

## LCQ3: Taking out insurance policies for taxis

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

Some taxi owners have relayed that they have all along been facing the problems of "difficulties in taking out insurance policies and high insurance premiums". Earlier on, an insurance company which provided insurance services for about 10 000 taxis suddenly issued notices on termination of insurance policies to its taxi insurance policyholders, almost causing 10 000 taxis to cease operation. Subsequently, the Insurance Authority (IA) invoked the powers under the Insurance Ordinance to appoint managers to take full control of the affairs and property of the insurance company concerned. The managers revoked such notices immediately afterwards, and the issue was settled temporarily. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will conduct a study on the issues of taxi owners taking out insurance, so as to completely resolve the problem of "difficulties in taking out insurance policies and high insurance premiums";

(2) whether the authorities have conducted investigations into whether the insurance company concerned violated the relevant legislation or the guidelines issued by IA; if so, of the details, and how the authorities will hold the company responsible; and

(3) whether it will improve the existing notification mechanism for termination of taxi insurance policies by extending the notice period for termination of insurance from seven days currently to one month?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) and the Insurance Authority (IA), my reply is as follows:

(1) As regards taxi insurance, like other motor insurance businesses, insurers underwrite and determine premium level based on commercial principles, taking into account factors such as accident rates, accident severity, past claim records, etc. In recent years, there has been an increase in taxi accident rate, the business environment of the taxi insurance industry has been unsatisfactory and taxi insurance premiums have risen. The Government understands the taxi trade's concerns about insurance matters and has been maintaining close communication with the taxi and

insurance trades in this regard. The Joint Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Insurance Coverage for the Transport Sector (Subcommittee) was set up last year in the last term of Legislative Council (LegCo) to explore and discuss the problems encountered by the taxi sector in procuring insurance and to make recommendations to tackle such problems. At present, the Government is actively following up on the recommendations of the Subcommittee.

The IA notes that currently some insurers have adopted measures to enhance risk differentiation in order to facilitate more accurate underwriting decisions and setting of premium for individual policies. These measures include deducting the excess for policy holders who can provide video footage of the accident at the time of claim application and offering discount on premiums to policy holders who can provide specified information concerning the drivers (including traffic offence records of the drivers) at the time of application.

In addition, with the coordination of the FSTB and IA, the Motor Insurers' Bureau of Hong Kong has suspended the levies on motor insurance for a year with effect from October 1, 2021 (equivalent to 3 per cent of the gross premiums of policies), so as to alleviate the financial burden of the public amidst the impact of the epidemic. This measure will directly reduce the cost of motor insurance and benefit various transport sectors, including the taxi trade.

The Government has all along been highly concerned about the problems encountered by the taxi trade when taking out insurance, which are not only related to insurance matters but also to the overall taxi operation and management. The Government is reviewing and will submit a host of measures to improve the development of the taxi industry, which include exploring how to enhance taxi service quality through professional fleet management so as to provide better service to passengers. We also aim to provide passengers with better protection through introducing the taxi-driver-offence points system and increasing penalties for illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by motor vehicles. The Government will consult the LegCo Panel on Transport on relevant suggestions later.

According to the understanding of the Transport Department (TD), the taxi trade is exploring various measures to reduce traffic accidents, which include requiring rentee taxi drivers to provide Certificate of Previous Conviction to taxi operators, centralising the management through fleet operation and strengthening training to drivers, etc. The taxi trade is also participating in the testing of various anti-collision warning, lane keeping warning and devices that could monitor drivers' condition and driving behavior. TD will continue to follow up closely with the trade on the testing progress and effectiveness with a view to identifying suitable safety devices to be installed on taxis. TD will also continue to work with the Police to enhance drivers' awareness of driving safety through various measures including regulation, enforcement, publicity and education, etc.

