

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on May 21 to noon today (May 22), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 240 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 53 153 samples of food imported from Japan (including 34 415 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 13 486 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ21: Costs of various projects of Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

It is learnt that the Northern Metropolis is the Government's key planning project, and a number of construction projects relating to the Northern Metropolis will commence successively this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the expenditures of various development projects of the Northern Metropolis (including studies, land resumption, land formation and construction works) (set out in a table); and

(2) whether it will formulate measures to streamline the administration workflows and reduce market risks, so as to bring down the costs of developing the Northern Metropolis and increase the market's incentive to submit tenders, thereby accelerating the development of the Northern Metropolis; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Government is taking forward the development of the Northern Metropolis in full steam, which includes various New Development Areas (NDAs) at different planning and development stages.

In consultation with the relevant government departments, the reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lam is as follows:

(1) The expenditure or estimates known so far for studies, land resumption and works involved in NDAs in the Northern Metropolis are listed at Annex. Since some projects are still under different stages of study, the land uses, engineering schemes, detailed design and implementation phasing would be subject to study. We would only be able to provide more accurate estimates on the expenditure of those projects when the relevant studies/design proceed to a more mature stage. Besides, the Government's expenditure and relevant estimates on land resumption and works for NDAs will be affected by different land development or disposal arrangements, such as whether in-situ land exchange applications within NDAs are successful, or whether the Government would invite market enterprises to undertake large-scale land development according to requirements set out by the Government.

(2) It has always been an objective of the current-term Government to enhance speed in development. Laws were amended in 2023 to streamline the development-related statutory procedures, enabling us to shorten the lead time required before commencing works in NDAs. After the legislative amendment, the development time required from commencement of studies to delivery of the first parcels of formed land for NDAs could be reduced from around 13 years in the past to about seven years.

For administrative procedures, we have implemented a number of streamlining measures in the past, among such which are more relevant to the development of the Northern Metropolis include the simplification and standardisation of the title-checking procedure, extension of the arrangement for standardisation of land premium for agricultural land outside NDAs, etc. Besides, dedicated units have been set up under the Lands Department and the Buildings Department to handle large-scale residential developments more speedily. The Development Projects Facilitation Office under the Development Bureau (DEVB) will co-ordinate with relevant departments and provide one-stop facilitation services for development projects. The streamlining of administrative procedures is an on-going task. We will continue exploring further scope in streamlining the development process and reducing the lead time required. We plan to brief the Panel on Development in around mid-2024 on our efforts on this front.

The Government will also expedite the development of the Northern Metropolis by actively leveraging market forces and adopting diverse development modes. Amongst others, under the Enhanced Conventional New Town Approach, the Government allows landowners to participate in the development of NDAs by in-situ land exchange. Following the enhanced in-situ land exchange arrangement announced by the Government in end 2023 which includes facilitation to landowners owning 90 per cent or above of private land within a development site to carry out consolidated development, we concluded the first land exchange agreement under the enhanced arrangement last month, which is also the third successful land exchange case in NDAs of the Northern Metropolis. In fact, the first private housing development in the Northern Metropolis implemented by in-situ land exchange has already been completed with population intake commenced in 2022, earlier than the population intake of the first public housing development in 2026. The option to adopt standard rates in premium assessment as mentioned above has already been introduced in NDAs with a view to shortening the time required for premium assessment. In addition, we will explore introducing the large-scale land development approach whereby sizable land parcels (including parcels with value for commercial development and investment returns, as well as community facilities and other infrastructures that would bring about longer-term economic and social benefits) in some NDAs in the Northern Metropolis would be selected for the enterprise, the successful bidder, to develop and construct the project collectively. This mode of development can alleviate the upfront financial burden of the Government, facilitate a more co-ordinated design for the development of an area, and expedite the provision of public facilities by leveraging market forces. At the same time, we will take into account factors like the economic and property market situation and dispose land in an orderly manner.

Moreover, the Government has always been concerned about construction costs. In terms of project governance initiatives, the DEVB established the Project Strategy and Governance Office (PSGO) in 2019 to further enhance the performance of infrastructure works projects by implementing various strategic initiatives to enhance capabilities in cost surveillance and project governance. The PSGO also uplifts productivity and efficiency in order to reduce project costs through the implementation of "Construction 2.0", promotion for wider adoption of high productivity construction methods such as Modular Integrated Construction and Multi-trade Integrated Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing, as well as digital technology and new construction materials. The PSGO is also undertaking a review on measures to control costs of public works projects with a view to taking forward land supply and infrastructural development in an effective manner. The review will be completed within this year.

