

Gazettal of Rating (Amendment) Bill 2024

The Government announced in the 2024-25 Budget that the progressive rating system for domestic tenements will be implemented as proposed in the 2022-23 Budget and will take effect from the fourth quarter of 2024-25 onwards to uphold the principle of "affordable users pay". To give effect to this, the Rating (Amendment) Bill 2024 will be gazetted on May 31 and will be introduced into the Legislative Council on June 12.

Under the Bill, for domestic tenements with a rateable value (RV) of \$550,000 or below, rates will continue to be charged at 5 per cent of the RV. For domestic tenements with a RV exceeding \$550,000, rates will be charged at the same rate of 5 per cent for the first \$550,000, 8 per cent for the next \$250,000, and 12 per cent for the value exceeding \$800,000 of the RV.

Non-domestic tenements, including those tenements occupied for the purpose of business activities or social services, e.g. hotel, children's home, nursery, home for the elderly, youth hostel, holiday camp, etc, will not be subject to the progressive rating system.

A Government spokesman said, "The progressive rating system endeavours to strike a balance between upholding the 'affordable users pay' principle and minimising the number of ratepayers affected. Due regard has also been given to the need to maintain a simple rating system. The proposal will only affect domestic tenements with an RV exceeding \$550,000, i.e. a monthly rent of about \$46,000 or above, which accounts for about 1.9 per cent of the total number of private domestic tenements in Hong Kong."

Due to their design, mode of occupation, etc, certain types of domestic tenements are currently assessed for rates as a single tenement on an "en-bloc" basis. As a result, RVs of these tenements may exceed \$550,000. However, it is not the intended purpose of implementing the progressive rating system to apply the principle of "affordable users pay" to them. In this connection, the following domestic tenements will be carved out from the scope of progressive rating system:

- public rental housing flats provided by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society, rental housing flats in Tai Hang Sai Estate provided by the Hong Kong Settlers Housing Corporation Limited as well as flats under the transitional housing or light public housing schemes, which aim at providing low-income families or target groups with affordable accommodation; and
- dormitories provided by the Hospital Authority, the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong, non-profit-making registered schools, post-

secondary institutions and religious institutions, in which a substantial portion of the household facilities are designed for shared use.

The Rating and Valuation Department issued letters to individual ratepayers concerned in mid-April 2024, informing them of the potentially higher rates liability upon implementation of the progressive rating system. The progressive rates for applicable cases will be reflected in the quarterly demands for the fourth quarter of 2024-25, which will be issued to the ratepayers concerned in December 2024. The government revenue will increase by about \$820 million each year.

LCQ5: Venues and supporting facilities for holding mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

There are views that notwithstanding the consensus in society that Hong Kong should organise more mega events to consolidate its status as an "events capital", Hong Kong's venues and supporting facilities may pose a major obstacle. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will build the largest outdoor performance venue in Asia to attract top international superstars and groups to perform in Hong Kong;
- (2) given that during the debate on the Member's motion on "Polishing Hong Kong's tourism brand" in this Council on February 22 this year, the Government indicated that it would be willing to explore the provision of recreational and entertainment facilities on the Sunny Bay reclamation site, including a multi-purpose venue or a motor racing circuit, of the relevant details and timetable; and
- (3) given that the Development and Reform Commission of Guangdong Province issued the notice on "Guangdong Province 2024 Key Construction Project Plan" in March this year, and one of the proposed projects was the construction of an FIA Grade 1 circuit and supporting facilities in Guangzhou, together with the construction of an international comprehensive racing sports park around the circuit, whether the Government will discuss with the relevant Mainland authorities the collaboration to construct a top-class motor racing circuit and supporting facilities in Hong Kong which can represent the presence of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in the sport, so as to create

synergy effects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Organising international mega events in Hong Kong means a lot to the city in various aspects. Not only do the events attract more tourists and generate more business opportunities to industries related to tourism and mega events, but also inject momentum to social development, bring joy to the public, create a positive atmosphere in the community and bolster Hong Kong's international image. Mega events of conventions and exhibitions can further foster the development of economy, finance, technology, healthcare and so on. Both the direct and indirect spending of tourists during their participation in the mega events will bring economic gains to Hong Kong. Our tourists will also make the best ambassadors to tell the good stories of Hong Kong.

