

LCQ16: UNESCO Creative Cities Network

Following is a question by the Hon Yim Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

It is learnt that the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) seeks to promote co-operation with cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development, with a view to placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of the regional development plans. UCCN represents seven fields, including Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music. As at October last year, a total of 350 cities had joined UCCN. There are views that Hong Kong's accession to UCCN will help promote the development of the city's cultural and creativity industries, facilitate exchanges between the enterprises and practitioners concerned and their international counterparts, as well as align with the goal of developing Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange as set out in the National 14th Five-Year Plan. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it has proactively considered seeking Hong Kong's accession to UCCN; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, (i) the specific details and progress of the related work, (ii) whether the authorities have considered the fields through which Hong Kong's creativity and characteristics to be showcased, and (iii) in addition to the fields mentioned in (ii), whether the authorities have considered the fields to be levelled up to international standards in a bid to develop Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange?

Reply:

President,

As we understand, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was founded in 2004 in order to strengthen international co-operation among cities on the promotion and implementation of sustainable development through culture and creativity. The UCCN covers seven creative fields, namely design, literature, music, crafts and folk art, film, media arts, and gastronomy. Member cities of the UCCN initiate creative activities in related fields so as to promote the development of the economic, social, cultural, environmental and other aspects in their cities.

The National 14th Five-Year Plan has expressed clear support for Hong Kong to develop into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has been proactively promoting the development of arts, culture and creative industries, including continuing to vigorously promote cultural exchanges and collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland and overseas. To support Hong Kong arts groups and artists to perform, showcase and collaborate with counterparts outside Hong

Kong, including in the Mainland, Southeast Asia and Europe, etc, we provide funding support and liaise through the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland and overseas cities. We also support cultural exchanges by a number of Hong Kong's outstanding arts projects recognised by the China National Arts Fund. Many funded projects have been successfully implemented in the Mainland, Macao, North America and Central and Eastern Europe to promote Chinese culture.

The CSTB actively establishes various platforms and brand projects, such as hosting the Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo for the first time this year and co-ordinating the Fourth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival as the host city, to explore a larger market for Hong Kong and Mainland arts groups, and plays an active role of "bringing in" different cultures while enabling our culture to "go global", establishing Hong Kong as an important hub for cultural exchange. As one of the most important cultural infrastructure projects of the Government, the West Kowloon Cultural District has also been actively collaborating with cultural organisations worldwide to strengthen mutual learning amongst different civilisations.

The Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency (CCIDA) under the CSTB has been subsidising initiatives and activities advocated and organised by the industries as well as exhibitions and exchange activities held around the world, including fashion weeks, film festivals, art expos, etc, for the development of Hong Kong's creative industries through the CreateSmart Initiative and the Film Development Fund (FDF). The CCIDA also collaborates with the industries to strengthen co-operation with counterparts from the rest of the world, with a view to reinforcing Hong Kong's status as Asia's creative capital. For example, the Business of Design Week partners with overseas countries/cities to promote design co-operation and exchanges. Now it has become the largest design gala in Asia, and among the largest similar events in the world. Fashion Summit (Hong Kong) has become a fashion design event focusing on sustainable fashion, and its activities including international conference, design exhibitions and fashion shows have successfully brought together key players from the fashion industry, relevant industry leaders and decision-makers from all over the world to gather in Hong Kong to exchange insights on the latest sustainable fashion trends, innovative technologies, solutions and opportunities; the FDF sponsors different film industry events and activities, including film festivals held in overseas places (such as Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Udine), as well as film festivals to be held in Tokyo, Toronto, etc, to further promote the development of Hong Kong films in the international markets.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has also been committed to promoting the development of arts and culture in Hong Kong and cultural exchanges and interactions with the Mainland and overseas. The LCSD organises various types of cultural activities, including arts festivals with different themes (such as the Chinese Culture Festival, the Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival and the Asia+ Festival), exhibitions, film screenings, and performances by local and visiting artists and arts groups, and festivals with traditional Chinese characteristics (such as the Lunar New Year Lantern

Carnivals and the Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnivals). These activities present different styles and promote cultural exchange between the East and the West. The East Kowloon Cultural Centre, which has been opened in phases, will be developed into a major arts technology venue and incubator, and will provide a new platform to nurture and showcase arts technology and creativity.