LCQ7: Supply of places in aided primary schools

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

Some members of the education sector have pointed out that the existing mechanism for operation of Primary One (P1) classes in aided primary schools has not given sufficient consideration to the demand for school places from (i) minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under various talent admission schemes such as the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), (ii) minors arriving in Hong Kong with their newly issued Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao, and (iii) local students (including non-Chinese speaking students) applying for late admission (including but not limited to P1) in the middle of a school term, leading to the continuous "class reduction and school closure" by the Government under the mechanism despite the shortage of places in aided primary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will compile statistics on/estimate the total number of minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under TTPS who attended aided primary schools in the 2022-2023 school year and this school year; if so, of the details, together with a breakdown by level; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) if it will review the existing mechanism, for instance, whether it will include the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at

various levels of aided primary schools in the past school year as the basis for deciding the actual number of P1 classes to be operated by the relevant primary schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that with the gradual completion of various new development areas (NDAs), the medium and long-term demand for primary school places in such NDAs will increase, how the Government plans for the supply of the relevant school places to avoid reinstating the previous arrangement of temporarily allocating more students per P1 class?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) makes reference to the latest population projections released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) when planning the provision of public sector primary school places. The latest population projections released by C&SD in August 2023 have taken into account the impact of various talent admission schemes (including Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS)) and initiatives on the future population. According to the information available, the provision of public sector Primary One (P1) places in the current school year is sufficient to meet the demand of eligible children in Hong Kong.

According to the information from the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Immigration Department, as at end December last year, nearly 21 000 unmarried dependent children under the age of 18 arrived in Hong Kong under TTPS. Talent coming to Hong Kong can choose to arrange their school-age children to study in private schools or publicly-funded schools. They are not required to obtain prior permission from Director of Immigration for receiving education in Hong Kong. On the part of primary and secondary schools, they do not need to report to the EDB upon admitting such dependants. Hence, the Government does not have statistics on the number of the relevant dependants studying in Hong Kong.

(2) The actual number of P1 classes that a school may operate depends on a number of factors, including parental choices and the number of classrooms available. Based on the number of children already admitted by a school during the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the result of computer analysis of the actual choices made by parents during the Central Allocation stage, the EDB would work out the total number of children to be allocated to each primary school. This will form the basis for deciding the number of P1 classes that a school may operate.

The current Primary One Admission (POA) mechanism has been working effectively. On the whole, the current mechanism has strived to strike a balance between the expectations of various stakeholders and has been generally accepted by the public over the years. The EDB has no plan to

conduct a comprehensive review on POA mechanism. We shall continue to closely monitor the implementation of POA System.

At present, schools have to comply with the requirement of enrolment cap when admitting students in the middle of a school term. Normally, schools admit students in the middle of a school term only by using the vacancies at different class levels. In most cases, meeting such demand for school places by means of operating additional classes is not necessary. Even if there are students admitted in the middle of a school term at other class levels, it bears no relation to the demand for P1 places. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at various class levels in the previous school year as a basis for determining the actual number of P1 classes to be operated in the following school year.

(3) The provision of public sector primary school places is planned on a district basis. For new development areas, under the established mechanism, the Government would reserve sites for school development when formulating town plans and planning large-scale residential developments, having regard to the planned population intake and the needs for community services in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Before launching a school building project, the Government would take into account various factors including the development plan of the area concerned, the school-age population projections which are compiled and updated based on the latest information provided by C&SD and the Planning Department, the actual number of existing students and the number of school places available at different grade levels, the prevailing education policies, other factors which may affect the demand and supply of school places, etc.

The Government has already made it clear that school allocation in the future would mainly focus on reprovisioning schools. Since the number of school-age children in a district would change with population movement, the demand and supply of school places would change accordingly. If construction of new school premises is necessary to meet the demand for school places arising from large-scale new housing developments in the districts, the EDB would give priority to cross-district reprovisioning, viz. reprovisioning schools in districts with a surplus of school places to districts with a greater demand for school places, so as to rationalise the demand and supply of school places among districts.