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has been promoting cultural, sports and tourism mega events, and actively attracting mega events to be held in Hong Kong. In the process of co-ordinating the smooth organisation of various mega events in Hong Kong, the CSTB proactively communicates and collaborates with bureaux and departments. In consultation with the Development Bureau, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

(1) The Government welcomes more large-scale performances and concerts starred by internationally renowned celebrities and groups to be held in Hong Kong. Majority of the large-scale pop concerts are run on commercial principles, involving lots of complex commercial and practical considerations. We understand that, in addition to the size of venue, organisers take into account a number of factors which include singers' schedule, market response, financial feasibility, target audience group and size, and venue facilities, when choosing the location of a concert.

According to our information, on average, each month in 2023 there were about two internationally renowned singers holding large-scale concerts with an audience of more than 10 000, and most of them were holding more than one show. In respect of venues, taking the highly popular Hong Kong Coliseum and the Queen Elizabeth Stadium as examples, the two venues have enjoyed close to 100 per cent occupancy in 2023-24. AsiaWorld-Expo and the Central Harbourfront Event Space were also frequently used for organising pop music concerts. It demonstrates that there are many famous international and local singers staging large-scale pop concerts in Hong Kong.

The Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP), being the largest sports infrastructure project in Hong Kong's history, occupies an area of about 28 hectares in the core of the Kai Tak Development Area. It will provide modern and multi-purpose sports and recreation facilities upon completion, including a 50 000-seat Main Stadium, a 10 000-seat Indoor Sports Centre, a 5 000-seat Public Sports Ground and about 14-hectare landscaped open space and other ancillary facilities. The Main Stadium, being equipped with a retractable roof,

offering different stage positioning and seating configurations as well as adopting a flexible pitch system design, provides more options for hosting different types of large-scale cultural and entertainment events such as concerts. The outdoor event space of around 1.4 hectares adjacent to the Main Stadium also allows the staging of fringe activities of the events held in the Main Stadium, or the hosting of different kinds of outdoor sports and entertainment events. As for the Indoor Sports Centre, its retractable seating system and flexible configuration of the play field facilitates the hosting of various kinds of sports or non-sports events. Together with the diversified, efficient and convenient transportation facilities and various kinds of catering facilities, the KTSP will become another appealing venue for large scale outdoor performance that attracts more major outdoor performances to be staged in Hong Kong, strengthening Hong Kong's status as an Events Capital. As a matter of fact, Kai Tak Sports Park Limited has so far made contact with over 200 local and international sports and non-sports events' promotion bodies, organisations and agencies, amongst which around 50 of them have expressed interest in utilising the facilities at the KTSP and are learning about the leasing arrangements.

There are many considerations in considering the construction of large-scale outdoor performance venues. Besides the scale of venues, the suitability of locations, ancillary facilities and accessibility, financial feasibility, seasons of favourable weather for outdoor events in Hong Kong, market size and demand and so on, are also considered. We will closely monitor the use of the KTSP after its opening, continue to study the ongoing need of developing large-scale venues, and plan for site development for outdoor venues of even greater scale when necessary.

(2) and (3) The Government announced the preliminary proposals for the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands project at the end of 2022. It recommended to build the Hong Kong Island West to Hung Shui Kiu Rail Link, and reserve part of the area of the proposed Sunny Bay Reclamation to accommodate the related railway depot facilities. The Civil Engineering and Development Department commenced the engineering study for Sunny Bay reclamation in May 2023 for anticipated completion in mid-2025 to ascertain the extent of reclamation required and its technical feasibility. Once the extent of the reclamation is ascertained, the Government will explore the land use options. Apart from accommodating the railway depot facilities, the Government will also explore the provision of various recreational and entertainment facilities on the Sunny Bay reclamation site, including a multi-purpose venue and a motor racing circuit.

