

# LCQ1: Promoting transformation and commercialisation of research and development outcomes

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Liao and a reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

There are views pointing out that innovation and technology (I&T) provides key impetus for Hong Kong's high-quality economic development and the cultivation of new quality productive forces. In recent years, the SAR Government has achieved substantial results in I&T development. In addition, the National 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong's development into an international I&T hub, and this year's Policy Address further proposes promoting a closer collaboration among the Government and the industry, academia, research and investment sectors. Regarding promoting the transformation and commercialisation of research and development (R&D) outcomes, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that there is a mismatch between R&D and market demand as well as a lack of understanding and knowledge of R&D outcomes in the market, which have imposed constraints on the transformation of R&D outcomes, whether the authorities will consider spearheading the establishment of a territory-wide online platform and database for the transformation of R&D outcomes in collaboration with tertiary institutions, science and research institutes and the I&T sector, and explore the interfacing of the platform with relevant Mainland and overseas platforms, so as to open up information communication channels and achieve precise matching to assist in the transformation of R&D outcomes;

(2) whether it will, by making reference to the practices of other regions, formulate measures to take the lead in procuring local R&D products, and by drawing on the Mainland's experience, study the introduction of policies for the initial application of newly-developed equipment, materials and software, so as to support the promotion and application of products transformed from local R&D outcomes; and

(3) apart from increasing the share of profits from intellectual property rights for R&D teams or inventors, whether it will, by drawing reference from the practice of Guangdong Province, explore further strengthening the incentives for R&D personnel and teams, such as conferring on R&D personnel the ownership or long-term rights of use of their scientific and technological achievements, as well as equity rewards?

Reply:

President,

With an aim to enhance the innovation and technology (I&T) ecosystem, the Government has been promoting collaboration among the industry, academic and research sectors through various measures, and adopting a multi-pronged approach to support commercialisation of research and development (R&D) outcomes. Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), our reply to various parts of the question from the Hon Martin Liao is as follows:

(1) First of all, the Government appreciated the Hon Martin Liao's suggestions. The smooth accessibility and dissemination of information about R&D outcomes help enhance the market's understanding and apprehension of R&D, playing a positive role in promoting the transformation and commercialisation of R&D outcomes. The Innovation and Technology Commission established the Innovation Hub@HK website to showcase more than 560 R&D outcomes by 12 local universities and public research institutes as well as 28 InnoHK research laboratories. The website serves as a one-stop search platform, allowing the industry to customise search criteria according to its needs and contact individual research institute and university to explore commercialisation opportunities, thereby facilitating commercialisation of research outcomes and technology transfer to the industry.

Besides, the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) has doubled the maximum annual funding to the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) of each of the eight University Grants Committee-funded universities to \$16 million since 2024-25, facilitating the patent and licensing activities in TTOs to enhance their technology transfer capabilities, thereby supporting the development of innovative ideas and R&D outcomes into new products or services.

Meanwhile, the R&D centres set up by the Government have been taking forward industry-driven applied R&D work that suits market needs and transferring technologies to the industries through contract researches, licensing arrangements, etc. to commercialise their R&D outcomes.

The two I&T flagship entities in Hong Kong (viz. the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and the Cyberport) have been helping start-ups to establish connection with the industry through leveraging its incubation experience and investment/business networks, with a view to promoting technology transfer and commercialisation of R&D results. The two parks have also been actively connecting with the industry to facilitate collaboration between park companies and the local trade and industry.

In addition, it was announced in the Policy Address this year that the Government would facilitate the establishment of the Hong Kong New Industrialisation Development Alliance. Pooling together talents and resources from various fields, the Alliance aims to serve as a platform for collaboration among the Government, industry, academia, research and investment sectors. With a view to promoting co-operation among enterprises and organisations, we believe that the Alliance will also be conducive to the promotion of transformation and commercialisation of R&D outcomes.