(2) The IA is an independent regulatory body established under the Insurance Ordinance (Cap. 41) (IO). Pursuant to the IO, the IA performs statutory

supervisory functions, which include requiring insurers to consistently maintain sufficient solvency for the promotion of stable development of the insurance industry as well as protection of existing and potential policy holders.

Through its supervisory work and the market intelligence collected, the IA discovered that the investment activities and asset allocation of Target Insurance Company Limited might have breached the statutory requirements under the IO, and there were also suspected deficiencies in its corporate governance. The IA thus decided to exercise its power to appoint Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu on January 7, 2022 to take control of the affairs and assets of the company to ensure its normal operation and conduct a detailed assessment of its financial position. The IA will, upon analysis and examination of all the evidence, decide on the way forward, including taking action against any illegal acts or misconduct in accordance with the law.

(3) An insurance policy is a commercial contract under which both the policy holder and the insurer are entitled to terminate the policy in accordance with the relevant provisions of the contract. Prevailing third party risk insurance policies for motor vehicles (including taxis) generally require a notice period of seven days for policy termination. This arrangement aims to provide convenience to policy holders who have decided to sell off their vehicles to recover the residual premiums as early as possible. The Government and the IA welcome the views of stakeholders, and will discuss with the insurance industry on how to improve the arrangement.

Thank you, President.

---

## **LCQ17: Food Truck Pilot Scheme**

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

The Government announced earlier that the Food Truck Pilot Scheme (Pilot Scheme) would end by the middle of this year due to "the unsatisfactory business development". There are comments that the Pilot Scheme is "too detached from reality" and has ended up being a "big mistake" inflicting heavy losses on investors, and that whatever can be done should be done to remedy the "big mistake" rather than dropping the Pilot Scheme and washing one's hands of it. Some members of the public attribute the failure of the Pilot Scheme to the Government's poor planning. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it can assess how much private capital, effort and time have been spent on the Pilot Scheme from the former Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development encouraging investor participation, the selection panel screening the various applicants for licences (including requiring them to prepare proposals and participate in a cooking contest), the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau deploying manpower and resources for the regulation of food trucks, to finally the policies failing to align with business development and investors successively closing down their businesses to reduce loss, and whether it will learn a lesson from this;

(2) as it is learnt that in the past, the Government would cancel the operating licences of on-street cooked food stalls (commonly known as "Dai Pai Dong") and mahjong parlours only by ceasing to issue new licences and would not revoke a licence until the death of the licensee concerned, whether the Government has assessed beforehand the losses that these food truck investors would suffer as a result of its announcement of the sudden "end of life" of the Pilot Scheme and its failure to provide proper "hospice" service for these food truck investors;

(3) as it has been reported that in the face of the Government's decision to end the Pilot Scheme, the only food truck operator still in business that specialises in hamburgers has no choice but to seek to secure a brick-and-mortar shop, whether the Government will provide the investor concerned or other investors who wish to continue operating food trucks with assistance in securing a brick-and-mortar shop or other appropriate support, so as to reduce the losses they suffer; and

(4) as the Chief Executive has earlier announced the introduction of the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund, whether the aforesaid food truck operator is eligible for the relevant subsidy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Food Truck Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) was launched on February 3, 2017. The Scheme is operated on a pilot basis, with the objective of promoting food trucks as a tourism project and has since been extended twice to February 2022. The Scheme has been running for almost five years. Its operation mode as a tourism project has been fully tested and its development is unable to achieve the policy objective. The Government has decided to end the Scheme, but will extend it for about four months until June 1, 2022, to allow sufficient time for the operators to make corresponding arrangements.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Paul Tse is as follows:

(1) In the 2015 Budget, the Government put forward its plan to study the introduction of food trucks. The Scheme has been positioned as a tourism promotion project and implemented in the form of a pilot scheme. The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Tourism Commission (TC) of

CEDB have, within their policy framework, all along been offering a lot of support by refining the Scheme in response to the operational difficulties and challenges faced by food trucks so as to expand the business opportunities and operation flexibility of food trucks. Such work includes:

