

## LCQ13: Quarantine arrangements for air crew

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

Question:

It is reported that since the end of last month, some locally based air crew of Cathay Pacific Airways Limited (CX) have contracted one after another the Coronavirus Disease 2019 and spread the virus in the community. Such incidents have revealed the loopholes in the quarantine arrangements for the locally based air crew of CX, such that the air crew may opt to "fly out on a passenger flight and return on a cargo flight", thereby exempting from the compulsory quarantine requirement. The Chief Executive has subsequently stated that the senior personnel of CX has been instructed to conduct a holistic investigation into the incidents and submit reports to the Government. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) how the practice of the aforesaid air crew violated the quarantine requirement specified by the Government; of the measures put in place to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents;
- (2) whether CX has already submitted the reports to the Government; if so, of the specific details of the reports; if not, whether it knows the progress of the relevant work of CX;
- (3) whether the Government will follow up CX's failure to comply with the Government's quarantine requirement; if so, of the details and progress; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) given that the Government has, since the 1st of this month, tightened the quarantine arrangements for locally based air cargo crew by extending the duration of self-isolation in designated quarantine hotels from three days to seven days for all locally based air cargo crew who have laid over at specified places, whether the Government has reviewed if such quarantine period requirement is sufficient; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the justifications for that; if the outcome is in the negative, whether the quarantine period will be extended?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Dominic Lee, our consolidated reply is as follows:

The Government has all along been vigilant to cope with the developments

of the global and local epidemic situation. It has put the quarantine arrangements for air crew under constant review and made timely adjustments, with a view to guarding against imported COVID-19 cases, while maintaining smooth air cargo services into and out of Hong Kong in order to meet the daily needs of the public and maintain the normal operation of the community and the economy.

According to the quarantine arrangements for air crew, the potential public health risk of locally based passenger crew is relatively higher. They perform flight duties on passenger flights to outports. Even though they are subject to stringent closed-loop requirements during layover at outports, they come into direct contact with passengers. Hence, they are required to undergo self-isolation at designated quarantine hotels (DQHs) after obtaining a negative result from COVID-19 testing upon their return to Hong Kong.

As for locally based air crew who perform flight duties on turnaround passenger flights without laying over at outports, they are only allowed to undergo home isolation after obtaining a negative result from COVID-19 testing, on the condition that the aircraft carry no inbound passengers on their return. In view of the latest developments of the epidemic situation, the Government has adjusted such arrangement. This type of locally based air crew are now also required to undergo self-isolation at DQHs upon their return to Hong Kong, with effect from December 30, 2021.

Regarding the issue concerning locally based passenger crew going home direct to undergo quarantine after laying over at outports and returning to Hong Kong on aircraft carrying cargo only, as well as the cases of Cathay Pacific Airways Limited's locally based air crew allegedly contravening the Government's quarantine requirements during home isolation, the Chairman of Cathay Pacific has already submitted a written explanation to the Chief Executive as requested. The Government also noted the statement issued by Cathay Pacific on January 11. After seeking legal advice, the Police laid charges on the two former Cathay Pacific air crew concerned on January 17. The Government will continue to conduct in-depth investigation and follow up seriously. If the investigation identifies sufficient evidence, indicating the need for the Government to take further legal actions, the Government will not hesitate to take actions. As the investigation is still ongoing and involves legal proceedings, the Government is not in a position to comment further at this stage.

Taking into account various factors, including the latest developments of the epidemic situation, public health risk assessments and the operational needs of the aviation industry, the Government will continue to review and enhance the quarantine arrangements for air crew in a holistic manner. Monitoring will be further stepped up, in order to ensure airlines and air crew will be able to accurately understand and strictly comply with the relevant requirements. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to review and make timely adjustments to the relevant arrangements, and will work with the aviation industry jointly on the anti-epidemic efforts, with a view to facilitating the resumption of normal operation of society as soon as possible, while minimising the impact on the community and the economy to be

brought about by the hampered air cargo services due to the tightened quarantine arrangements.

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## [Acting SHA expresses deep sorrow over passing of Dr Tong Wai-ki](#)

The Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, today (January 19) expressed deep condolences over the passing of the Chairman of the Hong Kong Taoist Association, Dr Tong Wai-ki.