(2) According to the FSTB, Hong Kong is one of the signatories to the Agreement on Government Procurement of the World Trade Organization (WTO GPA). The Government abides by procurement principles of the WTO GPA to treat all local and non-local suppliers on an equal footing. We also encourage participation of more local and non-local bidders to obtain goods and services at the best value for money through fair, open and competitive bidding procedures. Therefore, government bureaux and departments have always welcomed local enterprises to participate in bidding when procuring various goods and services. Without compromising the aforementioned government procurement principles, the Government has been actively introducing and applying I&T products and services from local start-ups with a view to playing a leading role. The major measures in recent years are as follows:

(a) The Public Sector Trial Scheme under the ITF provides eligible local companies/organisations with funding support for the production of prototypes or samples and conduct of trials of R&D outcomes in the public sector (including Government departments);

(b) The Smart Government Innovation Lab under the Digital Policy Office promotes and invites industry players to assist government departments in their adoption of I&T solutions, with a view to enhancing public services and city management, while creating more business opportunities for local I&T start-ups as well as small and medium-sized enterprises; and

(c) The E&M InnoPortal of the EMSD lists the technological needs of government departments, the public sector and electrical and mechanical trades. Organisations such as start-ups and academic institutions can propose I&T solutions via the portal for matching.

The Government will strive to create conditions for application of products of local scientific researches as far as practicable and encourage the market to procure relevant products more to demonstrate the industry's support.

(3) Local universities currently possess an array of R&D outcomes of core technologies/deep technology that have good potential for commercialisation. However, there have been constraints in relation to intellectual property (IP) matters under the management system of universities. In order to provide greater incentive for university teams to commercialise R&D outcomes with transformation potential, the Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme requires that the university teams/inventors should be entitled to no less than 70 per cent of the IP benefits (for IPs generated by the teams/inventors during the project period). We will keep a close watch on the actual circumstances and strive to consolidate Hong Kong's strengths in basic scientific research. Thank you.

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# LCQ15: Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme

Following is a question by Professor the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

On October 18 last year, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) officially launched the Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme, providing funding support on a matching basis to at least 100 research teams from eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee which had good potential to become successful start-ups. The ITC announced subsequently on September 6 this year the launch of the second round of applications of the Scheme. There are views that quite a number of processes of the Scheme can be enhanced. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the biannual application periods can be regularised to facilitate early preparation by applicants in seeking partnering enterprises and preparing necessary documents before clear deadlines;

(2) as it has been reported that in the first round of applications of the Scheme, the funding amounts applied for some projects were significantly reduced, making it necessary for the applicants in question to amend their original application forms and re-enter into agreements with their partnering enterprises, whether the authorities have currently allowed sufficient time for applicants to amend their application forms;

(3) of the authorities' time limit from the completion of application vetting and approval to the disbursement of funding; whether fixed deadlines would be set for vetting and approval as well as funding disbursement, thereby facilitating early arrangement by applicants for project implementation and liaison with partnering enterprises over the timing of fund transfers;

(4) as it has been reported that while many partnering enterprises of the applicants under the Scheme are of Mainland origin, Mainland enterprises have difficulties in effecting cross-boundary fund transfers, and the 2024 Policy Address has proposed exploring the facilitation of cross-boundary fund transfers by Mainland enterprises settling in the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone, whether the authorities will extend the scope of exploration to include Mainland partnering enterprises of the applicants under the Scheme; and

(5) as it has been reported that some project applications of the Scheme (e.g. in life science) have a prolonged research cycle which often spans over 10 years or more from conceptualisation to production, especially for those involving pharmaceutical research and development, hence making it difficult

to achieve productisation within the five years' project duration of the Scheme and thus, undermining the chance of successful application for such projects with a long research cycle under the Scheme, whether the authorities will consider drawing up separate terms and conditions for project applications with a prolonged research cycle?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon William Wong is as follows:

(1) The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) intends to invite applications twice every 12 months in respect of the Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus (RAISE+) Scheme. With the experience gained from the implementation of the RAISE+ Scheme over the past year, the ITC intends to regularly launch a round of application in September or October each year to enable universities to carry out the preparatory work.

