

LCQ3: Measures to facilitate elderly persons to retire in Mainland

Following is a question by the Hon Kingsley Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

The Guangdong (GD) Scheme and the Fujian (FJ) Scheme under the Social Security Allowance Scheme allow eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who have moved to reside in these two provinces to receive the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) or the Old Age Allowance (OAA). On the other hand, it has been reported that according to a survey conducted by an organisation, nearly 400 000 Hong Kong residents are of Hainan origin, and among them, about 85 000 are elderly persons aged above 65, and due to the beautiful environment, good air quality and low cost of living in the Hainan Province, many Hainanese who responded to the survey have expressed their intention to settle in their home province after retirement. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will study introducing a "Hainan Scheme" to allow eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who have moved to reside in the province to receive OALA or OAA so as to meet their keen demand; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) in addition to the portable Social Security Allowance and a series of schemes relating to residential care services and healthcare, of other policy initiatives put in place by the authorities to facilitate elderly persons to settle in the Mainland after retirement, in order to provide them with an additional option for quality ageing; and

(3) of the current respective numbers of beneficiaries of the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme; what new measures are in place to step up publicity on the two schemes?

Reply:

President,

The Government currently implements a number of measures to facilitate Hong Kong elderly persons' retirement on the Mainland and provide them with more choices. Amongst them, portable cash assistance initiatives include the Guangdong (GD) Scheme, the Fujian (FJ) Scheme and the Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (PCSSA) Scheme. Under the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme, eligible Hong Kong elderly persons who choose to retire in GD and FJ can receive the Old Age Allowance (OAA) or the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) without returning to Hong Kong every year. As at March 2024, there

were 25 011 and 2 447 elderly persons benefiting from the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme respectively.

Portable cash assistance only covers eligible elderly persons retiring in GD and FJ because there are relatively more Hong Kong residents residing in these two provinces, and the two provinces are uniquely and closely connected with Hong Kong on social, economic and transport fronts, etc. According to the data of the Census and Statistics Department and the National Bureau of Statistics, most Hong Kong elderly persons or residents residing on the Mainland stay in GD and FJ, accounting for about 80 per cent of the total number of such persons.

At present, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has appointed agents to assist in the implementation of the portable cash assistance initiatives and provide a range of services, including submitting applications for elderly persons who cannot return to Hong Kong, conducting case reviews, providing enquiry and declaration services to recipients, assisting the SWD in recovering overpaid allowances from recipients and investigating suspected fraud cases, etc. Our country has a vast area, and Hong Kong elderly persons residing in other provinces or municipalities on the Mainland are relatively small in number and scattered. If the scope of the portable cash assistance initiatives is to be expanded to more Mainland provinces and municipalities, we need to carefully consider the administrative expenses involved in appointing agents to provide relevant services in these areas and the associated cost-effectiveness.

Furthermore, we must point out that the portable cash assistance initiatives involve relaxing the requirement of recipients' residence in Hong Kong while they receive relevant cash assistance. The financial implications must be carefully considered when implementing the relevant initiatives.

When the Government considers expanding the cash assistance initiatives, it must take into account long-term fiscal sustainability and prudently use public funds to support Hong Kong elderly persons. We will carefully listen to the community's views on the portable cash assistance initiatives, with a view to striking a balance between addressing the demands of Hong Kong residents and making appropriate use of limited welfare resources. The Government currently has no plan to expand the scope of the portable cash assistance initiatives to Hainan Province.

The Member is concerned about whether the Government has other policy measures to facilitate elderly persons' retirement on the Mainland. In order to strengthen support for elderly persons retiring in GD and FJ, the Housing Bureau provides flexibility to elderly persons who need to surrender their public rental housing (PRH) units or delete their names from the tenancies upon receiving portable cash assistance. Considering that Hong Kong elderly persons may encounter adaptation issues after moving to the Mainland, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) currently allow elderly persons to keep their PRH units for no more than three months, with the grace period starting from the date of the elderly persons' departure from Hong Kong.

If the recipients voluntarily surrender their PRH units, the HA and the HKHS will issue a Letter of Assurance to the recipients upon their request while recovering the PRH units, provided that there is no breach of the Tenancy Agreement. In the event of their return to Hong Kong for good and redemption of the Letter of Assurance, the recipients will be allocated a refurbished PRH unit by the HA or the HKHS if they meet the eligibility criteria for PRH application and the conditions as laid down in the Letter of Assurance, subject to availability of resources.