In addition, Hong Kong is known as a food paradise. We not only have many Michelin-starred restaurants, but also a variety of tasty local street food. We have been promoting Hong Kong's diverse food offerings that bring together Chinese and Western cultures through different strategies and making use of Hong Kong's strength as food paradise, so as to maximise the city's international exposure and attract visitors from around the world for an unforgettable cuisine journey. The Hong Kong Tourism Board works with Mainland and famous overseas media partners to develop culinary-themed programmes for deepening visitors' impression and interest in Hong Kong's cuisine; invites members of the media, key opinion leaders and celebrity chefs for "Tasting is Believing" visits so that they can promote Hong Kong's gastronomy to the world; organises and promotes flagship and major gastronomic events such as the annual Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, the recently concluded Vinexpo Asia 2024, and would organise for the second year in a row the Asia's 50 Best Bars award presentation ceremony.

The CSTB will continue leveraging our unique East-meets-West cultural background, enhance and expand the extensive cultural and creative connections established with other places, and continue supporting the development of cultural and creative industries to implement Hong Kong's positioning as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange under the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

LCQ3: Protecting the safety of passengers of marine excursion vessels

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

There are views that the Victoria Harbour is an iconic tourist spot in which Hong Kong takes pride, and Victoria Harbour tours are well received by visitors to Hong Kong. However, there are views relaying that vessels engaging in illegal operation of harbour tours have now become increasingly rampant in the vicinity of Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront with inadequacies in the berthing arrangements, rendering it difficult to protect passenger safety. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current numbers of Class I and Class IV vessels that can provide harbour tour services, as well as the respective operational requirements of and restrictions on these two classes of vessels;

(2) as there are views relaying that some pleasure vessels have allegedly been engaging in illegal carriage of passengers in the vicinity of the Victoria Harbour and instantly charging individual passengers by means of soliciting, of the numbers of onsite inspections and decoy operations conducted by the authorities in respect of vessels allegedly engaging in illegal carriage of passengers in the past year, and whether they have reviewed the effectiveness of such law enforcement actions; and

(3) whether it has monitored the usage of the Victoria Harbour's various piers and landing facilities during peak hours and holidays, and whether it has planned to enhance the relevant facilities and formulate crowd control measures with a view to diverting passengers, thereby meeting the increasing market demand; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Victoria Harbour is one of the major tourist attractions in Hong Kong, attracting a lot of visitors to go sightseeing onshore and at sea every year. At present, marine tours and sightseeing ships are available in the market for tourists and the general public to enjoy the scenery of Victoria Harbour. Navigational and safety matters in relation to the relevant vessels are regulated by the Marine Department (MD). Apart from providing licensing services of local vessels and surveying services, the MD also conducts routine patrols or special operations in Hong Kong waters from time to time to enforce various marine legislation. If any vessels (including sea sightseeing ships) are found to have violated marine legislation during patrols, the MD shall take follow-up actions in accordance with the law to ensure that vessels comply with the requirements under the relevant licences and marine legislation.

Regarding to the Hon Yiu Pak-leung's questions, the reply, prepared in consultation with the relevant departments, is as follows:

(1) According to the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Certification and Licensing) Regulation (Cap. 548D), Class I vessels, such as ferries and launches, are permitted to carry more than 12 passengers and are mainly used for the purpose of carrying passengers. Class IV vessels can only be used by the owners or charterers of the vessel exclusively for pleasure purposes.

Generally speaking, all local vessels (including the two aforementioned types of vessels) are required to comply with the relevant requirements under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (Cap. 548) and its subsidiary legislation, such as holding a certificate of ownership, having a valid operating licence and third-party risks insurance on board. In addition, the vessels must have on board a qualified coxswain and engine operators or pleasure vessel operators with the relevant prescribed

quantities of life-saving equipment, fire-fighting appliances and radio equipment, and must strictly adhere to the number of persons permitted to be carried onboard as allowed by their operating licenses.

All classes of vessels must also meet the relevant safety standards in the Code of Practice issued by the MD under section 8 of Cap. 548 specific to the characteristics of different classes of vessels (such as size, speed, nature of voyage, etc.), to ensure that vessels with varying characteristics are properly regulated.