Mr Nip said, "Dr Tong dedicated his life in promoting the Taoist religion and uniting the Taoist community. He also actively participated in charitable services and talent nurturing. In 2013, he was awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star for his great contributions to the community."

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Tong and would like to extend my deepest condolences to his family."

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## [CE expresses sorrow over passing of Dr Tong Wai-ki](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (January 19) expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the Chairman of the Hong Kong Taoist Association, Dr Tong Wai-ki.

"Dr Tong was held in high regard. Over the years, he had been committed to promoting the Taoist religion and Chinese culture and actively participated in social services and charitable activities, making significant contributions. He was awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star in 2013.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Tong. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to his family and the Taoist community," Mrs Lam said.

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## LC Urgent Q1: Measures to immediately improve the management of the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre

Following is an urgent question by the Hon Edward Leung under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

A female security guard working in the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (PBQC) was suspected of having infected with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 in PBQC last week. A few days later, a security guard working in PBQC who had close contact with her was also confirmed to have been infected. With the epidemic situation worsening recently, a large number of members of the public have been sent to PBQC for isolation. However, with PBQC alleged for its mismanagement and unsatisfactory hygienic condition, coupled with the fact that the transmission chains of the Omicron variant have yet to be cut as of now, the public are concerned about PBQC's failure to properly implement infection control measures, which may result in the spread of the virus or cross-infection at PBQC and even in the community. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council how it will immediately improve the infection prevention measures of PBQC and its management, so as to prevent its staff from being infected and spreading the virus to the community?

Reply:

President,

When tackling the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government has been adhering to the principle of "preventing the importation of cases and the spreading of the virus in the community". In order to prevent the spreading of the virus in the community, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has remained vigilant by strictly implementing contact tracing, testing and quarantine measures for confirmed cases involving the mutant strain detected in the community. Currently, the CHP arranges all close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo quarantine at quarantine centres.

As persons undergoing quarantine at quarantine centres are contacts with higher risk levels, the Government places an emphasis on the anti-epidemic efforts at quarantine centres so as to ensure the safety of colleagues who work there and prevent the virus from spreading to the community through quarantine centres.

Currently, all persons working at the quarantine centres must wear

appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). If these persons have to enter high-risk areas to perform duties, they must wear a full set of PPE (including surgical mask, face shield, cap, gown and gloves) and strictly follow infection control measures. Staff of quarantine centres, including security workers, are categorised as groups of very high risks. The DH requires all security workers to complete the course of vaccination by receiving two doses of vaccine and, in accordance with requirements of the Food and Health Bureau, be tested once every two days.

The Government is highly concerned about the COVID-19 diagnosis of the two contract security workers who work at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. Upon knowledge of the incident, the Civil Aid Service (CAS), which is responsible for the management of the quarantine centre, immediately arranged for cleaning and disinfection of the areas where the security workers had worked. The CAS had also reminded relevant persons to seek medical attention immediately should they feel unwell. Moreover, after conducting epidemiological investigations, the CHP had identified about 18 security workers as close contacts and arranged for them to undergo quarantine at quarantine centres.

Due to the development of the epidemic, the number of contacts undergoing quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre had increased substantially in recent days, among which were isolated incidents of individuals who could not receive tests before the end of quarantine period, resulting in delays in leaving the quarantine centre. We apologise for the inconvenience caused to the persons under quarantine, and have immediately carried out improvement measures, including enhancing manpower at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre, strengthening the communication mechanism with persons under quarantine and reviewing the operation of various departments in the quarantine centre, so as to avoid similar incidents from happening again.

I wish to take this opportunity to explain to Members the various enhancement measures, mainly involving four aspects, taken at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre:

- Enhancing manpower: the DH and CAS had immediately deployed additional manpower to work at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre and enhanced manpower from the contractors so as to strengthen the operation of the quarantine centre. The Fire Services Department had also temporarily deployed staff to assist in the daily operation of the centre. Currently, the manpower at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre had increased from about 600 to about 1 000;
- Checking the information in the computer system: the CAS had arranged for more experienced staff to be responsible for data entry and cross-checking of information of persons under quarantine every night so as to ensure the accuracy of records of persons checking in and out;

- Strengthening communication with persons under quarantine: we note that the number of enquiries received at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre had drastically increased in recent days, resulting in a longer turnaround time for enquiries. Other than enhancing manpower in handling enquiries from persons under quarantine, the quarantine centre also disseminates the latest information to persons under quarantine at appropriate times through messaging and instant messaging applications, so as to reduce the number of repetitive enquiries. The DH had also temporarily set up a 24-hour dedicated hotline for persons under quarantine to enquire about the checking-out arrangements; and
- Cross-departmental coordination group: the coordination group is formed by various departments responsible for the operation of the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre and led by the DH. When needed, such as when the number of persons under quarantine drastically increased or when there are updates in the quarantine arrangement, the coordination group will operate to strengthen the communication among various departments and expedite the work of the quarantine centre.