- (i) Exploring new operating venues continuously and introducing eight new operating venues in addition to the original eight designated venues;
- (ii) Relaxing restrictions by offering a more flexible operation schedule so as to facilitate the operators to secure operation locations and trading periods with more business opportunities, including allowing food trucks to operate in different venues at day time and night time, bid for available vacant pitches either by drawing lots or on a first-come-first-served basis, and swap trading periods of the same venue with other operators;
- (iii) Taking suggestions of the operators to identify new operating venues;
- (iv) Expanding the mode of operation by allowing food trucks to participate in self-identified events which are open to the public, with publicity packages and appropriate licences. Since the commencement of the Scheme, operators have applied for operation in 109 self-identified events and all applications were approved; and
- (v) Reducing the operating costs of operators substantially by allowing them to opt whether to operate at individual venues and pay rental fees for operation days only.

In addition, in view of the impact of the riots in 2019 and the epidemic brought to the operation of food trucks, the Government has launched a series of helping measures for food trucks, including waiving all licence fees and first vehicle examination fees for food trucks, providing a one-off subsidy of \$80,000 to operators, offering 75 per cent rental concession at government venues, and facilitating rental reduction of 30 per cent and 20 per cent for food truck venues at the two theme parks respectively.

Apart from policy support, the business performance of food trucks, being a commercially operated project, also hinges upon the operating conditions and strategy of the operators. They will be able to generate profits if their business strategy meets the preference and affordability of customers. However, the business development of food trucks being a tourism promotion facility was not satisfactory. Their business was better only in the first year after the implementation of the Scheme in 2017 but deteriorated continuously in the subsequent two years. Three of the 15 food trucks have already withdrawn from the Scheme, and currently among the remaining 12 food trucks, only half maintain relatively regular operation. As for the current 12 operating venues, only three have frequent food truck operation. Since the development of the Scheme cannot achieve the policy objective, we decided to end the Scheme.

(2) When the Scheme was launched in early 2017, it was explicitly stated that the Scheme would be operated on a pilot basis. Even though the Government has

been providing various support to food truck operation, and refining and extending the Scheme on a number of occasions in the past five years, food trucks are operated on a commercial basis and they are to attract customers by their own characteristics. Since the implementation of the Scheme, most of the 15 food trucks have either withdrawn from the Scheme or suspended their operation, notwithstanding some are still in operation. As TC does not keep the commercial information of the operators' profit, we are unable to comment on the profit and loss situation of individual operator.

(3) It will be food truck operators' commercial decision whether they will continue running their businesses in other modes of catering businesses after the conclusion of the Scheme. If they so decide, they are required to follow the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's existing procedures to apply for an appropriate licence.

(4) In response to the latest development of the epidemic situation, the Government announced on January 5, 2022, to tighten social distancing measures with effect from January 7, and on January 14, to further extend the corresponding measures until February 3, so as to contain the latest wave of the epidemic as soon as possible. The Chief Executive announced on January 14 that measures for the fifth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) would be rolled out. The measures partly target at premises directly affected by the latest round of the tightening of measures, including premises that have been asked to close or catering business premises where dine-in service at night has been banned, and partly target at trades, though not directly affected by this round of measures, which have not seen any business revival and not recovered since the onset of the epidemic. The operation of food trucks is not directly affected by the latest round of tightened measures, and hence they are not covered under the measures of the fifth round of the AEF.