Further, if a Class IV vessel is let for hire or reward, the owner must obtain the Director of Marine's prior approval of and endorsement on the vessel's operating licence. During the charter period, the written charter agreement or written hire-purchase agreement for such vessels must be available on board for inspection by an authorised officer.

As of May 2024, there were 265 Class I licensed vessels that can engage in sightseeing tours at sea and 997 Class IV licensed vessels approved by the Director of Marine to be let for hire or reward.

(2) From January 2023 to mid-June 2024, the MD conducted a total of 230 site inspections and 17 decoy operations in various waters of Hong Kong, and initiated 23 prosecutions. Among them, 17 cases were convicted, and the legal proceedings of four of the cases are still underway.

To safeguard navigational safety, apart from daily patrols and law enforcement in Hong Kong waters, the MD also works closely with the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), including conducting special joint operations during weekends and holidays, to combat illegal carriage of passengers, violation of licensing conditions, etc. The MD will continue to work closely with the HKPF and review the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts from time to time.

In addition, to help the public identify Class IV vessels endorsed by the MD for hire or reward, the MD has drawn up a list and made it available for public viewing. The list can be accessed by scanning the relevant QR code printed on pamphlets as well as posters and banners displayed in popular marine tourism spots. The MD will keep updating the list.

(3) Currently on both sides of the central Victoria Harbour, there are a number of landing facilities, including ferry piers, public piers and public landing steps, for vessels' use of passenger embarkation and disembarkation. Ferry piers are facilities used by franchised or licensed ferry services operators; public piers and public landing steps are generally public facilities that are open all day and for use by vessels so long as the latter comply with the relevant marine regulations, particularly those in respect of safe embarkation and disembarkation of passengers.

Regarding ferry piers, the ferry operators using the ferry piers are responsible for managing the daily operations of the piers. The Transport Department (TD) also arranges on-site inspections from time to time to closely monitor passenger demand and maintains close liaison with the ferry operators with a view to upgrading the pier facilities in a timely manner

according to actual needs.

Regarding public piers and public landing steps, the daily operation is handled by different government departments in accordance with their respective scopes of work. Generally speaking, the TD is responsible for daily management, while the Civil Engineering and Development Department is responsible for the maintenance and repair of public piers and public landing steps. The Government will review the usage of public landing facilities and gauge the views of stakeholders from time to time to improve the design and usage arrangements of the landing facilities.

The TD conducts a survey approximately once every two years about the public piers and public landing steps under its management, including about 30 public piers and public landing steps in the central Victoria Harbour from Tsim Sha Tsui to Kai Tak and from Central to North Point. As observed, the regular daily usage of most of these facilities is not high, and the passenger embarkation and disembarkation at those facilities with higher usage is generally good and orderly. The TD will continue to review the usage and conditions of public piers and public landing steps through regular surveys.

Thank you, President.

LCQ20: Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers

Following is a question by the Hon Carman Kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

Regarding the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers (GPRS), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following monthly information about GPRS since its full implementation on May 1 last year (set out in a table):

(i) the respective numbers of applications for registration as suppliers received and approved;

(ii) the respective numbers of applications for waste disposal licence for glass container received and granted;

(iii) the total amount of container recycling levy (the levy) collected;

(iv) the operating expenditure; and

(v) the number of cases received involving the distribution of glass-bottled beverages in Hong Kong by non-registered suppliers;

(2) given that the two government-appointed glass management contractors (GMCs) have been providing waste glass container collection services since 2018, of the following information about the services (set out in a table):

(i) the current number of glass bottle collection points across the territory (broken down by District Council district);

(ii) the quantity of waste glass containers collected and the recovery rate in each of the past seven years, as well as their respective year-on-year rates of change;

(iii) the quantity of waste glass containers turned into recycled glass materials and the year-on-year rate of change in each of the past seven years; and

(iv) the current applications of recycled glass materials and their respective percentages;

(3) given that registered suppliers with their own reuse arrangements may apply to the Environmental Protection Department for exemption from the levy, of the current number of registered suppliers granted with exemption from the levy, as well as the recovery rate (the share of recovered quantity in distributed quantity) of each of such registered suppliers;

