

## LCQ10: Lifts connecting to public footbridges

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

Regarding lifts connecting to public footbridges (the lifts), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how it monitors the cleansing works performed by the contractors for the lifts (e.g. whether the contractors are required to submit regular reports) to ensure that the lifts are clean and bright;

(2) how frequently the maintenance works of the lifts are carried out, and of the average time taken by the contractors to deal with unforeseen lift failures; how the Government monitors and ensures that the contractors carry out regular inspections;

(3) given that the Government has enhanced its newly constructed lifts for the convenience of users (including the introduction of touchless lift buttons, the installation of reflective panels inside the lifts and the provision of buttons on the side walls of the lift cars), whether the Government has plans to adopt such a design in all its lifts; if so, of the specific work plan; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that the Government indicated in its paper submitted to the Panel on Transport of this Council in October last year that it was conducting tests on a number of materials and devices (including nano-self-cleaning coatings and nano-fibre filters) for its lifts and lift towers to reduce the accumulation of dust and dirt, whether the results of the tests meet the relevant requirements; if so, of the specific timetable for the adoption of such materials; if not, the improvement plans in place to meet the relevant requirements; and

(5) given that the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department is contemplating the use of cleansing robots to carry out cleansing works for the lifts, whether the Government has plans to introduce more similar programmes to reduce the workload of cleansing workers and minimize the impact of the suspension of lift service on the public?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Highways Department (HyD) and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Professor the

Hon Lau is as follows:

(1) The HyD employs contractors on a term contract basis to clean the lifts attached to public footbridges (Note 1). The contractors clean the lift structures (e.g. the external glass walls of lift towers and lift cars) once every three months. Facilities such as the internal walls of lift cars, lift doors and control panels will be cleaned once a day.

The HyD has stipulated in the contracts a stringent mechanism to monitor the performance of contractors. Upon completion of the relevant work, the contractors are required to submit work records, including on-site photographs, in accordance with the contract requirements. The HyD will examine the relevant work records or reports to ensure that the work complies with the contract requirements and is completed within the required timeframe. The HyD will also send its staff to conduct weekly random checks on the work of the contractors. If the level of the relevant work fails to meet the specified standards, the HyD will take appropriate follow-up actions in accordance with the contract requirements and the established mechanism, such as issuing warning letters, reflecting the findings in the quarterly performance reports of the contractors, and deducting the relevant payment in accordance with the contract terms.

In addition, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is responsible for the daily floor sweeping of the lifts concerned. The FEHD conducts inspections based on the principle of risk management to ensure that the frontline sweeping services meet the required performance standards. Besides, the FEHD maintains effective communication with the outsourced contractors, advises and reminds them of the areas requiring attention, follow-up and improvement. If the contractor is found to be in breach of the contract terms, verbal warning, written warning or various types of Default Notices will be issued to the contractor and the monthly service fee will be deducted accordingly.

Note 1: They refer to public footbridges across public roads which are repaired and maintained by the HyD.

(2) The HyD engages the EMSD to carry out maintenance of the electrical and mechanical equipment of the lifts concerned and the EMSD engages registered lift contractors to perform the work. The contractors will carry out weekly routine maintenance and inspection of the lifts and arrange for appropriate repairs when necessary. According to the performance pledge, the contractor is required to arrive at the scene within one hour upon receipt of a report of lift malfunctions. For malfunctions involving trapped passengers, the contractor is required to arrive at the scene within 30 minutes. In both cases, the compliance rate should be at least 95 per cent.

The EMSD will monitor the progress of the contractors' maintenance and repair work, including reviewing the logbooks and maintenance reports of the contractors, and dispatching staff from time to time to carry out surprise inspections of the contractors' work. If a contractor is found not to have taken timely follow-up actions or its performance is not up to the required standard, the EMSD will follow up with the contractor in accordance with the

requirements of the contract, including the issuance of warning letters and reflecting the findings in the quarterly performance reports of the contractors.