If the recipients delete their names from the PRH tenancies while their family members still live in the PRH units, they can apply to the HA for a Letter of Reinstatement. In the event of their return to Hong Kong for good and redemption of the Letter of Reinstatement from the HA, subject to the prevailing housing policies, the recipients may apply for reinstatement of their names in the tenancies as authorised family members, provided that the tenancies of the units are still valid. The HKHS also puts in place similar arrangements for its PRH units.

The SWD has set up thematic websites about the GD Scheme and the FJ Scheme to provide online application forms and information such as eligibility criteria, application procedures and frequently asked questions. The Government's Cross-boundary Public Services thematic website also provides relevant services and information to facilitate Hong Kong residents' submission of applications on the Mainland. From time to time, the SWD promotes the two schemes through various channels, including promotional videos on television and cross-boundary coaches, newspaper advertisements, putting up posters and distributing promotional flyers and application forms, etc. Furthermore, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Guangdong of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the SWD's agents on the Mainland would assist in promotion through their websites, physical networks and WeChat official accounts, etc.

LCQ17: Developing “silver economy”

Following is a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

In February this year, the Government established the Advisory Panel on Silver Economy (Advisory Panel) to conduct research on the market demand and development of the "silver economy" and give relevant recommendations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Advisory Panel has commenced the aforesaid research; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, whether the scope of the research includes (i) the trend in the proportion of elderly population in the next five years, (ii) the consumption potential (e.g. income, assets and the balance of the Mandatory Provident Fund account) of soon-to-be-elderly persons (i.e. persons aged 55 to 64) and the elderly (i.e. persons aged 65 or above), and (iii) the current contribution percentage of the elderly care industry to Gross Domestic Product; if so, of the preliminary results of the research; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the authorities will, in order to collect data on elderly consumption, consider conducting regular research on the consumption activities and potential of the elderly, as well as the proportion of elderly population; if so, of the planning of such research; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as there are views pointing out that in recent years, there has been a tendency among local elderly people to go north for spending, of the authorities' policies in place to attract them to stay and spend in Hong Kong;

(4) whether it will consider developing overseas silver markets and promoting "silver tourism", such as introducing measures to attract overseas elderly people to visit Hong Kong for sightseeing and spending; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) given that the Mainland defines the "silver economy" as the collection of a series of economic activities such as providing products or services to the elderly and preparing for old age, whether the Government will draw reference from this definition and include products and services aimed at preparing middle-aged and young people for old age (e.g. anti-ageing health products, medical beauty services, and wealth planning and insurance products) in its plan to develop the "silver economy"?

Reply:

President,

The consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Jeffery Lam is as follows:

The growing elderly population in Hong Kong is emerging as an important consumer group. According to the projection of the Census and Statistics Department, the number of persons aged 65 or above in Hong Kong will soar from 1.64 million in 2023 to 2.67 million in 2043, representing 35 per cent of the total population by then.

To tap into the business potential of the "silver economy", the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) established the Advisory Panel on Silver Economy (Advisory Panel) in February 2024. Chaired by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, the Advisory Panel comprises experts

from different fields such as the business and social welfare sectors, conducts in-depth research on the market demands of the "silver economy" and the development and business activities of its related industries (such as the cultural, tourism, telecommunications and exhibition industry), and will offer recommendations in one year's time.

Since its establishment, the Advisory Panel has convened two meetings, to review such statistics as the trend in the proportion of the elderly population, the consumption capability, patterns and habits of the elderly and soon-to-be-elderly persons, and existing Government policies and measures that are conducive to the development of "silver economy", including gerontechnology solution and products, financial and digital services, public transport fare subsidy, as well as consumer education and protection. The Advisory Panel has also referred to the Opinions on Developing the Silver Economy to Improve the Well-being of the Elderly promulgated by the General Office of the State Council in January 2024, when considering how to facilitate the market development of products and services catering to the elderly population and inject economic impetus into relevant industries.

"Silver economy" encompasses a wide array of products and services, covering a wide range of industries and trades. To unleash the business potential of the elderly market, and strengthen support for the needs and desires of the elderly, the Government is setting directions and goals and formulating policy measures for the development of the "silver economy". The Government will provide relevant research data, results, and recommendations as soon as possible.