(4) given that while a government-led approach has been adopted for GPRS, the authorities indicated in February this year the proposed establishment of a common legislative framework applicable to different products for various Producer Responsibility Schemes under a market-led approach, whether the authorities will review GPRS with a view to aligning its adopted approach with the proposed common legislative framework; of the progress of legislative work for the establishment of the common legislative framework, and whether an implementation timetable has been drawn up;

(5) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on October 27, 2021, the Government indicated that the two GMCs were expected to gradually increase the quantity of waste glass containers recovered to 50 000 tonnes a year, and in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Secretary for Environment and Ecology indicated that the total quantity of waste glass containers recovered by the two GMCs fell short of the authorities' target in each year from 2019 to 2022, what measures the authorities have in place to boost the quantity of waste glass containers recovered;

(6) given that registered suppliers must fulfil their statutory obligations, including submission of returns, keeping records relating to the returns, payment of the levy and submission of annual audit reports, how such statutory obligations are being fulfilled by registered suppliers; how the authorities monitor their implementation, and whether relevant information

will be published to enhance the transparency of GPRS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) as there are views that the establishment of glass bottle collection points at retail outlets and in common areas of properties can help boost the recovery rate of waste glass containers, whether the authorities will require registered suppliers to set up a recycling network with retail outlets and common areas of properties as the backbone to facilitate the return of waste glass containers by members of the public to registered suppliers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(8) given that the first term of the glass management contracts ended in the fourth quarter of last year, whether the authorities have reviewed if the two GMCs have met the operational requirements under their contract; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the negative, whether penalties have been imposed on the GMC with subpar performance by the authorities, and whether the GMC concerned is eligible to bid for the contract afresh; whether the authorities will consider examining the reward and penalty mechanism under the contract, such that GMCs will do a good job in waste glass container recovery?

Reply:

President,

The Producer Responsibility Scheme on Glass Beverage Containers (GPRS) has been fully implemented since May 1, 2023. Under the GPRS, suppliers of glass-bottled beverages (including manufactures and importers) must first register with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) as registered suppliers before distributing any regulated glass-bottled beverages in Hong Kong. Registered suppliers are required to fulfil the statutory responsibilities, including submitting returns, paying recycling levies according to the volume of glass-bottled beverages distributed and submitting audit reports. If registered suppliers arrange for recovery and reuse of their own beverage glass bottles, they can apply to the EPD for an exemption of recycling levy. In addition, under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354), starting from May 1, 2023, other than exempted scenarios, any person who stores, treats, reprocesses or recycles glass container waste must obtain a waste disposal licence.

The reply to the question raised by the Hon Carmen Kan is as follows:

(1) The various statistics about the GPRS since its implementation are set out below:

(i) The number of applications received and approved for registration as suppliers

Year	Month	Number of applications received	Number of applications approved
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2023	Feb (Note 1)	181	0
	Mar	369	300
	Apr	333	571
	May	123	127
	Jun	46	44
	Jul	33	38
	Aug	26	29
	Sep	20	22
	Oct	23	18
	Nov	27	31
	Dec	21	16
2024	Jan	16	18
	Feb	6	9
	Mar	8	9
	Apr	10	6
	May	12	13
Total		1 254	1 251

Note 1: The GPRS started to accept applications for supplier registration from February 1, 2023.

Among the 1 251 approved registered suppliers, 38 applied for cancellation of registration during the above-mentioned period. Therefore, the total number of registered suppliers as at May 2024 was 1 213.

(ii) To help the recycling trade to get prepared before the commencement of the GPRS, we started accepting applications for Glass Container Waste Disposal Licence (GCWDL) from February 1, 2023. So far, a total of five applications have been received and approved. As one of the facilities surrendered the GCWDL to the EPD in February 2024, there are currently a total of four facilities holding GCWDL.