Hong Kong is a centre for major international sports events. We will continue to foster the exchange and collaboration in sports between Hong Kong and different cities in the Mainland, and continuously explore the possibility of the hosting of mega sports events in places including the Greater Bay Area. At present, we are proactively working with the Guangdong Province and the Macao Special Administrative Region to take forward the organisation of National Games and National Games for Persons with Disabilities to be held in 2025, and in the process strengthening the collaboration among the three places in organising major sports events. We believe that, after the National Games, more various types of mega events

will commence one after another. As for considering undertaking major infrastructure projects, we will also take into account other projects in the Greater Bay Area.

Thank you President.

LCQ8: Berthing of vessels at Tuen Mun River

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

It is learnt that the berthing facilities at the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter have long been in short supply. Recently, some members of the public and marine stakeholders have relayed that many vessels have illegally berthed within Tuen Mun River, giving rise to hygiene problems there which not only lead to environmental pollution but also affect the daily lives of the residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the Ordinances according to which enforcement actions were taken against the illegal acts of vessels berthing at Tuen Mun River over the past five years, and the number of cases where prosecutions were instituted in this connection in each of the years, with a tabulated breakdown by Ordinance;

(2) whether the authorities will consider providing berthing spaces for vessels at other locations in Tuen Mun, so as to reduce the number of vessels berthing at Tuen Mun River; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the authorities will adopt other measures, including taking some form of interception proportionately, to divert the large number of vessels currently berthing at Tuen Mun River; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the measures taken by the authorities over the past five years, including law enforcement and prosecution, to improve the overall hygiene of Tuen Mun River?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to ensuring that sufficient sheltered spaces

are provided within Hong Kong waters for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather, so as to safeguard the safety of the vessels and their crew members. There are currently 14 typhoon shelters (including Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter adjacent to Tuen Mun River) located in different parts of Hong Kong waters, providing 423 hectares of berthing space for vessels. Apart from typhoon shelters, local vessels can also choose to berth at 18 sheltered anchorages.

It is the established policy of the Government to provide sheltered spaces in Hong Kong on a territory-wide basis. The Marine Department (MD) carries out regular assessments of the territory-wide supply and demand situation of sheltered spaces provided, and the latest round of the "Assessment of Typhoon Shelter Space Requirements 2022-2035" was completed at the end of 2022. The results revealed that the overall territory-wide supply of sheltered space could meet the berthing needs of local vessels throughout the period up to 2035. In general, the MD conducts assessments about every five years, and the next round of assessment is expected to commence in 2025.

In addition, according to current marine legislation, local vessels may be anchored at any safe and suitable locations within Hong Kong waters according to their daily operational needs, except for restricted waters where anchorage is prohibited. As Tuen Mun River is not a restricted water area, local vessels can enter or berth at safe and suitable locations within the river area.

In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Development Bureau and the MD, the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) The MD carries out patrols in Tuen Mun River and deals with vessels and facilities violating the marine legislation in accordance with the law. Statistics on enforcement and prosecution actions conducted by the MD in the Tuen Mun River area in the past five years are set out at Annex.

(2) As mentioned above, given that Tuen Mun River is not a restricted water area, local vessels can enter or berth at safe and suitable locations within the river area. It has been observed that there is no congestion of vessels berthed in Tuen Mun River which has obstructed the navigable area. During its daily patrols, the MD continues to strive to keep Tuen Mun River unobstructed and conduct inspections on any safety issues related to vessels. Apart from assisting and instructing the vessels concerned to rectify the situation, the MD also carries out relevant investigations and follow-up actions when necessary.

(3) The installation of any object at sea may impose impacts to the marine traffic, navigational safety or vessels' safety. Therefore, the MD will not take any rash interception measures against vessels entering or berthing in the area of Tuen Mun River.

(4) The overall hygiene of Tuen Mun River fall under a number of government departments. Each department deals with related matters according to the established division of duties, including the Food and Environmental Hygiene

Department (FEHD)'s responsibility for removing floating refuse on river channel, the Drainage Services Department (DSD)'s responsibility for providing sewage and stormwater drainage services, the Environmental Protection Department regulating illegal sewage discharge, and the MD's responsibility for handling oil pollution.