LCQ 19: Payment arrangement of Legal Aid Department

Following is a question by the Hon Lam San-keung and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

Between January and June last year, there were in total 2 326 assigned out cases by the Legal Aid Department (LAD) for which legal proceedings had been concluded (i.e. settled or adjudicated). Regarding the LAD's payment arrangement, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as at the 30th of last month, of the number of the aforesaid cases in which the lawyers, experts or other parties have been paid in full by the LAD within a year after the conclusion of the legal proceedings, and the amount of payments involved;

(2) among the aforesaid 2 326 cases, of the estimated amount of monies involved in those cases where payments have yet to be made; among such cases, of the number of those in which the lawyers, experts or other parties have received advance payments of interim costs, and the amount of monies involved; and

(3) given that under the existing arrangement, the LAD will only effect the balance payment to the lawyers, experts or other parties upon receipt of all monies due to the aided persons and the LAD, whether the authorities will consider reviewing the arrangement and study the possibility of allowing the LAD to effect balance payments to the persons concerned before receiving all monies, with a view to speeding up the effecting of balance payments?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the Hon Lam San-keung's question is as follows:

The Legal Aid Department (LAD) has set a performance pledge for effecting payments to lawyers, experts or other parties who have provided service in legal aid cases, namely to (i) effect advance payments of interim costs within six weeks from the receipt of bills by the LAD, and (b) effect balance payments within six weeks from the date of agreement of all costs and disbursements related to the case, or receipt of all monies due to the aided person and the LAD, whichever is later. In 2023, the LAD fulfilled the performance pledge at a rate as high as 99 per cent.

In general, upon the conclusion of the legal proceedings of a case (i.e. the case has been settled or adjudicated), it usually takes time for the relevant parties to agree the amount of costs and disbursements, and for the receipt of all monies due to the aided person and the LAD. Out of the 2 326 cases for which legal proceedings were concluded between January and June 2023, as at June 30, 2024, there are 2 261 cases (about 97 per cent in the total number of cases) in which the payments have been made in full, and the amount involved is around HK\$336.69 million. Meanwhile, there are 65 cases in which the payments have not yet been made in full. Most of these cases involve agreement yet to be reached on the amount of costs and disbursements by the parties involved, or bills or required information yet to be submitted by assigned lawyers to the LAD, rendering the LAD unable to confirm the amount of payment to be made. Nevertheless, other than 12 cases in which the assigned lawyers have yet to submit any bill to the LAD, the LAD has effected advance payments in the remaining 53 cases, and the amount involved is around HK\$9.99 million.

In light of the views of the legal industry on receipt of payment for their services, the LAD has implemented various measures to shorten the time required for assessing the fees payable to assigned lawyers and expedite the payment process, including making advance payment of interim costs to assigned lawyers upon receipt of their interim bills to the LAD before the conclusion of a case, setting up a helpline for assigned lawyers to make direct enquiries with the responsible staff of the LAD on the progress of

costs assessment, etc. The LAD will continue to closely keep in view the actual situation of payments, and conduct timely review when necessary.

LCQ16: Ancillary transport facilities for Kai Tak Development Area

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

It has been reported that the large-scale sports facilities in the Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA) will commence trial operation in early next year. Meanwhile, major sports competitions or events, as well as competitions of the 15th National Games (National Games), will be held in the area one after another. However, there are views that KTDA obviously lacks sufficient roads for pedestrian and vehicular access and relevant ancillary transport facilities at present, and the Central Kowloon Route (CKR) and the Trunk Road T2 linking the area with nearby areas will take time to complete. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the completion of CKR is expected to be no earlier than 2025 [according to the authorities' latest estimate, of the restraints on the construction works that have to be overcome to expedite the completion; whether the authorities will make arrangements to enable the early completion of the works, so as to provide spectators with convenient access routes by vehicles and tie in with the staging of the National Games; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the authorities' contingency plans in place to ensure that the additional vehicular traffic during the staging of major competitions or the National Games in KTDA will not cause traffic congestion in the surrounding areas;

(3) as the Government plans to develop the Kai Tak Smart and Green Mass Transit System which will be connected to the Kai Tak Sports Park, but the alignment of the system will not be extended to Kwun Tong, of the authorities' evaluation of the effectiveness of the said system in diverting the passenger and vehicular flows accessing the large-scale sports facilities in KTDA after its completion;

(4) as the authorities have proposed in recent years the implementation of a "multi-modal" Environmentally Friendly Linkage System (EFLS) in place of the EFLS for Kowloon East, and the Chief Executive has announced in his 2023 Policy Address the implementation of smart and green mass transit in KTDA, of

the current work progress of the authorities in introducing the multi-modal EFLS; before the completion of the smart and green mass transit, whether the authorities have considered devising public transport routes (including bus, minibus and other public transport) that run via or provide direct access to the large-scale sports facilities in KTDA; and