(iii) Registered suppliers are required to submit returns on the volume of glass-bottled beverages distributed quarterly and pay the container recycling levy, at a rate of \$0.98 per litre-volume, to the EPD. Since the implementation of the GPRS in May 2023 up to December 2023, the EPD had collected around \$54 million of container recycling levy. The amount of container recycling levy collected quarterly is tabulated below:

Year	Quarter (Note 2)	Container Recycling Levy Collected (\$ million)
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2023	Second quarter (May to Jun)	12.6
	Third quarter	19.7
	Fourth quarter	21.7
Total		54.0

Note 2: Container recycling levy is collected quarterly from registered suppliers.

(iv) The operational expenditure of the GPRS involves various items, and a monthly breakdown is not available. The overall operational expenditure of the GPRS in financial year 2023-24 was around \$56.8 million.

(v) As at end of May 2024, the EPD, through intelligence and conducting proactive inspections, had identified a total of 120 cases of suppliers suspected of distributing glass-bottled beverages without registration. Subsequently, they have all registered with the EPD in accordance with the legal requirements, and submitted returns and paid the required recycling levies based on the volume of glass-bottled beverages they have distributed. The number of such cases received per month is tabulated below:

Year	Month	Number of cases
2023	May	43
	Jun	8
	Jul	4
	Aug	19
	Sep	5
	Oct	12
	Nov	7
	Dec	11
2024	Jan	2
	Feb	0
	Mar	4
	Apr	4
	May	1
Total		120

For the above cases, the EPD has issued verbal advice or warning letters to the unregistered suppliers involved, and no prosecution has been initiated.

(2) To underpin the implementation of the GPRS, the EPD has been progressively providing collection and treatment services of waste glass containers since early 2018. The collection and treatment services for Hong Kong Island (including Islands District) and the New Territories commenced in

early 2018, while those for Kowloon commenced in July 2018. The three contracts of the first phase were completed in the fourth quarter of 2023, and the contractors of the second phase also commenced recycling services of waste glass containers starting from the same period. The relevant statistics are as follows:

(i) The number of glass container collection points by District Council district:

District	Number of Glass Container Collection Points	District	Number of Glass Container Collection Points
Central & Western	492	Kwai Tsing	175
Eastern	283	North	189
Southern	286	Sai Kung	245
Wan Chai	386	Sha Tin	300
Kowloon City	263	Tai Po	232
Kwun Tong	232	Tsuen Wan	139
Sham Shui Po	256	Tuen Mun	212
Wong Tai Sin	152	Yuen Long	302
Yau Tsim Mong	412	Islands	154
Total number of glass container collection points			4 710

(ii) The quantities of waste glass containers collected under the glass management contracts in the past seven years and the year-on-year comparisons are as follows:

Year	Quantity of Waste Glass Containers Collected (tonnes)	Year-on-year Comparison
2017	Glass management contracts not yet in operation	N/A
2018	9 570	N/A
2019	21 210	+122%
2020	14 270 (Note 3)	-33%
2021	20 280 (Note 3)	+42%
2022	19 530 (Note 3)	-4%
2023	22 670	+16%

Note 3: The quantities of waste glass containers collected between 2020 and 2022 were reduced due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic.

The overall recycling rates of waste glass containers across the territory in the past seven years and the year-on-year comparisons are as

follows:

Year	Recycling Rate of Waste Glass Containers	Year-on-year Comparison
2017	Glass management contracts not yet in operation	N/A
2018	16.3%	N/A
2019	22.3%	+6.0%
2020	20.5%	-1.8%
2021	23.9%	+3.4%
2022	23.4%	-0.5%
2023	Being compiled	

(iii) The quantities of recycled glass materials converted from waste glass containers and delivered by the glass management contractors in the past seven years and the year-on-year comparisons are as follows:

Year	Quantity of recovered glass materials (tonnes)	Year-on-year Comparison
2017	Glass management contracts not yet in operation	N/A
2018	4 890	N/A
2019	22 720	+365%
2020	13 420	-41%
2021	17 270	+29%
2022	19 230	+11%
2023	20 280	+5%

(iv) As at March 2024, the glass management contractors had delivered around 103 200 tonnes of recycled glass materials for the following applications:

Application	Share of total quantity of recovered glass materials
Production of eco-pavers	44%
Production of cement	10%
Export for recycling	8%
As fill materials for different works projects	38%

(3) Currently, there are two registered suppliers under the GPRS which have established their own recovery and reuse arrangements for their glass beverage containers, and have been exempted from paying the container recycling levy with the submission of Container Waste Reduction Plan. The

waste reduction rates of these two registered suppliers in 2023 are 80 per cent and 95 per cent respectively, both meeting the reduction rate requirement of no less than 80 per cent.