I fully understand that the quarantine arrangement will bring inconvenience to members of the public, but quarantine is an important part of the policy of "preventing the spreading of the virus in the community" and has proven to be effective. In the nearly two years that have passed, a total of about 68 000 persons underwent quarantine at the quarantine centres, among which more than 2 700 (around 4 per cent) confirmed cases were discovered. I once again thank the effort of the frontline colleagues, and also hope that members of the public will understand the relevant measures and fight the virus together. We will also learn from this experience and improve the quality of the operation of the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre in order to protect the health of members of the public.

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## [LCQ19: Revitalisation of Tuen Mun River](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

The Drainage Services Department (DSD) commenced the Review and Selection of River Sections for Revitalisation – Feasibility Study in early 2021 to select river sections with revitalisation potential and identify the

preliminary scope of relevant revitalisation works. The study covers Tuen Mun River and is scheduled for completion in 2023. However, some residents of Tuen Mun district have relayed that the pollution problem of Tuen Mun River has been severe all along. They always see a lot of grease and rubbish, including styrofoam, food waste and construction materials floating on the surface of Tuen Mun River, and they smell stench from time to time. The hygiene conditions are worrying. Although quite a number of residents have complained to the Environmental Protection Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the DSD (the three departments) over the years, those departments have often shirked their responsibilities, and thus the conditions have not seen any improvement. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of complaints or reports about the hygiene and stench of Tuen Mun River received by the three departments in each of the past three years;
- (2) whether the three departments explored in the past three years the main causes of the river water pollution of Tuen Mun River;
- (3) of the details of the inspection and desilting work carried out at Tuen Mun River by the three departments in each of the past three years, including the number of inspections, as well as the manpower and expenses involved;
- (4) as it has been reported that the pollution of Tuen Mun River may be caused by the misconnection of foul water pipes which discharge industrial wastewater to the river, whether the Government commenced investigations in the past three years into the sources of such industrial wastewater; if so, of the number of prosecutions instituted each year; and
- (5) whether Tuen Mun River has been included in the revitalisation scheme; if so, of the latest progress of the revitalisation works?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been striving to improve the water quality of Tuen Mun River with the continuous implementation of a number of measures, including phased planning of the public sewers for rural villages in upper stream of Tuen Mun River, directing domestic sewage from villages to public sewers gradually, tracing pollution sources, stepping up enforcement actions, rectifying sewer misconnections, clearing stormwater drains and conducting desilting works. The sewer connection works of Lam Tei, Fuk Hang Tsuen (Upper), Fu Tei Ha Tsuen, Kei Lun Wai, and part of both Tuen Tsz Wai and Tsing Chuen Wai have been completed. Separately, the sewerage works at Fuk Hang Tsuen (Lower), Tsz Tin Tsuen, Po Tong Ha and Siu Hang Tsuen are currently under construction and expected to be completed in 2024. In addition, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) combats the pollution at source and installs dry weather flow interceptors to prevent discharge of pollutants into stormwater drainage system. In terms of overall river water

quality, Water Quality Index gradings of the middle and lower sections of Tuen Mun River have been maintaining at "Good" for many years. Having consulted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Drainage Services Department (DSD), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is provided as follows:

(1) The respective numbers of complaints or reports about the hygiene and stench of Tuen Mun River received by the EPD, FEHD and DSD in each of the past three years are provided as follows:

|      | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------|------|------|------|
| EPD  | 10   | 12   | 19   |
| FEHD | 2    | 6    | 24   |
| DSD  | 9    | 25   | 32   |

(2) As aforementioned, the Government has been planning public sewers for the rural villages upstream of Tuen Mun River to progressively direct their domestic sewage to the public sewers. As some villages are yet to be connected to public sewers and rely on private-built septic tanks for sewage treatment, the effectiveness of sewage treatment may be affected when some of these septic tanks are not properly maintained. In addition, the misconnection of building and restaurant sewers or public sewers to stormwater drains along the coastal areas as well as illegal discharge results in pollutants discharging into Tuen Mun River that affects the water quality of some river sections and causes odour problem.