Cleansing service contractors engaged by the FEHD conduct inspection and remove floating refuse at Tuen Mun River regularly. In the past five years (2019-2023), about 2 400 kilograms (kg), 2 900 kg, 3 400 kg, 5 200 kg and 4 000 kg of floating refuse was removed respectively. Officers of the FEHD would take enforcement actions against people found littering at the riverside, including issuing fixed penalty notices or summons.

The DSD continues to carry out regular desilting work for the section of Tuen Mun River from Siu Hong Station to Tuen Mun Station on Tuen Ma Line to maintain its drainage capacity. On average, the DSD conducts inspections of Tuen Mun River about two to three times every month and arranges desilting and river embankment cleaning when necessary.

In the past five years, the MD received a total of 19 reports of suspected oil pollution in Tuen Mun River, of which three cases were confirmed as oil pollution incidents by MD officers on site, and clean-up operations were arranged immediately. In addition, if relevant government departments intend to set up floating booms in Tuen Mun River to intercept floating refuse from entering the sea, the MD will provide advice from the perspective of marine traffic and navigational safety.

LCQ21: Support for families of suicide victims and relevant associate professionals

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

It has been reported that according to the data released by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong in September last year, the suicide rate in Hong Kong in 2022 was 14.5 (meaning that 14.5 persons died by suicide per 100 000 persons), representing a 17.9 per cent increase over the figure of 12.3 in 2021. Moreover, in the first 11 months of 2023, there were 31 suspected fatal student suicide cases reported to the Education Bureau by all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. There are views that despite the upward trend

in the number of suicide cases, the support provided by the community for families of suicide victims and relevant associate professionals is inadequate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how the existing policy takes care of and satisfies the demand of families of suicide victims for mental health and community support; whether it will formulate programmes or measures targeted at this group of people;

(2) of the targeted public education programmes in place to dispel public prejudice and misconceptions about families of suicide victims, and to promote empathy and support for them;

(3) whether it will formulate new measures to prevent suicide, particularly in terms of early identification and intervention in respect of people at high risk of suicide, and whether their families will be covered by such measures; if so, of the details and the support provided for them;

(4) how resources are currently allocated and optimised to strengthen the support for relevant associate professionals in suicide prevention work; whether it has plans to introduce new relevant professional training programmes or improve the existing programmes, so as to enhance the capability of relevant associate professionals to identify and deal with people at risk of suicide; and

(5) regarding interdepartmental co-operation, how the Government improves co-ordination among various relevant government departments and non-governmental organisations, so as to form an effective support network to help relevant associate professionals carry out suicide prevention work more effectively?

Reply:

President,

Suicidal behaviour is a complex social phenomenon affected by a multitude of factors. The Government attaches great importance to suicide prevention and has been providing multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral support to persons with suicidal tendency and their families through co-ordination and co-operation among various bureaux and departments (including the Education Bureau (EDB), the Health Bureau (HHB), the Department of Health (DH), the Labour and Welfare Bureau, and the Social Welfare Department (SWD)), non-government organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders in the community. Family members of suicide victims in particular need multi-faceted support and assistance in adapting to the change brought about by the death of a loved one and coping with grief, so as to tide over the difficult period.

In consultation with the relevant bureaux and departments, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Tang Fei is as follows:

(1) To address the mental health and needs of family members of suicide victims, different government bureaux and departments, the Hospital Authority (HA) and government-subsidised NGOs have been providing mental health support and community support to family members of suicide victims, including:

(a) if the school is aware that a student is a family member of a suicide victim, the school's multi-disciplinary team, including guidance personnel, school social workers, school-based educational psychologists, will provide appropriate support according to the student's needs, maintain communication with the parents to understand the student's emotional condition, and provide further assistance where necessary, including referral of the student in emotional distress to professionals for bereavement counselling services;