For the other round of application, it will depend on the progress of the follow-up work of the previous round of application as well as factors such as the manpower arrangement of the Secretariat. Should the Secretariat have the capacity to launch another round of application, the ITC will notify the universities of the arrangement as soon as possible so that they can prepare for the applications.

(2) The approved funding amounts for the first round of approved projects were confirmed after the Steering Committee of the RAISE+ Scheme had examined the information provided in the applications of the relevant projects, and taken into account factors such as the financial estimates of the projects, as well as the reasonableness and necessity of the relevant expenditures. These final decisions were also made in adherence to the principle of ensuring the proper use of public funds. For projects approved in the first round, two months were given by the ITC to the universities concerned to revise their original applications, and all the universities were able to submit their revised applications before the deadline. Requests for extra time to revise the original applications will be considered on a discretionary basis by the ITC subject to the actual circumstances and reasons set out by individual universities.

(3) The time between the completion of vetting and allocation of funds varies from case to case, depending on the completeness of the information submitted by the university, accuracy of the team's financial calculations for the project, and whether complicated issues that require further clarification are involved, etc. It is therefore difficult to set a fixed timeframe for the disbursement of funds. In general, if the application and documents submitted by the university are confirmed to be in order and in full compliance with the requirements of the RAISE+ Scheme after vetting, government funding can be disbursed within a short period of time. However, there were a number of first round applications of which the documents submitted by universities did not match the information contained in the applications. Such cases required

additional time for the ITC to communicate with the universities and their teams to clarify the issues and obtain further documents and explanations before the applications can be further processed, which may result in a longer vetting time.

(4) and (5) The RAISE+ Scheme aims to fund, on a matching basis, research teams from universities which have good potential to become successful start ups in order to promote the transformation and commercialisation of excellent deep technology research and development (R&D) outcomes. The ITC welcomes universities and research teams to attract funding from various parties and submit applications for projects in different technology areas. In fact, most of the applications submitted by universities can attract investments from outside Hong Kong (including the Mainland and overseas) with letters of intent for investment signed. In vetting the applications, the Steering Committee of the Scheme will consider not only the potential of the projects but will also suitably take into account the time and cycle(s) required for the projects in different technology areas. Among the first batch of 24 projects which have confirmed their participation in the Scheme, quite a number of them are under the area of life and health technology, including those engaging in the R&D of pharmaceutical products (Note).

As we take forward the RAISE+ Scheme, the ITC will continue to listen to stakeholders' views, consolidate experience and review the relevant arrangements of the Scheme in a timely manner, so as to make the vetting process in the future smoother. The ITC will improve the Scheme and promote collaboration among the industry, academic and research sectors for incentivising universities to transform and commercialise more of their excellent R&D outcomes, thereby promoting the co-ordinated development of the upstream, mid-stream and downstream.

Note: In terms of commercialisation, the RAISE+ Scheme only requires the projects to initiate the commercialisation of R&D outcomes in the second stage, without strictly requiring them to achieve mass production or productisation of the R&D outcomes within five years.

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## **LCQ9: Equipping civil servants to embrace digital transformation of public services**

Following is a question by the Hon Chau Siu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