(3) The government departments have been working closely to manage matters in relation to Tuen Mun River, including its water quality, hygiene and drainage capacity etc.

The EPD continues to conduct proactive pollution source inspections in Tuen Mun district in order to combat pollution at source and intercept the illegal discharge of pollutants into the stormwater drainage system. In addition, upon receiving related pollution complaints, our staff will promptly conduct targeted site inspections, perform pollution source investigations in the upstream area and take appropriate enforcement action. Should there be any illegal discharges, enforcement actions will be taken. If we identify any misconnection of building foul sewer or public foul sewer to stormwater drains, the case will be immediately referred to the Buildings Department (BD) or DSD for follow-up. Since 2020, we have introduced the Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to systematically and accurately record case details, optimise inspection and follow-up procedure so as to improve case handling efficiency. The details of inspections on Tuen Mun River conducted by the EPD in each of the past three years are tabulated below:

|      | Number of inspection* | Number of sewer misconnection case ** | Number of prosecution |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2019 | 25                    | 0                                     | 1                     |
| 2020 | 30                    | 2                                     | 0                     |
| 2021 | 48                    | 4                                     | 1                     |

\*The above work is part of the EPD daily pollution control work. Therefore, there is no detailed breakdown on manpower resources and expenditure involved in individual items.

\*\*Half of the cases have been rectified by the BD or DSD.

The FEHD has been sending staff to inspect the hygiene condition of Tuen Mun River on a regular basis. The number of inspections conducted by the FEHD, the number of clearance of floating refuse on the river surface carried out by its contractors, and the expenditure involved in refuse clearance in each of the past three years are tabulated below:

|      | Number of inspection | Number of clearance | Clearance fee (\$)* |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2019 | 53                   | 105                 | 199,912             |
| 2020 | 53                   | 106                 | 154,760             |
| 2021 | 52                   | 104                 | 176,800             |

\*The FEHD does not maintain a breakdown of the manpower expenditure involved in inspections.

The DSD and relevant public works departments carry out desilting work for the section of Tuen Mun River from Siu Hong Station on Tuen Ma Line to the estuary in a timely manner to ensure the proper functioning of Tuen Mun River and maintain its drainage capacity. On average, the DSD conducts inspections on Tuen Mun River for about two to three times a month, inspecting the river condition and arranging desilting and river embankment cleaning when necessary. In December 2021, the DSD started to test the use of remote-controlled desilting robots to carry out underwater desilting work on Tuen Mun River near Tuen Mun Station on Tuen Ma Line to enhance desilting and improve the condition of the river.

The number of inspections on Tuen Mun River conducted by the DSD and relevant public works departments, the number of desilting and river embankment cleaning and the cost in each of the past three years are as follows:

|      | Number of inspection | Number of clearance | Clearance fee (\$ million) |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 2019 | 28                   | 35                  | 3.18                       |

|      |    |    |      |
|------|----|----|------|
| 2020 | 35 | 40 | 2.42 |
| 2021 | 53 | 55 | 2.34 |

(4) The industrial area near Tuen Mun River is mainly located in Tuen Mun Industrial Center and Nan Fung Industrial City, the westward of Tuen Mun River. The number of inspections conducted, sewer misconnection cases identified and prosecutions instituted under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance in the vicinity of the industrial area near Tuen Mun River in each of the past three years are tabulated as follows:

|      | Number of inspection | Sewer misconnection case near industrial area* | Number of prosecution |
|------|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 2019 | 8                    | 0  | 1                     |
| 2020 | 8                    | 2  | 0                     |
| 2021 | 13                   | 1  | 1                     |

\* Two cases have been rectified by the DSD

(5) The DSD is conducting a feasibility study for rivers revitalisation, and Middle Tuen Mun River Channel is evaluated as an area with revitalisation potential. The DSD is currently exploring practical means of improving the water quality to establish its feasibility. The study is targeted for completion in 2023. The preliminary design and planning stages will be proceeded after creating a project item for Revitalisation of Middle Tuen Mun River Channel.