(3) The HyD has been striving to optimise the design of lifts to meet the needs of users. For new lifts retrofitted under the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme since August 2022, the HyD has introduced touchless buttons, and added reflective panels inside the lifts and control panels on the side walls of the lifts for the convenience of wheelchair users. The HyD and the EMSD will tie in with the maintenance cycle and refurbishment arrangement of footbridges and pedestrian subways, and consider adding relevant installations to existing lifts as necessary, taking into account the actual situation and relevant factors, such as the site environment and the existing equipment of the lifts.

(4) The HyD has been exploring the introduction of new designs and materials to enhance the cleanliness of lifts and lift towers. In March 2024, the HyD completed a number of material and installation tests for new lifts retrofitted under the UA Programme, including the testing of nano-self-cleaning coatings and nanofiber filters. The results showed that the nano-self-cleaning coatings could effectively reduce the accumulation of dust and dirt on the glasses of lift towers and lift cars, while the nanofiber filters could prevent dust and dirt from entering the lift towers through the louvers. In view of this, the HyD will adopt these technologies in its new lifts in future.

(5) The HyD is committed to exploring the technical feasibility of using cleansing robots to carry out cleansing work for lifts attached to public footbridges, including the internal and external glass surfaces of lift towers and lift cars. However, due to the complex structure and narrow space of lift shafts, it is technically challenging to use robots for cleansing. The HyD has commissioned the EMSD to encourage the industry to come up with innovative technological solutions through the E&M InnoPortal (Note 2). In addition, the EMSD and the HyD will continue to liaise with the industry to keep in view the development of new technologies and introduce other innovative solutions for field trials as appropriate, with a view to further alleviating the workload of cleansing workers and minimising the service interruptions caused by regular cleansing.

Note 2: The EMSD launched the E&M InnoPortal which lists the service wishes of various government departments, public organisations and the electrical and mechanical trades, and invites the innovation and technology (I&T) sector, including start-ups and universities to propose relevant I&T solutions for matching. For successfully matched I&T wishes and solutions, the EMSD will carry out field trials in a bid to promote and drive the research and development and application of innovative technologies.

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# LCQ18: The situation of importation of Labour

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

The Government successively launched the Labour Importation Scheme for the Transport Sector – Aviation Industry and the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) last year to alleviate the manpower shortage across different sectors. However, members of various sectors have relayed to me that these two schemes, which have been implemented for more than half a year, are not as effective as expected and have failed to help them alleviate the imminent manpower shortage. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of imported workers who have arrived to work in Hong Kong since the implementation of the Labour Importation Scheme for the Transport Sector – Aviation Industry, with a breakdown by the 10 job types under the scheme;

(2) of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the authorities and the number of workers involved since the implementation of the ESLS, and whether the authorities will compile statistics on/estimate the number of workers who have arrived to work in Hong Kong; of the aforesaid information on the 26 job categories normally excluded from the Supplementary Labour Scheme;

(3) of the respective numbers of applications from the hotel, guesthouse and travel agent industries received, being processed, approved and rejected by the authorities and the job types involved since the implementation of the ESLS; whether the authorities will compile statistics on/estimate the number of workers who have arrived to work in Hong Kong; and

(4) as members of the industry generally consider that the progress of processing applications under the ESLS has been slow, making it difficult to alleviate the imminent frontline manpower constraints facing the industry, and the Government indicated in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the 10th of last month that new measures will be introduced shortly to further improve the workflow of processing relevant applications, of the anticipated reduction in the average time taken to process each application following the implementation of the new measures?

Reply:

President,

To cope with the challenges brought by manpower shortage, the Government has enhanced the mechanism for importation of workers on the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers. On July 17, 2023, the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB) launched the Labour Importation Scheme for the Transport Sector – Aviation Industry (Aviation Scheme). The Labour Department (LD) has also implemented the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) since September 4, 2023 to enhance the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme, including suspending the general exclusion of the 26 job categories as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from labour importation for two years.

In consultation with the TLB, my reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(i) The Aviation Scheme allows aviation-related companies with direct contractual relationships with the Airport Authority Hong Kong to suitably import workers on the prerequisite of safeguarding the employment priority of local workers, with a quota ceiling of 6 300.