The Chief Executive has indicated in the Supplement to the 2024 Policy Address that the Civil Service Bureau will drive the adoption of management measures and digitalisation in government departments to reprioritise and reorganise their work, capitalise on technology solutions, and streamline work processes, thereby optimising the use of the civil service manpower resources. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the establishment and strength of the Clerical Officer, Clerical Assistant and Personal Secretary grades in each of the past three years, together with a breakdown by government department and rank;
- (2) of the following information on the recruitment exercises for Assistant Clerical Officers, Clerical Assistants and Personal Secretaries II in each of the past three years and this year to date: (i) target number of recruits, (ii) number of applicants, (iii) number of persons invited to attend skills tests, (iv) number of persons who passed the skills tests, (v) number of persons invited to attend interviews, (vi) number of persons who passed the interviews, (vii) number of appointment letters issued and (viii) number of persons who reported for duty;
- (3) as it has been reported that at present, 10-odd government departments are piloting the use of a document editing copilot application for the civil service (the Application), a generative artificial intelligence (AI) application platform developed by the Government, to help with tasks such as drafting and translating documents, and the authorities expect that the Application will be extended for full deployment in all government departments by the end of this year, of the current application situation and number of users of the Application, together with a breakdown by government department and rank of users; whether they have conducted surveys to collect users' feedback on the Application; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) of the research and development expenditure, as well as annual recurrent operating expenditure of the Application;
- (5) of the authorities' specific ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the Application in enhancing internal efficiency of the civil service, and whether they have estimated the Application's effectiveness; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (6) of the following information on technology and AI application training for civil servants provided by the authorities in the past year: (i) name of the training programmes, (ii) training format and programme hours, (iii) target number of trainees, (iv) actual number of trainees, (v) government departments and ranks of trainees and (vi) ways to review the effectiveness of training; and
- (7) as various digital government initiatives will be introduced one after another within the coming two years, whether the Civil Service College and the Digital Policy Office have formulated long-term plans for the enhancement of AI and digital literacy of serving civil servants (especially the general grades staff), with a view to equipping civil servants to embrace the digital

transformation of public services; if so, of the details and road map; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Supplement to the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address states that the Civil Service Bureau will, with the assistance of the Digital Policy Office (DPO), continue to drive the adoption of management measures and digitalisation in policy bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to reprioritise and re-organise their work, capitalise on technology solutions, and streamline work processes, with a view to optimising the use of the civil service manpower resources. At the same time, we are actively providing relevant training to civil servants in response to the challenges posed by the digital transformation of public services, with a view to meeting the needs of contemporary development, government services and operations.

Regarding the question raised by the Hon Chau Siu-chung, we have consulted the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, and our reply is as follows:

(1) As a multi-functional workforce, the Clerical and Secretarial (C&S) Grades deliver a wide range of frontline services to the public, in addition to the provision of general support duties at offices. The grade members are centrally managed by the General Grades Office (GGO) and are deployed to various B/Ds. The yearly breakdown (as at December 31 of each year) of the establishment and strength figures of the C&S Grades from 2021 to 2023 by B/Ds is provided at Annex I.

(2) In order to attract people aspiring to serve the community to join the civil service, speed up the recruitment process and provide job seekers with greater convenience, the Recruitment Centre of the GGO commenced operation in October 2023, under which year-round recruitment has replaced the previous biennial open recruitment exercises (OREs), providing "one-stop" service for those interested in applying for the job of Assistant Clerical Officer (ACO), Clerical Assistant (CA) and Personal Secretary II (PSII).

The first year target of the year-round recruitment is to recruit about 2 000 officers for the C&S Grades. Since its commencement, we have received more than 40 000 applications for the posts of ACO, CA and PSII, representing an increase of 23 per cent over the total number of applications received for the three posts in the 2022 ORE. So far, about 1 860 suitable candidates have passed the interview. We will make offer of appointment to them progressively upon completion of the requisite recruitment procedures. The breakdown of the recruitment figures for the above posts in the 2020 ORE, 2022 ORE and year-round recruitment since October 2023 is at Annex II.