(5) of the respective numbers of additional parking spaces for tourist coaches and private cars in KTDA in the future?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau, Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, Highways Department and Transport Department (TD), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) The Central Kowloon Route (CKR) is about 4.7 kilometres (km) in length, linking Yau Ma Tei Interchange of West Kowloon with Kowloon Bay and Kai Tak Development Area (KTDA) of East Kowloon. It consists mainly of about 3.9 km of tunnels, most of which are constructed deep in rock stratum.

The overall progress of the CKR project is satisfactory. Most of the structural works for the tunnels, slip roads and tunnel buildings have been completed while the associated electrical and mechanical works are in full swing. The remaining main works include the tunnel works of about 300-metre section between Ferry Street and Shanghai Street beneath the Gascoigne Road Flyover. The need to minimise the impact on traffic, environment and residents in the vicinity during the construction period, coupled with the uncertainties in the underground environment, pose a number of engineering challenges. The project team continues to actively take measures to overcome the challenges encountered and catch up with the works progress, with a view to commissioning in 2025 as scheduled. The exact date is yet to be confirmed.

We will continue to closely monitor the works progress with a view to facilitating the early commissioning of the CKR, so that it can serve its traffic diversion function and alleviate the traffic load of other major roads in the area.

(2) and (3) When large-scale events are to be held at the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) in the future, the Government will closely liaise with Kai Tak Sports Park Limited and public transport operators in advance to make necessary preparations and arrangements, depending on the scale of the events and the needs of the visitors. Crowd dispersal from the KTSP will mainly rely on mass transit system. Where necessary, the Government and public transport operators will deploy contingency measures such as strengthening railway services and arranging special bus services to meet the additional transport demand during the event period.

As for the 15th National Games (NG), the TD will work closely with the Steering Committee under the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Organising Committee of the 15th NG, its Coordinating Committees and the

National Games Coordination Office (Hong Kong), provide traffic and transport related inputs to assist them in co-ordinating with other relevant parties and ensure smooth traffic arrangements for the NG.

The proposed Smart and Green Mass Transit System in Kai Tak will have a station near the KTSP, connecting with the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in the former runway area of Kai Tak and the MTR Kai Tak Station. Its design and operation arrangement will be subject to the transit system to be adopted eventually. The Transport and Logistics Bureau will closely liaise with the Police and the operator of the KTSP with a view to catering for the crowd dispersal arrangement at the KTSP upon commissioning of the System.

(4) The Government is taking forward various initiatives of the "multi-model" Environmentally Friendly Linkage System. Among them, the elevated landscaped pedestrian deck to enhance connectivity near the MTR Kwun Tong Station commenced construction in 2022 and is targeted for completion by end 2025. The GreenWay network for shared-use by pedestrians and cyclists will dovetail with the implementation programmes of the open space and infrastructure projects in the KTDA. The first phase of the GreenWay network, about 7.5 km long, is expected to be commissioned by phases in 2024 the earliest. As regards the traveller facilities linking up the former Kai Tak Runway Area, the Kowloon Bay Action Area and the Kwun Tong Action Area, including the pedestrian cum cyclist bridge with travelators across Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter and elevated travelators at Wai Yip Street and Sheung Yee Road, the study and detailed design of these projects are in progress as planned.

Moreover, the TD has been planning appropriate public transport services in advance to meet passenger needs taking into account the latest situation of the infrastructure facilities and developments in the KTDA. Located at the heart of the KTDA, the KTSP is served by a range of diversified, efficient and convenient public transport services in the vicinity. Among them, the MTR Kai Tak Station and Sung Wong Toi Station, which are connected to the Tuen Ma Line railway service, are about 10 to 15 minutes' walk from the KTSP. The nearby bus stops at Shing Kai Road have different bus routes providing services including those to and from various districts in Kowloon as well as eastern Hong Kong Island, while the bus stops at Prince Edward Road East also have a number of bus routes connecting to various districts in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories.

The TD will continue to closely monitor the development of the area, with a view to adjusting or enhancing the local public transport services when necessary to meet passengers' demand.

(5) According to plan, it is expected that there will be an addition of about 1 000 private car parking spaces and about 70 coach parking spaces made available for public use in the KTDA from now to 2025 to meet the parking demand in the area.