In the first round of application from July to August 2023, the TLB approved the applications from 28 eligible companies with a total of 2 841 quotas covering all 10 job types under the Aviation Scheme. As at April 2024, 1 450 imported workers had arrived to work in Hong Kong and their distribution with a breakdown by job type is at Annex 1.

The second round of application under the Aviation Scheme was conducted from March to April 2024. The TLB approved the applications from 27 eligible companies with a total of 2 982 quotas also covering all job types. The employers concerned have already started recruiting imported workers and those approved in the second round are expected to arrive to work in Hong Kong starting from June to July 2024.

(2) and (3) From September 4, 2023 to April 30, 2024, 4 239 applications seeking to import 41 470 workers were received under the ESLS. Of these applications, 31 574 imported workers intended to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation before (21 662 and 9 912 respectively for the 26 job categories and the unskilled/low-skilled posts). During the same period, 1 277 applications seeking to import 8 586 imported workers were approved under the ESLS, including 4 929 workers approved to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation in the past (3 910 and 1 019 respectively for the 26 job categories and the unskilled/low-skilled posts). A breakdown of the numbers of imported workers applied for and approved by the 26 job categories is at Annex 2.

In addition, apart from the approved applications, as at April 30, 2024, 1 028 applications in respect of those received after the launch of the ESLS had started or completed the local recruitment exercise, seeking to import 11 313 workers. The LD expects that the vetting of most of these applications will be completed in the second quarter of this year. The exact number approved will depend on the results of local recruitment and the application

details of the cases.

As at April 30, 2024, the major posts related to the accommodation services industry (including the hotel and boarding house sectors) received under the ESLS included room attendant, waiter/waitress and receptionist, etc. A breakdown of the numbers of applications received, under processing, approved and refused relating to the accommodation services industry is at Annex 3. The LD does not maintain a breakdown on the travel agency sector.

Employers approved to import workers under the ESLS are required to sign a standard employment contract with each of its prospective imported worker. They shall arrange their prospective imported workers to submit visa/entry permit applications to the Immigration Department within the period specified in the approval-in-principle letter (generally within six months from the issue date of the said letter). The arrival time of the imported workers depends on the progress of the employers' handling of the relevant procedures. The LD does not maintain the number of imported workers arriving and working in Hong Kong under the ESLS.

(4) The time required for the LD to process each application under the ESLS is affected by a number of factors, including whether the applicant employer has provided sufficient information or has requested changes to the application details during processing. If the job vacancies involves novel job titles or special skills, the LD will need more time to seek advice from relevant bureaux and/or departments, training bodies, professional bodies, etc., to set the reasonable wages, entry requirements, scope of duties, etc.

The LD has uploaded to the ESLS dedicated website the "List of Common Posts" covering the median monthly wage, working hours, entry requirements and duties of 156 common posts in different industries for employers' reference. To further enhance the workflow of processing applications, the LD on May 2, 2024, introduced a series of new measures, striving to complete the processing of newly-received applications for common posts within around three months. The new measures include:

(i) introducing an application form for common posts and assigning designated teams to process these applications to expedite the preliminary screening process for commencement of the four-week local open recruitment;

(ii) deploying staff designated to vet applications submitted by employers. The LD will remind the employers as soon as possible in case the information on the application forms is incomplete or the required supporting documents are missing;

(iii) exercising flexibility in the handling of recruitment advertisements placed by employers during local recruitment, and avoiding to extend the four-week local recruitment period as far as possible; and expediting the process of following up on interview results;

(iv) organising briefings for employment agencies involved in labour importation matters to explain the application arrangements of the ESLS to facilitate employment agencies to assist employers on the handling of

applications; and

(v) increasing the frequency of circulating the recommendations on the applications of the ESLS to the Labour Advisory Board.

The LD will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the ESLS, safeguard the employment priority for local workers and improve the processing of applications.