(3) to (5) In 2023, the Government supported, through the InnoHK Research Clusters under the Innovation and Technology Commission, the establishment of the Hong Kong Generative AI Research and Development Center (HKGAI) which is formed by a group of research and development teams of local universities and



focuses on the research and development of generative AI (GenAI) technology and large language models (LLMs). The HKGAI is currently developing a LLM and a GenAI document processing copilot application based on that LLM. The application has been provided to officers of B/Ds for internal trial use starting from 2024. Under the co-ordination of the DPO, currently more than 800 government officers of different grades from over 20 B/Ds are participating in the pilot use programme, mainly for document processing work like drafting, translation and summarisation of documents.

The above-mentioned application is currently at the development stage. Through the pilot use programme, the HKGAI keeps on collecting feedbacks from government users (including feedbacks on the accuracy of contents and terminologies, user experience, effectiveness) in order to further train up and optimise LLM and the effectiveness of the application in document processing work. The costs associated with the above-mentioned application as well as the hardware, software and operating costs involved in the pilot use programme are covered by the HKGAI through existing resources. On the other hand, the relevant B/Ds participate in the pilot use programme and provide feedbacks with their existing staff, with no additional manpower resources involved.

(6) to (7) The DPO provides regular and multifarious training for government staff having regard to the needs arising from the application of technology in the course of development of the digital government. Such training includes face-to-face courses, seminars, workshops, e-learning, professional training courses, covering different technological fields such as big data analytics, AI, blockchain, cloud computing, geospatial analytics, information security and cybersecurity, Internet of Things, smart cities, information management, information system design and implementation, digital accessibility, information technology (IT) infrastructure and standards, etc. In 2023-24, the DPO arranged over 380 training programmes for some 17 800 trainees in total from IT-related professional grades of the DPO and various grades of other government departments. The DPO will continue to strengthen the training content and diversify the delivery modes to encourage more personnel from different grades to undergo training, thereby supporting the digital transformation of the Government.

Innovation and technology (I&T) application is also one of the key training areas of the Civil Service College (CSC). The CSC organises I&T application training for government officers at all levels, covering topics like global trends of the digital media, application and management of AI, data sharing, the use of social media to promote public services, etc. The CSC has also enriched the I&T element in its leadership and national studies training and Mainland visits to enhance civil servants' understanding on the latest advancements in I&T as well as smart city development in the Mainland. In 2023-24, around 5 000 civil servants of different ranks from various B/Ds participated in the above training programmes. Furthermore, the CSC provides civil servants with e-learning resources relating to AI, blockchain, data analytics and cybersecurity, etc. All the CSC classes collect feedbacks from participants through questionnaires. In class, discussions and analyses are held, where tutors would observe the performance of the participants to

assess their grasp of the subject matter. The CSC also enhances the elements relating to I&T application in the flagship leadership development programmes at all levels and national studies programmes, including organising workshops for the middle and senior management to enhance the digital literacy of civil servants and their capability in leading digital transformation. Furthermore, the CSC co-organises with the DPO on a regular basis a series of lectures specifically designed for senior directorates to deepen their understanding of topics such as IT, data management and cybersecurity, etc.

B/Ds also provide I&T training for their staff having regard to their operational needs, including training on AI, big data analytics, departmental IT application systems such as Building Information Modelling technology, application of geospatial data, etc.

In response to the digital transformation of public services, the GGO has also been actively enhancing the digital literacy and digital mindset of General Grades staff through classroom instruction, practical workshops and thematic sharing sessions to improve the knowledge and skills of General Grades staff in software application, social media, cybersecurity, IT project management, innovative thinking, etc. Examples include an executive training programme this year for suitable Executive Officers at middle and senior levels on digital transformation.