LCQ20: Enhancing the facilities of the MTR Lam Tin Station

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Ka-piu and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

There are views that when the MTR Lam Tin Station was commissioned in 1989, due consideration was not given to residents' needs for barrier-free access. For example, residents in Lam Tin and Cha Kwo Ling travelling between Exit A and Exit D of Lam Tin Station respectively and the station concourse can only do so via escalators due to the lack of lifts. Moreover, there are views that given the intake of residential development projects at Ko Ling Road and the forthcoming redevelopment of Cha Kwo Ling Village, the patronage of Lam Tin Station is expected to increase continuously. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics and made estimates on the respective total populations and the populations of elderly of Lam Tin and Cha Kwo Ling (i) in 1989, (ii) at present, (iii) in 2034 and (iv) in 2044;

(2) whether it knows if the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has compiled statistics and made estimates on the respective carrying capacity and average daily patronage of Lam Tin Station (i) in 1989, (ii) at present, (iii) in 2034 and (iv) in 2044;

(3) whether it knows if MTRCL has compiled statistics on the respective design capacities and the highest usage rates during peak hours of the escalators at Exit A and Exit D of Lam Tin Station; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it knows the contingency measures put in place by the MTRCL in case of service suspension of the escalators at Exit A or Exit D of Lam Tin Station due to equipment failures or accidents, so as to ensure that passengers can still travel between those exits and the areas nearby;

(5) whether it knows if MTRCL will consider wholesale replacement of the escalators at Exit A and Exit D of Lam Tin Station to enhance their safety and reliability;

(6) given that MTRCL currently provides Accessible-car for the carriage of wheelchair-bound passengers between Exit A or Exit D1 of Lam Tin Station and Exit B1 of Yau Tong Station, while it is reported that as Accessible-car can only carry one electric wheelchair-bound passenger or two manual wheelchair-bound passengers at a time, and advance booking service is not available, wheelchair-bound passengers in need can only request such service after arriving at Lam Tin Station or Yau Tong Station, and the waiting time can be

as long as half an hour, whether it knows if MTRCL has examined how the service can be further optimized to provide more convenience to wheelchair-bound passengers; and

(7) whether it knows if MTRCL has examined the expansion of Exit A and Exit D of Lam Tin Station for the construction of inclined lifts (to provide more convenient barrier-free connections) and/or staircases (for diversion and evacuation purposes); if MTRCL has, of the progress; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the Planning Department (PlanD) and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Tang Ka-piu is as follows:

(1) The C&SD conducts a population census/by-census once every five years and can provide population figures for smaller geographical areas based on these results. The latest population census was conducted in 2021. According to the results of the 1991 and 2021 Population Census, the population residing in Lam Tin area and Cha Kwo Ling area are given in the table below. The C&SD does not maintain relevant statistics for 1989 and 2024.

| Population | | Year | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| | | 1991 | 2021 |
| Population of Lam Tin area (Tertiary Planning Unit 297) | Total population | 69 600 | 98 500 |
| | Elderly persons (Aged 65 or above) | 6 800 | 23 100 |
| Population of Cha Kwo Ling area (Tertiary Planning Unit 290) | Total population | 4 700 | 52 700 |
| | Elderly persons (Aged 65 or above) | 300 | 9 200 |
| Total | | 74 300 | 151 200 |

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

According to the Projections of Population Distribution published by the PlanD in March 2024, the projected population in Lam Tin and Cha Kwo Ling by the abovementioned Tertiary Planning Units are 95 500 and 49 300 respectively in 2027. The Government does not maintain the projected number of elderly persons and the projected population in 2034 and 2044 for such Units.

(2) All train compartments of the MTR railway lines were designed in accordance with the prevailing industry standards at the time of their construction, and the maximum carrying capacity of train compartments was

calculated based on an average of up to six standing persons per square metre (ppsm). At present, the maximum carrying capacity of the Kwun Tong Line is 71 400 passenger trips per hour per direction.

When assessing the service demand for railway lines, the MTRCL will normally use the loading of the highest loading section (i.e. the critical link of railway lines) as an indicator. In 2023, the patronage per direction in the busiest hour of the morning peak for the critical link on the Kwun Tong Line (from Choi Hung to Kowloon Bay) was about 34 500. Based on a four ppsm passenger density, the loading was about 68 per cent, while the loading was about 48 per cent based on a six ppsm passenger density. According to the information of the MTRCL, the overall passenger flow at the MTR Lam Tin Station is generally smooth, and the station can cope with the patronage at peak hours.