(b) the SWD provides suicide prevention services through subventing NGOs, such as the Suicide Crisis Intervention Centre (SCIC) of the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong, to provide outreaching, immediate risk intervention and intensive counselling services for persons in need (including family members of suicide victims). The SCIC also proactively engages internet users with suicidal tendency, with a view to calming their negative emotions and rendering timely support;

(c) the HA and the SWD's medical social workers also provide appropriate assistance for patients and their family members in need (including family members of suicide victims), including financial assistance, counselling services, connection with community resources, in order to facilitate their recovery and re-integration into society;

(d) the HA's Mental Health Direct provides support on mental health issues to members of the public (including family members of suicide victims). The hotline operates around the clock and is answered by psychiatric nurses offering professional advice; and

(e) the HHB's 18111 – Mental Health Support Hotline provides one-stop, round-the-clock emotional and mental health support for people with mental health needs (including family members of suicide victims). Callers will be provided with service information or referred to appropriate service organisations based on their individual needs.

(2) The Government has earmarked a recurrent annual funding of \$50 million to embark on an ongoing mental health promotion and public education initiative to enhance public understanding of mental health, including eliminating prejudice of the public against persons with mental health problems and promoting public sympathy, understanding and support for suicidal persons and their families. In particular, the "Shall We Talk" initiative disseminates mental health-related messages, including the promotion of suicide prevention knowledge and skills and relevant help-seeking information to tie in with the "World Suicide Prevention Day", through various channels such as its one-stop website (shallwetalk.hk), social media pages, TV and radio programmes, offline events.

(3)-(5) In terms of suicide prevention, different government bureaux and departments, the HA and government-subvented NGOs have been providing suicide prevention services targeting suicidal risks through a number of measures, and the multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral teams providing the services have all received relevant professional training. Relevant services include:

(a) the EDB is committed to providing "gatekeeper" training for teachers,

parents and students to enable their early identification and support for students with mental health needs (including those with suicidal risks). There are professionals in schools, including guidance personnel, school social workers and school-based educational psychologists, who provide appropriate support and referral services to students with mental health needs. The HHB, in collaboration with the EDB, the HA and the SWD, has also launched the Student Mental Health Support Scheme to provide appropriate support services for students with mental health needs. In view of the rising trend of student suicide cases in 2023, the Government has immediately taken a number of actions and implemented the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism through cross-departmental collaboration from December 2023 to December 2024 in all secondary schools in Hong Kong, working together with schools, parents and other stakeholders in society, as well as the schools' multi-disciplinary team, off-campus support network and medical services, to ensure early identification of and support for students at high risk;

(b) the SWD set up five Cyber Youth Support Teams in 2018 to proactively search and approach at-risk and hidden youths through online platforms commonly used by young people and provide timely intervention, support and counselling service through online and offline modes to youths in needs (including those who are emotionally unstable and have suicidal thoughts). The SWD also provides subventions to an NGO to operate the "Hotline Service for Youth at Risk" which provides appropriate counselling and referral services through telephone contacts for at risk groups such as children and youths who are emotionally unstable, have suicidal thoughts or attempt to commit suicide;

(c) through subvention to NGOs, the SWD operates 24 Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness across the city to provide one-stop and district-based community support services, ranging from prevention to risk management for persons in mental recovery, persons with mental health needs and their families or carers. These services include public education, day training, counselling services, outreaching visits, case referrals and peer support services; and

(d) targeting elderly with suicidal risks, the HA has implemented the Elderly Suicide Prevention Programme (ESPP) since 2002 to provide timely and appropriate psychiatric diagnosis and treatments for elderly suspected to have suicidal tendency, with a view to reducing the suicidal risk of the elderly concerned. Under the ESPP, elderly assessed to be at suicidal risk will be immediately referred to the HA's psychiatric services by the SWD, NGOs, social workers or doctors for further diagnosis and treatment.

[Import of poultry meat and products](#)

from Corangamite Shire of State of Victoria in Australia suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 29) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H7N9 avian influenza in Corangamite Shire of the State of Victoria in Australia, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 130 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 4.06 million poultry eggs from Australia in the first three months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Australian authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.