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## **LCQ11: Developing diverse tourism**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

There are views that tourism has always been an important driving force for the development of Hong Kong. To tie in with the concept of "tourism is everywhere" in Hong Kong, the Government should further promote the development of diverse tourism along the coloured themes of blue, green, black, white, red, gold and heritage. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how the authorities plan to expedite the promotion of blue, green, black, white, red, gold and heritage tourism, such as panda tourism, horse-racing tourism, country park tourism, financial tourism, gold tourism, as well as tourism related to heritage and the history of the War of Resistance;

(2) as it is learnt that the Government will enhance some hiking trails in country parks involving in the history of the War of Resistance and establish brand new historical trails, of the details of the brand new historical

trails to be established, including whether it will establish the Sha Tau Kok Heritage Trail advocated by the community and launch comprehensive promotion for it in the future; and

(3) how to make good use of technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) to promote tourism related to the history of the War of Resistance in a more dynamic and diversified manner; as it is learnt that a community group has launched the "AI Chat With Veterans" project, under which the images of veterans and their experiences are presented on its website and all-in-one machines through AI technology, whether the authorities will consider collaborating with the relevant group to make use of the project's technology at the historical sites of the War of Resistance or at the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence?

Reply:

President,

Tourism is one of the major driving forces of Hong Kong's economy. Following the resumption of normal cross-boundary travel starting from February 2023, Hong Kong's tourism industry began to recover at full speed with a steady growth in visitor arrivals. From January to October 2024, some 36.7 million arrivals were recorded, representing a year-on-year increase of about 37 per cent. As the Chief Executive pointed out in this year's Policy Address, the Government will develop Hong Kong into a premier tourism destination through innovative thinking and making better use of our rich and unique resources such as the Victoria Harbour, outlying islands, rural areas, cultures, cuisines, lifestyles and historic buildings. These elements, combined with our edges in technology, animation and comics, the performing arts, film and television culture, and more, will help instill the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong".

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Chan Yung, in consultation with the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the reply is as follows:

(1) In developing tourism products with characteristics, we will develop eco-tourism, explore more itineraries with characteristics related to the countryside and coastal routes, and enhance related amenities. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) is organising signature creative arts and cultural tourism projects, namely Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival and Design District Hong Kong at Sha Tau Kok, and will promote cultural and eco-tourism initiatives and products at Sha Tau Kok. Relevant policy bureaux will also take part in such work. For example, the Environment and Ecology Bureau will promote in-depth eco-tour experience by integrating culture characteristics of countryside villages, which include the organisation of island hopping tour(s) at Yan Chau Tong early next year to facilitate urban-rural symbiosis; while the DEVB will utilise the natural resources of South Lantau in such ways as expediting the development of the South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor, developing the ex-Lamma Quarry site into an area for leisure and

outdoor recreational uses, and developing two eco-tourism nodes, namely Tsim Bei Tsui and Pak Nai. The DEVB plans to invite expression of interest on the aforesaid three projects in the first quarter of next year.

On the promotion of panda tourism, the CSTB is organising a series of promotional and marketing activities in collaboration with the Ocean Park (OP), the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and all sectors of the community. These include driving different policy bureaux, the tourism industry and different related sectors to conduct extensive promotion on the theme of giant pandas for sparking the craze for giant panda across the city. For example, the Giant Panda Naming Competition and Giant Panda Painting Competition, organised by the CSTB and co-organised by the OP, were launched on October 2 this year, inviting submissions by October 27 and November 8 this year respectively. Responses to the two competitions were overwhelming with over 22 600 and 3 000 submissions received respectively, showing the public's love for the giant pandas. Besides, the OP has launched dedicated social media platforms for the giant pandas and issued posts to update members of the public on the conditions of the two giant pandas after their arrival in Hong Kong and provide educational information about conservation of giant pandas. The HKTB has also launched a dedicated one-stop "Giant Panda Special Page" on its Discover Hong Kong website to enable both locals and visitors to obtain information about giant pandas' events at any time. Furthermore, we have been encouraging different sectors of the community to seize the opportunities brought by the giant pandas, exercise creativity and launch a series of panda-related promotional activities, merchandise as well as cultural, creative and tourism products, etc., thereby creating business opportunities and actively promoting panda tourism. In fact, many merchants, organisations and groups have organised a number of promotional activities and events under the theme of giant pandas. For example, a number of shopping malls in different districts have already displayed installations and decorations featuring giant pandas for the public to take photos, and the China Travel Service Group will shortly launch promotional and marketing campaigns on the theme of giant pandas; the catering sector has introduced different giant panda-designed products, such as desserts, wines, gourmet vouchers; and the retail sector is rolling out a variety of crossover products featuring giant pandas.