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## LCQ7: Handling of styrofoam waste

Following is a question by the Hon Lam So-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

Regarding the handling of styrofoam waste, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current daily amount of styrofoam waste being sent to landfills;
- (2) as it is learnt that styrofoam is widely used as a packaging material for some household electrical appliances (e.g. air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines and televisions), whether the Government has compiled statistics on the amount of styrofoam waste generated from the packaging materials of household electrical appliances in each of the past three years and, among such waste, the amount that was sent to landfills;
- (3) as there are views that the economic benefits of styrofoam recycling are relatively low, how the Government assists the recycling industry in handling large volumes of styrofoam waste when alternatives that can completely replace styrofoam have not yet emerged;
- (4) whether it has assessed if the problem of styrofoam waste can be fully resolved when I·PARK1, a modern waste-to-energy incinerator for treating municipal solid waste, becomes operational in 2025; and
- (5) whether the Government currently has plans to fully resolve the problem of styrofoam waste?

Reply:

President,

Given styrofoam being lightweight but bulky in volume, even when a large

amount of styrofoam is recovered and processed, only a small amount of raw plastics will be produced. The costs on transportation and recycling are high. Coupled with the fact that most of the waste styrofoam is either contaminated or mixed with impurities, the recycling efficiency of styrofoam is comparatively low. Hence, the Government has put forward various strategies on handling styrofoam waste: (i) reducing use at source, such as banning the sale or supply of styrofoam tableware, and encouraging electrical appliances suppliers to reduce the use of styrofoam packaging materials; (ii) encouraging reuse, such as styrofoam boxes used for storage of vegetables and fruits; and (iii) providing outlets for recycling, such as recycling of styrofoam products at the GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities. As regards styrofoam that cannot be reused or recycled, to reduce the amount of such waste to be transferred to landfills for handling, the Government is constructing the Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 1 (I-PARK1), with a view to transforming waste into energy with advanced technology.

The consolidated reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lam So-wai is as follows:

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has not compiled the breakdown of statistics on the quantity of waste styrofoam generated and disposed of.

As mentioned in the Government's overall strategies in the preamble, in respect of styrofoam tableware, the Government has implemented the new regulation on disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products on April 22 this year. Restaurants and retail stores are not allowed to sell or supply all styrofoam tableware (including plates, food containers and cups), thereby directly and significantly reducing the use of styrofoam at source.

In respect of packaging materials for household electrical appliances, the EPD conducted a survey on packaging materials for the trade of electrical and electronic appliances suppliers in 2022 and encouraged them to reduce the amount of styrofoam packaging materials as much as possible. Among the replies from electrical appliances suppliers, more than 50 respondents (about 60 per cent) stated that they had actively reduced the use of styrofoam in the packaging of electrical and electronic products, and, when practicable, even ceased using styrofoam altogether. According to the responses of these electrical appliances suppliers, the use of styrofoam for packaging in most of their small household appliances have been reduced or ceased. To commend companies with outstanding performance, the EPD presented awards to several electrical and electronic appliances suppliers who have reduced the use of styrofoam packaging in at least 60 per cent of their products, including Gilman Group Limited, Arçelik Hitachi Home Appliances Sales Hong Kong Limited, Shun Hing Electric Works and Engineering Company Limited, Midea Electric (Hong Kong) Limited and German Pool (Hong Kong) Limited, at the opening ceremony of the "GREEN@COMMUNITY Recycling Month" in November 2022. Through this event, we had also appealed to more suppliers of different products to reduce the use of packaging material (including styrofoam). In addition, the EPD published the "Practical Guides on Packaging Reduction and Management" (Guides) for the electrical and electronic appliances sector on



May 2 this year and issued letters to electrical appliances suppliers to encourage them to make reference to the Guides and use recyclable packaging materials in place of styrofoam.

To facilitate different sectors in kick-starting their journey on packaging reduction and management, apart from the electrical and electronic appliances sector, the EPD is also developing a set of Guides for specific sectors to provide practical tips and experience sharing on how to avoid and reduce packaging consumption (including styrofoam containers) so as to achieve sustainable packaging management in their daily operations. For details about the Guides, please visit the following website: [www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en-hk/resources-centre/packaging-reduction-tips-different-sectors](http://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en-hk/resources-centre/packaging-reduction-tips-different-sectors).

In respect of styrofoam boxes used for vegetables and fruits, those used for transporting vegetables and fruits supplied to Hong Kong from the Mainland are mainly returned to the Mainland for reuse. With the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong since January 2023, the arrangement has been running smoothly. In addition, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, and the Fish Marketing Organisation have installed cold-press machines in the overhauled markets and wholesale markets respectively and arranged local recyclers to recover and recycle styrofoam boxes that cannot be reused due to damage or other reasons on the spot.