---

## **LCQ14: Support for transport sector**

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

Some practitioners of the transport sector have relayed that with the local retail prices of diesel and liquefied petroleum gas soaring by 40 per cent to 50 per cent due to the continuous rise in international oil prices last year, coupled with the business difficulties brought about by the fluctuating epidemic situation, the sector has been facing the hardship of not being able to make ends meet. Moreover, in the past few months, quite a number of taxi and red minibus (RMB) rentee-drivers switched one after another to other industries because their income could no longer offset the

soaring fuel costs, resulting in an increasingly acute shortage of drivers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the average amounts of fuel expenditures incurred by various commercial transport modes (i.e. goods vehicles, container trucks, franchised buses, non-franchised buses, school buses, taxis, RMBs, green minibuses, ferries and kaitos) and the rates of changes of such expenditures, as well as the proportions of such expenditures in the total operating costs, in each of the past two years;

(2) as members of the sector have pointed out that there has been a 40 per cent wastage of RMB drivers after the disbursement of fuel subsidies under the Anti-epidemic Fund to public light buses and taxis ended in June last year, whether the Government will consider providing such subsidies again; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it will consider allowing the sector to levy fuel surcharges for offsetting the cost burden brought about by the soaring fuel prices; and

(3) as members of the sector have pointed out that the fluctuating epidemic situation has led to a significant decrease in patronage and business difficulties, whether in the past six months the Government continued to keep in view the business environment of the sector as promised in its reply to my question on July 21 last year; if so, of the details, and the new measures in place to relieve the hardship of the sector; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Frankie Yick is as follows:

(1) For franchised buses, taxis, ferries as well as green minibuses (GMBs), the average amount of fuel expenditure and the proportion of such expenditure to overall operating costs in the past two years were as follows:

|                              | 2020                      |                               | 2021                               |                               |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                              | Fuel expenditure          | Proportion to operating costs | Fuel expenditure                   | Proportion to operating costs |
| All Franchised Bus Operators | \$794 million in total    | About 7.6 per cent            | \$807 million in total (Note 1)    | About 10.5 per cent (Note 1)  |
| All Ferry Operators          | \$115 million in total    | About 14 per cent             | \$120 million in total             | About 19 per cent             |
| Taxi                         | \$211 per vehicle per day | About 28 per cent             | \$250 per vehicle per day (Note 1) | About 32 per cent (Note 1)    |

|                 |                                 |                      |                                 |                      |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| GMB<br>(Note 2) | \$340 per<br>vehicle per<br>day | About 13 per<br>cent | \$336 per<br>vehicle per<br>day | About 14 per<br>cent |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|

Note 1: Only figures from January to September 2021 were included.

Note 2: The figures on fuel and operating expenditures were based on the annual financial returns of 2019/20 and 2020/21 (from April 1 to March 31) provided by GMB operators.

The Transport Department (TD) has not kept data on operating costs of non-franchised buses, red minibuses (RMBs), school private buses, kaito and goods vehicles sectors.

(2) In view of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transport sector, the Government has introduced a series of relief measures under the Anti-Epidemic Fund (AEF) to provide financial support (including fuel subsidies) for the transport sector with a view to alleviating their operating pressure.

As at December 1, 2021, the Government has disbursed a total of about \$5.9 billion of subsidies under the AEF to the transport sector. Amongst the subsidies, the Government has offered a \$1.0 discount per litre of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for LPG taxis and PLBs, and reimburse one-third of the actual fuel cost for petrol taxis and diesel PLBs from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, involving more than \$430 million.

The Government also provided a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$30,000 to each eligible registered owner of taxi or RMB and holder of passenger service licence (PSL) of GMB, and provided a monthly subsidy of \$6,000 or a one-off subsidy of \$7,500 to each eligible active taxi and RMB driver for a period of six months between April 1 and September 30, 2020. Besides, under the Employment Support Scheme, the Government provided wage subsidies in respect of employees enrolled in Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) schemes of GMB operators. For each employee aged 65 or above not joining MPF schemes, a monthly subsidy of \$6,000 for six months was provided to GMB operators, so as to assist the trade in coping with the operational pressure under the prevailing economic environment.

While the Government has no plan to provide fuel subsidy again at this stage, it will continue to adopt other feasible measures to alleviate the pressure faced by the trade, including fare adjustment and/or rationalisation of service routes, etc. Take GMBs as an example, up to November 30, 2021, the TD has approved fare increase applications for a total of 80 GMB routes for the year. We are also actively processing the taxi fare increase applications with a view to improving the business environment and financial situation of the taxi trade.