The MTRCL has been closely monitoring the operation of its stations, while the Government would also urge the MTRCL to keep abreast of the development of neighbouring communities and passenger needs, review its station facilities in a timely manner and upgrade station facilities when necessary, with a view to providing passengers with more comfortable and convenient railway services. Apart from upgrading station facilities, the MTRCL would implement appropriate passenger flow management measures during peak hours when patronage is higher. These measures include deploying station staff to facilitate the boarding and alighting of passengers and maintain order at platforms, as well as adjusting the entry and exit directions of station entrances to smoothen the passenger flow.

(3) There are a total of nine escalators at Entrance/Exit A of Lam Tin Station, which are divided into three groups at three sections (i.e. the upper, middle and lower sections), connecting the station concourse with Kai Tin Road. At Entrance/Exit D, there are two escalators facilitating passengers' access to the station concourse and Sin Fat Road. Each escalator has a design capacity of around 120 commuters per minute. While the MTRCL does not have the statistics on the actual escalator throughput, it is observed that the escalators are in smooth operation and are effective in easing passenger flow during peak hours and other periods.

(4) To ensure the smooth operation of escalators in its stations, the MTRCL has put in place a stringent system of repair and maintenance for escalators within the MTR network, and will carry out regular inspections and maintenance works in accordance with the statutory requirements. The MTRCL will carry out major refurbishment and replace components to ensure the safe and reliable operation of escalators, and offer passengers with highly efficient services.

In case an escalator in Lam Tin Station is out of service due to various factors, the MTRCL will implement passenger flow management measures correspondingly, such as deploying additional staff to maintain order, proactively assisting passengers in making use of the escalators, enhancing station announcement, and arranging contractors to promptly repair the facility. When necessary, a station entrance/exit might be used as a one-way exit while other temporary supporting measures will be implemented as

appropriate to ease passenger flow.

(5) In general, escalators within the MTR network have a design lifespan of over 40 years. Apart from routine inspection and maintenance, the MTRCL will carry out a major mid-life refurbishment for an escalator after about 25 years of usage through a contractor to thoroughly repair and maintain the components of the entire escalator and replace the worn-out parts. During the refurbishment, the MTRCL will closely monitor the work progress while ensuring the smooth flow of passengers. Relevant measures will also be taken to minimise the impact on passengers.

In fact, the MTRCL already carried out a major refurbishment for all 11 escalators at Entrances/Exits A and D of Lam Tin Station by batches between 2015 and 2019. In addition, most of the escalators at Entrance/Exit A are undergoing component replacement works between May and August this year to further enhance the efficacy of these facilities.

(6) Since September 2016, the MTRCL has been providing barrier-free connection service at Lam Tin Station free of charge by arranging the Accessible-Car Service for wheelchair passengers to facilitate their travelling between station entrances/exits on Kai Tin Road and Lei Yue Mun Road. The service is welcomed by the local community and people with disabilities.

Since the launch of the connection service, the MTRCL has been maintaining communication with and listening to the views of the stakeholders, including members of the Legislative Council and District Councils, disability groups, and other passengers and community stakeholders. Upon thorough study and wide consultation of the stakeholders, the MTRCL has enhanced the service by relocating the pick-up/drop-off point at Entrance/Exit C of Lam Tin Station near Lei Yue Mun Road to the vehicular access of Yau Lai Estate outside Entrance/Exit B1 of Yau Tong Station since April 16, 2023. The adjustment enables wheelchair passengers to get on/off the vehicles in a safer and more convenient environment, and is generally welcomed by various stakeholders. The operation of the barrier-free connection service, though subject to the time required for deploying the vehicles and road traffic conditions, is observed to be smooth in general.

(7) At present, there is a barrier-free ramp at Entrance/Exit C of the MTR Lam Tin Station to connect the station with Lei Yue Mun Road, which facilitates the access of passengers to/from the station. The MTRCL had explored retrofitting barrier-free facilities at Entrance/Exit A on Kai Tin Road and Entrance/Exit D1 on Sin Fat Road, but found them unfeasible due to the constraints of geographical conditions, spaces inside the station, and land ownership, etc..

The MTRCL will communicate with the disability groups on a regular basis to understand the needs of people with disabilities in relation to station facilities and services, with a view to continuously improving the barrier-free accessibility of railway services.