From the perspective of environmental benefits, reusing styrofoam boxes is better than recycling. However, styrofoam also has unfavourable characteristics, such as poor strength, brittleness and low degradability. Balancing the cost-effectiveness and the long-term development of the industries, we will continue to maintain dialogue with the food and recycling industries, encourage the food industry to switch to stackable, durable and easy-to-clean plastic boxes for transportation of goods in the long-run as far as practicable.

In terms of recycling styrofoam, all GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities accept styrofoam items generated from households for passing on to downstream recyclers approved by the EPD for proper treatment and turning them into resources. Each Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores under GREEN@COMMUNITY has a workshop for temporary storage of recyclables. If members of the public need to hand over styrofoam that is relatively bulky in size to GREEN@COMMUNITY, they are advised to contact the relevant facility to make prior arrangements.

Meanwhile, the EPD is working at full steam on constructing I·PARK1 near Shek Kwu Chau, which is the first modern waste-to-energy incineration project in Hong Kong, with an expected handling capacity of 3 000 tonnes of municipal solid waste (MSW) per day. I·PARK1 will mainly receive MSW, including styrofoam waste, transported by sea from the West Kowloon Transfer Station and turn the waste into energy.

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## LCQ16: Overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Judy Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

From 2019 to early 2021, the Transport Department (TD) decluttered non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings in the pilot areas of Central and Sham Shui Po. To tie in with the overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong, TD will extend the decluttering works to other suitable locations progressively. However, some members of the public have relayed that at present, many narrow footpaths on Hong Kong Island are still cluttered with non-essential traffic signs, causing much inconvenience to pedestrians. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of non-essential traffic signs and (ii) the length of non-essential pedestrian railings removed each year since the completion of the pilot scheme, together with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) of the existing mechanism adopted by the authorities to identify non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings for removal; whether they will consider establishing a channel for DC members and members of the public to formally put forward proposals for removal of non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings; and

(3) of the specific plans in future to achieve respectively the four objectives of "make it connected", "make it safe", "make it enjoyable" and "make it smart" under the overall walkability strategy for Hong Kong, so as to create a more comfortable walking environment for members of the public?

Reply:

President,

To promote "Walk in HK" and encourage the public to walk more, the Transport Department (TD) fosters a pedestrian-friendly environment and promotes walking as a form of sustainable urban mobility along four pillars, namely "make it connected", "make it safe", "make it enjoyable" and "make it smart". My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Judy Chan is as follows:

(1) The TD has commenced the work to declutter non-essential traffic signs at suitable locations in various districts across the city since August 2021. As

at the end of 2023, the numbers of non-essential traffic signs decluttered in various districts are as follows:

District	2021 (August to December)	2022	2023
Central and Western	2	17	62
Wan Chai	4	26	27
Eastern	20	16	24
Southern	0	40	30
Yau Tsim Mong	14	17	247
Sham Shui Po	2	17	94
Kowloon City	1	0	48
Wong Tai Sin	9	6	91
Kwun Tong	0	32	93
Tsuen Wan	17	27	206
Tuen Mun	11	41	51
Yuen Long	18	17	26
North	3	30	111
Tai Po	0	12	54
Sai Kung	0	46	4
Sha Tin	2	35	78
Kwai Tsing	0	0	85
Islands	0	0	1
Total	103	379	1 332

The TD has also commenced the work to declutter non-essential pedestrian railings at suitable locations in various districts across the city since October 2020. As at the end of 2023, the lengths (in metres) of non-essential pedestrian railings decluttered in various districts are as follows:

District	2020 (October to December)	2021	2022	2023
Central and Western	0	14	35	52
Wan Chai	149	581	72	138
Eastern	0	393	243	120
Southern	0	23	21	219
Yau Tsim Mong	488	0	60	73
Sham Shui Po	93	60	74	192

