinforcing the support to it. In considering such systems, we need to balance their impact on electricity tariff and power supply. Therefore, instead of straightforward implementation through the FiT Scheme, a case-by-case approach must be adopted. Currently, the Government has four initial RE systems exceeding one megawatt in operation or under planning. They include the solar energy generation system already installed by the Drainage Services Department at the Siu Ho Wan Sewage Treatment Works and the solar energy generation system planned to be installed at the Yuen Long Effluent Polishing

Plant, which is under construction. The Water Supplies Department is also studying the development of a large-scale solar farm at the South East New Territories Landfill. All these systems would not join the FiT Scheme and the electricity so generated would be self-used by the government facilities, thereby offsetting the corresponding electricity tariff. So far, the two power companies have not formally received any FiT applications with RE systems exceeding one megawatt.

(3) There are statutory requirements on height and covered area of village houses (Note). Therefore, building design is relatively simple and uniform, and are of lower risks in terms of building safety. Having taken into account the above, the Government relaxed the height restriction for the installation of solar energy generation systems on the rooftop of village houses to 2.5 metres (m) in October 2018. No prior permission from the Lands Department (LandsD) or the Buildings Department (BD) is needed as long as this height restriction and other requirements are met. Nevertheless, certification and submission of a safety certificate to the LandsD for record by authorised person (AP) is still necessary.

Private buildings other than village houses vary in height, area and design and the surrounding environment is more complicated. Thus, the risks of installing solar energy generation systems on rooftop of the buildings are higher than those of village houses and these would involve more considerations, such as impact on the building structure (e.g. allowable load imposed on the rooftop), fire safety (e.g. effects on the means of escape), effect on the environment and whether it will cause nuisance to residents in the vicinity (mainly in terms of light reflection and visual impact etc). At present, for the installation of solar energy generation systems not exceeding 1.5 m in height on rooftop of private buildings, works can be commenced in accordance with the simplified requirements under the Minor Works Control System (MWCS) without prior approval from the BD. For cases exceeding 1.5 m in height, an AP and a registered structural engineer should be appointed to submit plans, and works may commence upon the BD's approval. In other words, the current approval regime has not set an insurmountable threshold in respect of the height of installation of solar energy generation systems in private buildings other than village houses.

Taking into account the situation of village houses and private buildings, the BD considers the current arrangement appropriate and does not intend to revise it at this stage.

Thank you, President.

Note: The Building Ordinance (Application to the New Territories) Ordinance stipulates restrictions on the height and roofed-over area of village houses, i.e. height not more than three storeys and not more than 8.23 metres, and roofed-over area not exceeding 65.03 square metres.

Auction of personalised vehicle registration marks to be held on December 8

The Transport Department (TD) today (November 20) announced that an auction of personalised vehicle registration marks (PVRMs) will be held on December 8 (Sunday) in Meeting Room S421, L4, Old Wing, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai.

"A total of 240 approved PVRMs will be put up for public auction. A list of the marks has been uploaded to the department's website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/index.html," a department spokesman said.

The reserve price of each of these marks is \$5,000. Applicants who have paid a deposit of \$5,000 should also participate in the bidding (including the first bid at the reserve price). Otherwise, the PVRM concerned may be sold to another bidder at the reserve price.

People who wish to participate in the bidding at the auction should take note of the following points:

(1) Bidders are required to produce the following documents for completion of registration and payment procedures immediately after successful bidding:

(i) the identity document of the successful bidder;
(ii) the identity document of the purchaser (if the purchaser and the successful bidder are different persons);
(iii) a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation (if the purchaser is a body corporate); and
(iv) a crossed cheque made payable to "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" or "The Government of the HKSAR". For an auctioned mark paid for by cheque, the first three working days after the date of auction will be required for cheque clearance confirmation before processing of the application for mark assignment can be completed. Successful bidders may also pay through the Easy Pay System (EPS), but are reminded to note the maximum transfer amount in the same day of the payment card. Payment by post-dated cheque, cash, credit card or other methods will not be accepted.

(2) Purchasers must make payment of the purchase price through EPS or by crossed cheque and complete the Memorandum of Sale of PVRM immediately after the bidding. Subsequent alteration of the particulars in the Memorandum will not be permitted.

(3) A PVRM can only be assigned to a motor vehicle which is registered in the name of the purchaser. The Certificate of Incorporation must be produced

immediately by the purchaser if a vehicle registration mark purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(4) The display of a PVRM on a motor vehicle should be in compliance with the requirements stipulated in Schedule 4 of the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations.

(5) Any change to the arrangement of letters, numerals and blank spaces of a PVRM, i.e. single and two rows as auctioned, will not be allowed.

(6) The purchaser shall, within 12 months after the date of auction, apply to the Commissioner for Transport for the PVRM to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. If the purchaser fails to assign the PVRM within 12 months, allocation of the PVRM will be cancelled and arranged for reallocation in accordance with the statutory provision without prior notice to the purchaser.

"Upon completion of the Memorandum of Sale of a PVRM, the purchaser will be issued a receipt and a Certificate of Allocation of Personalised Registration Mark. The Certificate of Allocation will serve to prove the holdership of the PVRM. Potential buyers of vehicles bearing a PVRM should check the Certificate of Allocation with the sellers and pay attention to the details therein. For transfer of vehicle ownership, this certificate together with other required documents should be sent to the TD for processing," the spokesman added.

For other auction details, please refer to the Guidance Notes – Auction of PVRM, which is available at the department's licensing offices or can be downloaded from its website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/pvr_m_auction/index.html.

CFS announces test results of seasonal food surveillance project on lap-mei (with photo)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 20) announced the test results of a recently completed seasonal food surveillance project on lap-mei. The test results of all 144 samples collected were satisfactory.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "Lap-mei is popular in winter and the CFS has therefore collected a variety of lap-mei samples including Chinese pork sausages, Chinese liver sausages, preserved duck meat and preserved pork from

different retailers including online retailers for chemical tests and nutrition content analyses."

Chemical tests targeted veterinary drug residues, metallic contaminants, preservatives usually found in preserved food, as well as other food additives that may be used in the production process and colouring matters that are not permitted in food. For nutrition content analyses, the contents of energy, carbohydrates, protein, total fat, saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, sodium and sugars of the samples were tested to check if they were consistent with their declared values on the nutrition label.

"Members of the public should maintain a balanced diet and avoid excessive consumption of lap-mei in view of its nitrate/nitrite level and potential risk of nitrosamine, as well as the relatively higher sodium, sugar and fat content in some lap-mei. Infants are highly susceptible to nitrite toxicity and should avoid consuming lap-mei, while for young children, the intake of lap-mei should also be restricted.

"Furthermore, the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization has classified processed meat as 'carcinogenic to humans' (Group 1). The public should avoid excessive consumption of processed meat to reduce the risk of developing colorectal cancer," the spokesman said.

The spokesman also called on the trade to comply with the legal requirements, follow good manufacturing practices and use permitted food additives in an appropriate manner. Retailers should source food from reliable suppliers and maintain a good recording system in accordance with the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