(4) We are planning to implement Producer Responsibility Schemes (PRSs) for different products based on a "market-led" approach. We are now drafting the legislative proposal of establishing a common legislative framework for PRSs, and will introduce a relevant amendment bill to the Legislative Council in due course. After the passage of the amendment bill, we will formulate the relevant subsidiary legislation for various products, including plastic beverage containers, beverage cartons, electric vehicle batteries, vehicle tyres and lead-acid batteries, and progressively implement the PRSs on these products. We have been communicating with the relevant sectors and stakeholders in order to refine the legislative proposals and operational details of the PRSs.

The GPRS has been implemented for around a year, and PRS based on the "market-led" approach has not been implemented. We will review the existing operation mode of the PRS when sufficient data and observations of the implementation of "market-led" PRSs are available.

(5) and (8) The first phase of the glass management contracts commenced operation in 2018. However, the collection of waste glass containers was impacted by the social unrest and COVID-19 epidemic from 2019 to 2022. As a result, the quantities of waste glass containers collected did not meet the planned target. The operational performance of the contractors during the first phase had been taken into account as one of the evaluation criteria in the technical assessment of the tenders for the second phase glass management contracts.

The EPD specified the annual targets on the quantities of waste glass materials to be recovered as well as other operational performance requirements in both the first and second phase of the glass management contracts, and reviewed the operational performance of the contractors annually in the contract period. If a contractor fails to meet the contract requirements, the Government may deduct the operation fees for that year in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions. If the contractor's unsatisfactory performance continues, the EPD may terminate the relevant contract early and may arrange for re-tendering in accordance with the relevant contract terms and conditions. Moreover, in the second phase of the contracts, bonus payment of the operation fees was introduced with a view to providing incentives for the contractors to increase the collection quantities of waste glass containers more proactively.

In order to increase the overall recycling rate of wastes (including waste glass containers), we have also been promoting waste reduction and recycling through various publicity activities. The Green\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme launched by the EPD has provided incentives to encourage the general public to continue participating in and developing recycling habits. With more recycling facilities available in the community, we expect that the overall recycling rate of wastes (including waste glass containers) would gradually increase.

(6) Following the enactment of the legislation, the EPD has been monitoring the submission of returns, retention of records relevant to the returns, payment of container recycling levies, and submission of annual audit reports by the registered suppliers. The overall compliance of the trade has been satisfactory. The EPD will continue to remind and urge the trade through various means such as inspections, phone calls and email, to fulfil their statutory obligations, including submitting returns and audit reports, as well as paying container recycling levies on time. As at end of May 2024, there had been 12 cases failing to settle payments of container recycling levies or submit annual audit reports. Subject to the evidence and investigation results, the EPD will consider taking further enforcement actions.

Moreover, to enhance the transparency of the GPRS, the EPD has published a list of registered suppliers online for inspection by the public and the trades. If the public or the trades have any suspicion about individual suppliers, they can provide information to assist the EPD in conducting follow-up investigations.

(7) Glass-bottled beverages are generally consumed in premises such as restaurants, bars and domestic premises, whereas immediate consumption at retail outlets is less common. In view of this, the glass management contractors have specifically arranged with the persons-in-charge of catering premises for setting up waste glass container collection points and providing collection services. In addition, the glass management contractors and the operators of the GREEN@COMMUNITY have set up collection points at public facilities in the community (e.g. Government venues, refuse collection points) and housing estates, etc, to enable members of the public to recycle waste glass containers generated in households. Currently, there are about 4 700 glass container collection points across the territory and the waste glass container collection arrangement has been generally effective and smooth.