Kowloon City	9	21	26	88
Wong Tai Sin	0	27	53	0
Kwun Tong	0	77	29	226
Tsuen Wan	65	140	216	186
Tuen Mun	116	945	670	110
Yuen Long	100	107	378	172
North	0	0	0	77
Tai Po	0	540	180	67
Sai Kung	590	2410	0	0
Sha Tin	200	23	175	0
Kwai Tsing	0	36	35	209
Islands	0	0	21	0
Total length (in meters)	1 810	5 397	2 288	1 929

(2) The TD has all along been committed to fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment. Regarding traffic signs, on the premise of not compromising road safety and traffic management, the TD declutters non-essential traffic signs in various districts across the city according to the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), whilst taking into account factors such as public opinions and planning for traffic improvement works. For instance, when a traffic sign contains the same message as that of a road marking, the TD will consider decluttering it, such as removing a "24-hour No-stopping Restriction" traffic sign when "double yellow lines" have already been painted on the road.

The provision of pedestrian railings is meant to guide pedestrians to cross the roads and prevent them from inadvertently moving away from footpaths onto carriageways, thereby ensuring road safety and achieving traffic management. Pedestrian railings are mainly erected at road junctions, pedestrian crossings, transport interchanges, school entrances/exits, central reserves and pedestrian refuge islands, etc. Currently, the TD adopts a "minimal approach" in the provision of pedestrian railings, which aims at stripping away excessive railings that are not bringing value to the implementation of the policy of enhancing walkability of the pedestrian environment and reducing street cluttering, with a view to releasing more road space for pedestrians on footpaths.

The TD will continue to conduct regular reviews of traffic signs and pedestrian railings under its purview to determine whether they should be maintained, removed or replaced, taking into account the functions of the traffic signs and railings, prevailing guidelines, accident records of the locations concerned, public views, etc. On matters relating to the decluttering of traffic signs and pedestrian railings, the TD consults local stakeholders through District Offices as and when necessary and also welcomes views from the general public.

(3) Under the overall strategy of "Walk in HK", apart from its continued

efforts to declutter non-essential traffic signs and pedestrian railings in various districts, the TD also proceeds with various walkability enhancement measures, which include footpath widening, provision of more pedestrian crossings, expanding pedestrian crossing build-outs, setting up of wayfinding signage, provision of raised crossings and setting up of low speed limit zones, etc. Moreover, the Government has commenced projects of providing covers for walkways across the 18 districts, of which 11 projects have been completed while the works of the remaining seven projects are in progress. The Government is also taking forward projects of providing covers for walkways connecting public hospitals. The TD will continue to keep in view the results and effectiveness of the various measures to enhance the pedestrian environment and extend them to cover suitable locations, taking into account technical conditions and public views. The TD will also strive to take forward walkability enhancement measures in other suitable locations across the city, with new development areas and suitable urban redevelopment areas selected for adopting the pedestrian planning framework to formulate and implement appropriate pedestrian facility measures.

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## **LCQ15: Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Fund**

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

According to the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Fund Annual Report for the year from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, both the rate of application for Traffic Accident Victims Assistance and the total amount of assistance paid in the year had increased as compared with those in 2021-2022, and among which, the victims of nearly 90 per cent of the cases sustained slight injuries. There are views pointing out that the increased amount of assistance paid is due to the abuse of the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Fund (the Fund). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the applications made to the Fund in 2022-2023 in respect of the aforesaid slight injury cases:

(i) the respective numbers of applications in which the victims were drivers, passengers and pedestrians;

(ii) whether it has categorised the severity of the injuries under "slight injury"; if so, set out the respective numbers of applications in which the

victims were drivers, passengers and pedestrians with a breakdown by such categories;

(iii) the respective numbers of applications submitted with injury certificates issued by doctors in public and private healthcare institutions;

(iv) among the applications with injury certificates issued by doctors in private healthcare institutions, (a) the number of applications involving an re-assessment of the injury certificates and (b) whether it has found cases involving injury certificates mostly issued by a small number of private doctors; and

(v) the respective numbers of applications in which injury grant and interim maintenance grant were granted, together with a breakdown by the number of days of sick leave for the victims (i.e. less than one month, one month to less than three months, and three months to six months) as certified by doctors;