At present, fare adjustments for taxis and GMBs are made taking into account a host of factors including changes in overall costs and revenues (including the fuel costs), service quality of the operators and acceptability of passengers, with a view to accommodating and balancing the needs of different stakeholders. We hold the view that the change in



operating costs arising from the fluctuation of the fuel prices, should be dealt with in accordance with the existing fare adjustment mechanism for taxis and GMBs.

(3) Since July 2021, the Government has introduced a number of supporting measures in response to the epidemic development, such as providing additional financial support for the cross-boundary passenger service sector in August 2021, including providing a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$30,000 for each cross-boundary coach and hire car, as well as a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$500,000 for each eligible cross-boundary ferry. The cross-boundary passenger trade will be provided with the aforementioned subsidies again under the fifth round of AEF recently announced. Besides, the Government has further waived the fees for vehicle licence for commercial vehicles, vehicle examination for licence renewal, first issue or renewal of PSL and PSL Certificate from December 30, 2021 to December 29, 2022.

In view of the impact of social distancing measures on the service demand, the TD will closely liaise with public transport operators, and timely introduce temporary adjustments to the headway of certain public transport services having regard to the passenger demand, so as to make optimal use of resources and reduce operating costs. To prevent the vehicle owners from having their vehicle registration cancelled and business disrupted due to their failure to arrange for vehicle examination and licence renewal in time during the pandemic, starting from November 1, 2021, registered owners of public transport vehicles (including taxis and PLBs) could apply for deferral of cancellation of vehicle registration for their vehicles of which vehicle licences have expired for nearly two years.

The Government will continue to keep in view the epidemic development and business environment of the sector, and maintain close liaison with the trade.

---

## **LCQ1: Disbursement of cash or consumption vouchers to members of public by Government**

Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a reply by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

Since 2011, the Government has disbursed cash or consumption vouchers to members of the public for several times with a view to returning wealth to

the people, or relieving people's hardship and boosting the economy, which has been supported by the majority of members of the public and business operators. Some members of the public are of the view that as the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic is not yet over, and there are still many uncertainties about the prospect of Hong Kong's economy, the Government should continue to implement measures to relieve people's hardship. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has considered disbursing again consumption vouchers of a total value equivalent to or not less than \$5,000 to members of the public, and launching other measures to relieve people's hardship; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the impacts of the various schemes for disbursing cash or consumption vouchers on the various economic indicators (including the Gross Domestic Product, the unemployment rate and prices), and whether it has assessed the effects brought by such schemes to the people of different income strata and the various trades and industries; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that chaos arose in the past when the Government implemented schemes for disbursing cash or consumption vouchers (e.g. a large number of elderly people who submitted paper application forms having to queue up for a long time for the procedure of resubmission of registrations), whether the Government has learnt from such experience to prevent the recurrence of similar problems, and whether it has considered allocating resources for co-operating with grass-roots organisations in various districts to enable such organisations to assist the Government in the publicity and registration matters; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Taking into account the economic, social and financial situations at different points in times, the current-term Government had in the past disburse cash to the people, including implementing the Caring and Sharing Scheme in 2018 to disburse \$4,000 to each eligible Hong Kong resident aged 18 or above, with the aim of better realisation of sharing the fruits of economic success with the public; and the Cash Payout Scheme in 2020 to disburse \$10,000 to each eligible Hong Kong permanent resident aged 18 or above to relieve people's financial burden and to encourage local consumption. We have also announced in the 2021-22 Budget the implementation of the Consumption Voucher Scheme (the Scheme), under which electronic consumption vouchers with a total value of \$5,000 would be disbursed by instalments to each eligible Hong Kong permanent resident and new arrival aged 18 or above, so as to boost local consumption with a view to accelerating economic recovery, as well as to encourage more local merchants and public to use electronic payment thereby fostering the extensive use of the local electronic payment.