LCQ4: Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

It has been reported that in January this year, a child abuse case took place in the Tuen Mun District involving a nine-month-old baby girl who was taken care of by a home-based child carer (HCC) recruited by a non-profit-

□making organization under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (the Care Project). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that the baby girl involved was the first child entrusted to the care of the HCC involved in the case, whether the authorities will consider rendering more assistance to novice HCCs with less experience in the future by, for example, deploying another experienced HCC or professional child carer to accompany them to take care of children for several times until they are experienced enough to take care of children on their own; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the respective numbers of profit-making and non-profit-making organizations providing home-based child care services under the Care Project in the Tuen Mun District in each of the past five years, and the details of training provided by these organizations for recruited HCCs; and

(3) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on March 27 this year, the Government indicated that since the launch of the Care Project, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) had received four reports of accidents leading to the injury of young children, of the number of accidents proved to be caused by the negligence of HCCs after investigation, and the improvement measures taken by the SWD after each accident?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) subsidises non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to operate the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP), which includes home-based child care service (HCCS) provided by the home-based child carers (HCCs) at their own residence or a suitable place as approved by the service operators for children aged under nine, and the centre-based care groups (CCGs) provided at the service centres set up by the service operators for children aged three to under nine. At present, there is one service team, operated by an NGO, set up in each of the 18 districts of Hong Kong (including Tuen Mun district) under NSCCP.

The SWD has all along required service operators to establish mechanisms to recruit, assess, screen and train up HCCs, and arrange service matching. At present, HCCs are required to receive four hours of basic training, covering infant and child growth and development and care skills, child nutrition and home safety, etc, as well as one hour of professional child care training provided by child care workers. Besides, social workers of the service operators are required to conduct monthly home visits to HCCs who are providing services, and the child care workers of the operators are also required to provide them with individual training/supervision on a monthly basis. Depending on the background and abilities of HCCs, the service operator will also provide them with enhanced training or retraining courses (including training on the identification of child abuse), and continuously

assess and follow up on their performance.

To enhance NSCCP, the SWD will strengthen the training for HCCs starting from the fourth quarter of this year, the content of which is standardised and formulated by the SWD. Trainees are required to undergo 14 hours of basic training, including infant and child physical and psychological development, special development milestones and needs of growth, care and communication skills, home safety and hygiene, handling of accidents/special incidents, etc, and HCCs who are arranged to take care of children with special learning needs must receive an additional four hours of advanced training to acquire relevant knowledge and skills. Service operators are required to evaluate the child care skills and knowledge of HCCs after completing the training, their confidence in providing care services, and whether the home environment is suitable for providing care services, before arranging them to provide services.

Under the enhanced NSCCP, apart from the existing home visits, training/supervision, and continuous evaluation and follow up on the performance of HCCs, relevant figures on training/supervision will also be included in the service quality indicators, and the service operators are required to submit relevant statistical information to the SWD on a quarterly basis. The SWD will also conduct regular and surprise visits to assess whether service operators are in compliance with the requirements of the Service Agreement.

(3) Regarding the reports of four accidents leading to the injury of young children mentioned in the Government's reply to a Member's question on March 27, 2024, after investigation, the four incidents were merely accidents (i.e. excluding suspected child abuse incidents) and did not involve negligence of HCCs. In response to each incident, the SWD has instructed the relevant service operators to take corresponding improvement measures, including enhancing CCG's environmental safety, enhancing HCC's home safety awareness as well as the precautions and care skills in taking care of children of different ages at the same time, and strengthening their safety knowledge in arranging outings for children. The SWD will continue to remind various service operators of the need to continuously examine the assessment and service matching arrangement of HCCs and to strengthen the training for HCCs.

LCQ19: Employment of Non-Civil Service Contract staff

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The Non-Civil Service Contract Staff (NCSC) Scheme, introduced by the Government in 1999, provides Heads of Departments with a flexible means of employing staff on fixed term contracts outside the civil service establishment to cope with the changing operational and service needs of policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds). In addition, B/Ds set quotas for the number of NCSC staff to be employed. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quotas set by various B/Ds for the employment of full-time NCSC staff and the number of such staff employed in each of the past five years;

(2) of the criteria adopted by various B/Ds for setting the quotas, and whether they have regularly reviewed the effectiveness of the quotas concerned and the necessity of the posts concerned; and

(3) as it has been reported that the current vacancy rate in the civil service is about 10 per cent, of the approach adopted by the Government for maintaining the level of public services (e.g. by filling vacancies, creating new posts or outsourcing the relevant work to personnel employed by contractors); the criteria adopted by the Government for determining whether the newly created posts are civil service posts or NCSC posts?