In order to boost Hong Kong's reputation as a premier destination for horse racing tourism and establish the city as the finest in the Asia Pacific region, the CSTB will join hands with the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) to further promote horse racing tourism, focusing on international major races and themed local races. For example, the HKTB will encourage the trade to include horse racing experiences in the itineraries for cruise and MICE visitors; and will work with the HKJC in offering tailor-made luxury horse racing experiences for high value-added visitors to savour Hong Kong's long-standing and distinctive horse racing culture.

As regards making good use of historic buildings for tourism purposes, the Commissioner for Heritage's Office and the Antiquities and Monuments Office under the DEVB will continue to work closely with the Tourism Commission (TC) and the tourism sector in identifying historic buildings with

high tourism potential, and collaborate with the owners or user departments and organisations of the historic buildings with a view to encouraging them to open up their historic buildings for local and tourist visits and appreciation and to arrange guided tours, wherever practicable. The DEVB will provide them with appropriate support from the heritage conservation perspective. In addition, the DEVB organises from time to time various visits to historic buildings and heritage exhibitions, such as the Heritage Fiesta cum Roving Exhibition 2024 and themed exhibitions at the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, and shares the relevant information with the HKTB. The DEVB also consolidates information on declared monuments and graded historic buildings by building types to facilitate the tourism sector in arranging themed itineraries. The DEVB will continue to liaise with relevant owners or user departments and organisations to explore the installation of information plaques at their historic buildings to facilitate better understanding of the historical background and heritage value of the historic buildings by the local and tourists. For example, information plaques have been installed for most of the historic buildings along the Greater Bay Area Education Heritage Trail (Hong Kong Section) and "HKU Heritage Sights and Sites" heritage trail.

To achieve "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", we also need to solicit support from the travel trade. Therefore, we have all along been encouraging the travel trade to capitalise on the uniqueness of Hong Kong's East-meets-West culture to attract more visitors to experience the cosmopolitan appeal of Hong Kong. To further promote the development of in-depth travel itineraries and products with characteristics, the CSTB has allocated funding to implement the Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme to encourage the travel trade to develop more in-depth travel itineraries under six distinctive themes, namely the Great Green Escape, the Water Adventure, the Legacy of Joy, the HK Pop Culture, the Journey Through National History and the Unconventional Journey.

On promotion aspect, the HKTB has been promoting to visitors itineraries and attractions with local characteristics through various channels including website, social media and visitor centres. In addition, the HKTB's "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" promotions showcase authentic culture, characteristics, history, etc. of these neighbourhoods, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's tourism appeal. The HKTB will continue to promote the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" and develop new elements into existing programmes to attract visitors with authentic culture. Through its year-round promotional platform "Hong Kong Great Outdoors", the HKTB also continues to introduce in detail and promote Hong Kong's unique natural scenery and countryside experiences, and actively promote Hong Kong's nature-based green tourism products and countryside through various promotional channels including guidebooks, webpages, production of television programmes, social media and mobile apps.

(2) The TC, in collaboration with the AFCD, has been taking forward the "Enhancement of Hiking Trails" (the Project) since 2018 to enhance the tourism supporting facilities of 20 hiking trails in country parks which are popular and with tourism potential. The Project covers hiking trails relating to war history, namely Lion Rock Historic Walk, Shing Mun War Relics Trail and Luk Keng War Relics Trail, with a view to enhancing hikers' understanding

of the history of our country and Hong Kong. The AFCD completed the enhancement works at Lion Rock Historic Walk in December 2023 and has been taking forward the enhancement works at Shing Mun War Relics Trail and Luk Keng War Relics Trail. Regarding the proposal of establishing new heritage trails, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department would co-operate with departments that manage the different hiking trails and provide information on the historical background of relevant historical sites to enrich the content.