(2) the number of reports on fraud of the Fund received by the Government in the past three years; whether it will step up measures to encourage the public to report suspected cases; and

(3) given that the amount of assistance disbursed from the Fund in 2020-2021 was substantially higher than that in 2019-2020, and the Fund recorded deficits in the past three years, whether the authorities will consider tightening the Fund's eligibility criteria as well as the vetting and approval of applications, such as by tightening the requirements on sick leave certificates or shortening the time limit for the submission of an application after the accident, so as to eradicate fraud and abuse of the Fund by lawbreakers and reduce the financial pressure on the Fund; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Traffic Accident Victims Assistance (TAVA) Scheme is administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The objective of the TAVA Scheme is to provide speedy financial assistance to road traffic accident victims or the surviving dependents of deceased traffic accident victims on a non-means-tested basis, regardless of the element of fault leading to the occurrence of the accident.

In response to the question raised, my reply is as follows:

(1) To achieve the objective of the TAVA Scheme to support traffic accident victims, financial assistance is provided on a non-means-tested basis, regardless of the element of fault leading to the occurrence of the accident. However, an applicant must meet the following conditions to be eligible for assistance payment, including (a) the accident must have been reported to the Police and determined by the Police as a road traffic accident; and (b) the

victim is injured or killed in the accident. In case of injury, the injured victim must be certified by a registered doctor that such injury requires hospitalisation of no less than three days or issued with proof for medical leave of no less than three days.

(i) and (ii) In 2022-23, the number of cases by the recipient's level of injury and role in the accident is tabulated below:

Level of injury	Number of cases (Note 1)			Total
	Role of recipient in the accident			
	Driver	Passenger	Pedestrian	
Slight injury	5 061	1 706	692	7 459
Serious injury	664	161	173	998
Fatal	16	7	28	51
Total	5 741	1 874	893	8 508 (Note 2)

(iii) In 2022-23, the number of cases involving sick leave certificates issued by the public hospitals and/or private hospitals/clinics are tabulated below:

Medical institutions issuing the sick leave certificates	Number of cases (Note 1)
Public hospitals	3 900
Private hospitals/clinics	585
Involving both public and private hospitals/clinics	3 977
Total	8 462 (Note 2)

(iv) The SWD does not maintain statistics on re-assessment of injuries by doctors of private hospitals/clinics and the information on private doctors.

(v) In 2022-23, the number of cases receiving Injury Grant and Interim Maintenance Grant by number of sick leave days granted are tabulated below:

Number of sick leave days granted	Number of cases (Note 1) receiving Injury Grant	Number of cases (Note 1) receiving Interim Maintenance Grant
30 days or below	2 745	513
31 – 90 days	1 696	539

91 – 180 days	4 021	1 577
Total	8 462	2 629

Note 1: The figures are based on the date of application of the cases.

Note 2: As some recipients passed away or passed away after applying for sick leave, the number of cases involving sick leave certificates and the total number of cases under the TAVA Scheme could vary.

(2) When processing applications, the SWD will clearly explain to the applicant that obtaining assistance payment by deception is a criminal offence. Apart from losing the eligibility for assistance, the applicant may be prosecuted under the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210) and be liable on conviction to imprisonment of a maximum of 14 years. The number of the suspected fraud cases reported by the public in the past three years are tabulated below:

Year	Number of suspected fraud cases reported
2021-22	28
2022-23	74
2023-24	16
Total	118

(3) The SWD has been strictly verifying every TAVA application, including seeking written confirmation from the Police on whether a traffic accident is involved, maintaining close liaison with the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health to ensure the injuries sustained by the applicants are related to the traffic accidents concerned, strengthening the procedures of vetting income proof, and verifying whether the applicants have made any claim for damages or compensation through other means for the same traffic accident as well as informing insurance companies in writing on the disbursement of payment in a timely manner to avoid double compensation.

The SWD will continue to monitor the implementation of the TAVA Scheme, review all aspects of work to enhance workflow of processing applications and step up inspections to strictly combat any abuses or frauds of TAVA. If any case is suspected to involve criminal elements, the SWD will handle it seriously and refer the case to law enforcements agencies for investigation.