Reply:

President,

Reply to different parts of the questions is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Non-Civil Service Contract (NCSC) Staff Scheme aims at providing bureaux/departments (B/Ds) with flexible means to employ additional staff on fixed term contracts outside the civil service establishment to cope with the following needs of B/Ds:

(a) the work concerned is time-limited, seasonal, or subject to market fluctuations; or

(b) the mode of delivery of the service involved is under review or is likely to be changed.

B/Ds can also consider employing NCSC staff to cope with business needs where the working hours of the manpower required are less than the conditioned hours of civil servants, or tap from the labour market the latest expertise in a particular area.

To control the overall number of NCSC staff, since 2006, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has set a ceiling on the number of NCSC staff that each B/Ds can employ every year having regard to factors such as the contract staff being employed by respective B/Ds at that time, the operational needs and work nature of the B/Ds, etc. B/Ds are allowed to employ full-time NCSC staff on the conditions that the criteria of NCSC Staff Scheme are met, the number of NCSC staff to be employed does not exceed the ceiling and B/Ds can

bear the required salary cost, so as to flexibly deploy manpower and swiftly respond to service or operational needs.

While B/Ds have the full authority to employ full-time NCSC staff within the assigned ceiling, in accordance with the prevailing requirements, each proposal on engagement of NCSC staff must be approved by Heads of Departments (HoDs) or a directorate officer with delegated authority from HoDs in order to ensure that the quotas are used appropriately, the employment concerned is cost-effective and conforms to the service needs, etc.

If B/Ds require to employ additional NCSC staff exceeding the assigned ceiling due to the changing service needs, they have to seek approval from the CSB, with prior consent of HoDs. The CSB may grant time-limited special quotas to B/Ds for the work and service concerned after careful consideration of various factors, including whether the job positions concerned are within the scope of the NCSC Staff Scheme, whether the job nature is appropriate for NCSC staff to perform, the manpower situation, the availability of suitable alternative service mode, etc. These special quotas will automatically lapse upon expiry of the validity period.

The number of full-time NCSC staff employed by B/Ds and the total number of quota approved for B/Ds (including the assigned ceiling and the special quotas granted by the CSB) in the past five years (i.e. from 2019-20 to 2023-24) are set out at Annex A and Annex B respectively.

(3) To cope with the ever-evolving public services, B/Ds can flexibly deploy manpower resources through various means including re-prioritisation, internal redeployment, streamlining of work processes and taking advantage of information technology, etc, so as to strive for excellent public services and address society development needs with the most cost-effective manpower establishment.

At the same time, having regard to such factors as operational needs, service nature and effectiveness, B/Ds will adopt the most suitable mode of public service delivery, like employing civil servants or non-civil service contract staff, or service outsourcing.

Government departments have put in place mechanisms for handling the duties of vacant posts, such as by recruitment, promotion, appointing suitable officers to take up acting appointments and, if necessary, extending the service of civil servants beyond their retirement age. We will continue to keep in view the overall manpower requirement and recruitment situation, remind recruiting B/Ds to take early actions to formulate manpower plans, launch recruitment exercises in a timely manner, as well as step up publicity to fill vacancies.

If B/Ds have justifiable operational needs and find redeployment of internal manpower not feasible, they may consider creating civil service posts to support new policy initiatives and service needs in accordance with the Government's established mechanisms. For creation of civil service posts, consideration will be given to various factors, such as the genuine operational needs and job nature of the proposed posts, the manpower

situation of the departments and grades concerned, room for internal redeployment and availability of more suitable modes of service delivery. In order to maintain the sustainability of public finances, the Government has strictly controlled the civil service establishment since 2021-22. In 2024-25, the Government will continue to control the overall establishment at a level not exceeding that as at end-March 2021.

As to NCSC staff, their employment has to meet the above-mentioned objectives.

Regardless of the mode of service delivery, with the use of public money, B/Ds should ensure that public resources are properly deployed to deliver quality public services in an effective manner.