(3) At present, the permanent and thematic exhibitions at the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence (MWRCD) give an account of the history of Japan's aggression against China and Hong Kong's participation in the War of Resistance, as well as the missions and contributions of guerrillas after the fall of Hong Kong. Apart from using exhibition panels, historical photos and exhibits, the MWRCD also complements the exhibitions with interactive installations, videos and oral histories from veterans to introduce this period of history to visitors through various media and enrich their museum-going experience. With advancements in technology, the MWRCD, subject to availability of resources, will consider how to effectively utilise new technologies, so as to further enhance the visitors' museum experience.

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## **LCQ21: Roadside railings**

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

On issues relating to roadside railings, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of roadside railings in Hong Kong, together with a breakdown by District Council district and type of railing;
- (2) of the average fees in respect of the installation and maintenance of each railing in each of the past three years, together with a breakdown by type of railing;
- (3) of the average cycles of maintenance and replacement for each railing; and
- (4) given Hong Kong's development towards smart roads and smart traffic management, whether relevant departments of the Government will review the original functions and needs of the railings on each road section in a timely

manner?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Transport Department (TD) and Highways Department (HyD), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Andrew Lam is as follows:

(1) As at October 2024, the total length of roadside railings on public roads in Hong Kong managed and maintained by the TD and the HyD respectively was about 1 600 kilometres. A breakdown by district and type of railings is at Annex.

(2) The HyD is responsible for the repair and maintenance of public roads and ancillary road facilities (including roadside railings) under its purview. In the past three years (i.e. from 2021 to 2023), the average expenditure on installing and replacing various types of roadside railings by the HyD was about \$600 per metre, which included the relevant costs such as materials and labour. As the expenditure on maintenance works for railings is included in the expenditure on routine road maintenance, the HyD does not maintain a breakdown of the expenditure on routine maintenance of each type of railings.

(3) The roadside railings of the HyD are mainly made of galvanised steel, which can normally last for more than a few decades, except under abnormal circumstances such as damages caused by collision due to traffic accidents or improper use of roadside railings as load bearing points. The HyD conducts regular inspections on public roads and ancillary road facilities under its purview to ensure, among other things, that the railings are in good condition, e.g. no rusting of steel and no loosening of screws, etc. If the HyD discovers during regular inspections or receives reports of wear and tear or damage to the railings, it will arrange contractors to carry out repairs or replace them as soon as possible.

(4) The provision of pedestrian railings is meant to guide pedestrians to cross the roads and prevent them from inadvertently moving away from footpaths onto carriageways, thereby ensuring road safety and achieving traffic management. Meanwhile, the HKeMobility mobile application of the TD provides walking routes across all districts in Hong Kong. Members of the public can look up the locations of pedestrian crossing facilities and use the walking route search function to plan walking routes. By planning walking routes in advance, the chance of pedestrians inadvertently walking into the carriageway can also be minimised.

Pedestrian railings are mainly erected at road junctions, pedestrian crossings, transport interchanges, school entrances/exits, central medians and pedestrian refuge islands, etc. At present, the TD adopts a "minimal approach" in the provision of pedestrian railings, which aims at stripping away excessive railings that are not bringing value to the implementation of the policy of enhancing walkability of the pedestrian environment and

reducing street cluttering, with a view to releasing more space for pedestrians on footpaths. The TD will conduct reviews of pedestrian railings under its purview as necessary to assess whether they should be maintained, removed or replaced, taking into account the functions of the railings, prevailing guidelines, accident records of the locations concerned, public views, etc. On matters relating to the decluttering of pedestrian railings, the TD will consult local stakeholders through District Offices as and when necessary.