My reply to the different parts of the question raised by the Hon Maggie

Chan is as follows:

(1) Since August 1, 2021, eligible people under the Scheme have successively received consumption vouchers via the four stored value facilities in batches and instalments. As at December 31, 2021, consumption vouchers of a total value of about \$30 billion have been disbursed to over 6.3 million successful registrants. The overall response of the community towards the Scheme has been very positive and considers that the Scheme has helped boost the economy by simulating consumer sentiment.

I am currently conducting public consultation to gauge the views of various sectors on the 2022-23 Budget. As resources are limited, the Special Administrative Region Government (SAR Government), in deciding whether to disburse consumption vouchers again or launch similar initiatives involving a large amount of public funds, has to consider relevant factors in a prudent and holistic manner, including the social and economic situation, the impact on social livelihood arising from the outbreaks of the epidemic and the current financial situation, in order to ensure that the measures are in the overall interest of Hong Kong.

(2) Before launching the Scheme, the Government Economist has roughly estimated that the Scheme would have a stimulus effect equivalent to 0.7 percentage point of the Gross Domestic Product on the local economy. The latest statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department shows that, even with the low base effect gradually dissipating, the value of total retail sales still grew by 9.6 per cent year-on-year between August and November last year (i.e. the first four months when the consumption vouchers were disbursed), which was higher than the average growth rate of 7.6 per cent between January and July in the same year. The value of total restaurant receipts rose by 43.9 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2021 against a low base of comparison, while private consumption expenditure in the same quarter also grew by 7.1 per cent year-on-year. This shows that the Scheme has helped stimulate local consumer sentiment and has achieved the intended result. As to the effectiveness of the Scheme in boosting different segments of the economy, we will conduct an overall assessment after its completion.

Over the period, the labour market has continued to improve since the beginning of last year, with the unemployment rate declining gradually from a high of over 7 per cent in early 2021 to 3.9 per cent by the end of the year. Moreover, the underlying Composite Consumer Price Index inflation rate increased from 0.3 per cent in the second quarter to 1.1 per cent in the third quarter, and averaged to 0.5 per cent in the first 11 months of 2021. Consumer price inflation went up in the second half of 2021 but remained moderate overall.

Apart from the positive impact on local consumption and the overall economy, the Scheme has helped foster the development of the local electronic payment market. Since the Government's announcement on April 11 last year that four stored value facility operators (i.e. Alipay HK, Octopus, Tap & Go and WeChat Pay HK) had been selected to help implement the Scheme, the four operators had altogether attracted over 4.7 million new users and 96 000 new

merchants as at December 31 last year. They also indicated that there had been a significant growth in the number and value of transactions processed by them since the implementation of the Scheme.

(3) In the course of working out the implementation details and arrangements of the Scheme, the SAR Government had strived to cater for the needs of different people and stakeholders. In terms of the registration process, we had endeavoured to strike a balance between security and simplicity. During implementation, some registrants had to resubmit their registrations due to incomplete or inaccurate information provided on their paper forms, resulting in a sudden influx of visitors at the Secretariat and hence longer waiting time. We had responded immediately, including extending the period of resubmission of registrations to provide supplementary information to one month, increasing substantially the manpower of the Secretariat and making available additional service hours at the Secretariat on Saturdays. With the implementation of these measures, visitors queuing for the Secretariat's services had largely subsided. To further facilitate people making resubmission of registrations, we had also set up three additional service centres in other districts within a few days.

In fact, in the course of planning for the Scheme and before the commencement of registration, we had liaised with different political parties, organisations and institutions (including district organisations, non-governmental organisations, social welfare organisations, organisations and residential care homes serving the elderly or persons with disabilities) to brief them on the details of the Scheme and the registration procedures. We also provided them with the registration forms and publicity materials to facilitate them to assist their clients to register for the Scheme. With the support and assistance of different parties, the Scheme has finally been implemented smoothly and has achieved the expected result. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all parties inside and outside the Government for their assistance, support and active participation.