The demand for P1 places in a school net in each school year may vary due to different unforeseen factors. In view of this, the EDB has been adopting flexible measures to cope with the transient changes in demand for school places in individual school nets. These measures include borrowing school places from other school nets, making good use of vacant classrooms to operate additional P1 classes, and temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class for the schools in the school nets concerned in individual school years when necessary. Given that the school-age population of P1 students has been declining in recent years, arrangements for temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class are not required for any school in

the 2023/24 school year.

[Auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks to be held on June 8 and 9](#)

The Transport Department (TD) today (May 22) announced that two auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks will be held on June 8 (Saturday) and 9 (Sunday) in Meeting Room N101, L1, New Wing, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai.

"A total of 350 vehicle registration marks will be put up for public sale at each auction. The lists of marks have been uploaded to the department's website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/index.html," a department spokesman said.

Applicants who have paid a deposit of \$1,000 to reserve a mark for auction should also participate in the bidding (including the first bid at the reserve price of \$1,000). Otherwise, the mark concerned may be sold to another bidder at the reserve price.

People who wish to participate in the bidding at the auction should take note of the following important points:

- (1) Successful bidders are required to produce the following documents for completion of registration and payment procedures immediately after the successful bidding:
 - (i) the identity document of the successful bidder;
 - (ii) the identity document of the purchaser if it is different from the successful bidder;
 - (iii) a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation if the purchaser is a body corporate; and
 - (iv) a crossed cheque made payable to "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" or "The Government of the HKSAR". (For an auctioned mark paid for by cheque, the first three working days after the date of auction will be required for cheque clearance confirmation before processing of the application for mark assignment can be completed.) Successful bidders can also pay through the Easy Pay System (EPS). Payment by post-dated cheques, cash or other methods will not be accepted.
- (2) Purchasers must make payment of the purchase price through EPS or by crossed cheque and complete the Memorandum of Sale of Registration Mark immediately after the bidding. Subsequent alteration of the particulars in the memorandum will not be permitted.

(3) A vehicle registration mark can only be assigned to a motor vehicle which is registered in the name of the purchaser. The Certificate of Incorporation must be produced immediately by the purchaser if a vehicle registration mark purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(4) Special registration marks are non-transferable. Where the ownership of a motor vehicle with a special registration mark is transferred, the allocation of the special registration mark shall be cancelled.

(5) The purchaser shall, within 12 months after the date of auction, apply to the Commissioner for Transport for the registration mark to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. If the purchaser fails to assign the registration mark within 12 months, allocation of the mark will be cancelled and arranged for re-allocation in accordance with the statutory provision without prior notice to the purchaser.

For other auction details, please refer to the Guidance Notes – Auction of Traditional Vehicle Registration Marks, which can be downloaded from the department's website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/tvrm_auction/index.html.

LCQ14: Examinations Support System of Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Hoey Simon Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

It is learnt that the Second Generation Public Examinations Support System (PESS2) designed to support the conduct of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE), as well as the mobile applications "i-Invigilation (HKDSE)" and "Check-in Smart (HKDSE)" did not run smoothly during the HKDSE, and the use of i-Invigilation (HKDSE) has even been suspended since the 13th of last month. On the other hand, it is learnt that unlike government departments, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) is exempt from the requirement of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) that before the launch of large-scale digital services, the relevant systems be subject to additional load tests and stress tests conducted by an independent third party arranged by the OGCIO. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the HKEAA will submit a report on the aforesaid incident to the Government;

(2) as it has been reported that the HKEAA has earlier conducted a stress test on PESS2, whether it knows the details of the test, including the test frequency, duration and method, as well as the test result;

(3) whether it knows if the HKEAA has formulated fallback plans for the full implementation of PESS2, such as deploying additional manpower to cope with contingencies; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council at a special meeting of the Finance Committee of this Council held on the 19th of last month to discuss the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry advised that the Government was considering extending the aforesaid requirement of the OGCI0 to legal entities and public organisations, of the relevant measures being formulated by the authorities and the implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) launched the Second-Generation Public Examinations Support System (PESS2) in normal examination centres for the written examinations of Category A subjects of the 2024 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) with the aim of streamlining the examination operations and improving the efficiency of the tasks related to the HKDSE. The PESS2, which was developed by a contractor commissioned by the HKEAA, consists of two major mobile applications and one online portal:

(1) "Check-in Smart (HKDSE)": to allow candidates to check examination information and perform self check-in before the examination;

(2) "i-Invigilation (HKDSE)": for invigilators to verify the candidates' identities, confirm attendance, and count the answer scripts collected; and

(3) "Centre Supervisor Control Panel": to enable centre supervisors to monitor the examination operations, confirm the candidates' attendance and answer scripts collected, handle irregularities and communicate with the HKEAA Command Centre.

My reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Hoey Simon Lee is as follows:

(1) to (3)

Stress test

After completing the system development work for the PESS2 and related applications in December 2022, the HKEAA conducted two rounds of load tests for the system having regard to the operational needs of the 2024 HKDSE that would involve over 50 000 candidates, 2 000 invigilators and some 500 examination centres.

The first load test, which took place in January 2023, aimed to verify the system's capacity for its phased deployment in the HKDSE normal examination centres. During the load test, the contractor used computer simulations to generate a higher workload than would normally be required. This included operating the system in up to 600 centre schools at the same time, with approximately 70 000 candidates expected to use the "Check-in Smart (HKDSE)" application for self-check-in, while around 3 000 invigilators using the "i-Invigilation (HKDSE)" application to perform invigilation duties required. Before conducting the load test, the HKEAA Secretariat (the Secretariat) reviewed the load test plan and relevant design flowcharts submitted by the contractor and provided feedback. Upon completion of the load test, the Secretariat examined the test performance report submitted by the contractor and accepted that the test was completed.

Regarding the HKDSE in April 2023, the HKEAA deployed the PESS2 for the Mathematics (Compulsory Part) and Chinese Language subjects in 48 centre schools for pilot implementation. The system operated smoothly throughout the examination period, without any anomalies being detected.

Thereafter, to fully deploy the PESS2 for all normal examination centres in the 2024 HKDSE, the HKEAA requested the contractor to conduct the second load test in January 2024. As with the first load test, this test plan also used computer simulations to generate a higher workload than would normally be required to verify that the PESS2's capacity could meet the various operational needs of the 2024 HKDSE. This included operating the system in up to 600 centre schools at the same time, with approximately 70 000 candidates expected to use the "Check-in Smart (HKDSE)" application for self-check-in, while around 3 000 invigilators using the "i-Invigilation (HKDSE)" application to perform invigilation duties required. According to the contractor's report, the system performed as expected during the second load test, without any anomalies being detected.

Contingency plan

Prior to the commencement of the 2024 HKDSE, the HKEAA has developed contingency measures in the event of any issues with the PESS2. If the system is unable to function properly, examination personnel should handle the candidates' attendance and the checking of answer scripts manually using paper forms. These paper forms were delivered to centre schools with other examination stationery in mid-March. The details of these contingency measures were outlined in the Centre Supervisor's Handbook and explained to examination personnel during the PESS2 Briefing Session and the Centre Supervisors' Conferences held in February and March 2024 respectively.

Incident report

In the wake of the PESS2 incident, the HKEAA and the contractor immediately conducted initial investigations and in-depth discussions. To ensure the smooth conduct of the subsequent examinations of the 2024 HKDSE, the HKEAA convened a press conference on the evening of April 12, 2024 to announce the suspension of the "i-Invigilation (HKDSE)" application with the tasks related to the examination being handled manually until further notice

and account for the follow-up actions for this incident. The usage of the "Check-in Smart (HKDSE)" application by the candidates would not be affected. The HKEAA also submitted a preliminary report to the Government. In addition, the HKEAA has set up a Task Force to investigate in detail the causes of the incident, including the methodology of the load tests, their results and the follow-up work, and devise improvement measures. The Task Force comprises members from the relevant committees of the HKEAA Council, university professors, representatives from the school sector, the Education Bureau and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The Task Force expected to finish the initial investigation in June 2024.

(4) The OGCIO is actively examining appropriate guidelines and technical support to Bureaux/Departments to strengthen their governance of new information technology systems launched by public bodies within their purview, including adequate testing before system rollout. The OGCIO aims to introduce relevant measures as soon as possible.