Thank you, President.

---

## **Latest arrangements for LCSD public services**

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19, the Government has announced that tightened social distancing measures will be extended until February 3. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (January 19) that most of the leisure and cultural venues/facilities will continue to be temporarily closed and all recreational, sports and cultural programmes to be held in the above period will also be cancelled.

## Leisure and sports venues

Outdoor leisure venues/facilities will continue to be temporarily closed, including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports grounds, Ngau Chi Wan Park Archery Range, Shek O Obstacle Golf Course, Tuen Mun Recreation and Sports Centre, hard-surface/sand/grass pitches, gateball courts, table tennis tables, skateparks, roller skating rinks, roller hockey grounds, skateboard grounds, outdoor fitness equipment, model car play areas, model boat pools, cycling facilities (except for cycle paths), outdoor children's play facilities (including tricycling areas, outdoor children's playgrounds and road safety towns), pebble walking trails, chess tables, amphitheatres, public swimming pools, water sports centres, barbecue sites, holiday camps and Pui O Campsite. Lifeguard services at the gazetted beaches that were originally open during the winter period, namely Deep Water Bay Beach, Clear Water Bay Second Beach, Silverstrand Beach and Golden Beach, will continue to be suspended.

All indoor sports facilities including sports centres, squash centres and badminton centres will also continue to be closed.

Passive/amenity areas at the LCSD's parks (such as lawns and benches in parks) and outdoor jogging tracks at parks will continue to remain open.

Application for use of amphitheatres and non-fee charging leisure venues for non-designated use/sales activities and application from schools or organisations on road safety towns will continue to be suspended until further notice.

Standby arrangement for non-fee charging land recreation and sports facilities will be suspended from January 20 until further notice.

For refund arrangements in relation to venue closures, the hirer may submit a completed refund application form together with the original booking permit to the LCSD booking office at a District Leisure Services Office or to relevant leisure venues by post. The application form can be downloaded from [www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/aboutlcsd/forms/refund.html](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/aboutlcsd/forms/refund.html). Due to the closure of fee-charging facilities in relation to the situation of COVID-19, the number of refund cases will increase tremendously. The LCSD has adopted measures to handle these refund cases as soon as possible but a prolonged processing time for refunds is expected. Members of the public are advised to note the longer time required for refunds. The department apologises for any inconvenience caused.

## Cultural venues

All public libraries and their students' study rooms will continue to be temporarily closed. All book drop services of the Hong Kong Public Libraries and those located at MTR Central, Kowloon Tong and Nam Cheong Stations as well as the self-service library stations at Island East Sports Centre Sitting-out Area, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and Tsuen Nam Road, Tai Wai, will maintain services. Public libraries will continue to provide online services such as e-Books and e-Databases. Please visit

[www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/index.html](http://www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/index.html) for details.

All performance venues, music centres of the Music Office and museums will continue to be temporarily closed. All programmes and activities will be suspended. During the period, all applications for Museum Passes and the Hong Kong Film Archive Resource Centre's Audiovisual Materials Viewing Cards will be suspended. Admission arrangements for holders of Museum Passes will be announced in due course.

The URBTIX outlets and ticket dispensing machines at the LCSD performance venues will continue to be closed. URBTIX will maintain Internet and mobile app ticketing and hotline services.

Refund arrangements in relation to the closure of cultural facilities will be announced in due course.

During the venue closure period, members of the public can visit the LCSD's Edutainment Channel ([www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/edutainment-channel.html](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/edutainment-channel.html)), a one-stop online platform offering informative and educational materials on aspects of culture and leisure, to participate in the online programmes of the "vis-a-vis +01" series and access its videos in various fields including culture, arts and sports.