

# Immigration Department Review 2023 (with photos)

The Director of Immigration, Mr Kwok Joon-fung, held a press conference today (February 8) to review the work of the Immigration Department (ImmD) in the past year and look ahead to the future. The following is a summary of the department's major activities in 2023 and its outlook:

Staying committed to its mission    Safeguarding national security

The ImmD has shouldered the responsibility of safeguarding national security with strong determination, guarding tightly the country's southern gateway over immigration matters in accordance with all applicable laws and prevailing immigration policies for the protection of national sovereignty, security and development interests. The ImmD fully supports the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and relevant agencies to improve the legal system and enforcement mechanisms related to national security. Meanwhile, the ImmD strives to build a united and committed immigration service with an affection for the country and Hong Kong, and continues to serve the public with excellence and a people-oriented approach, with a view to contributing to Hong Kong in its critical transition from stability to prosperity.

Enhancing efficiency    Facilitating connection and integration

(A) Passenger traffic at control points

Given the orderly resumption of normal travel of persons between Hong Kong and the Mainland in phases starting from January 2023, the control points where passenger immigration clearance services had been suspended in response to the pandemic have been reopened. In 2023, a total of around 212 million passengers passed through Hong Kong's control points, representing a rise of 39 times over 2022. The total number of visitor arrivals was around 34 million, representing a rise of 55 times as compared with that of 2022, of which Mainland visitor arrivals were around 26.76 million, representing a rise of 70 times when compared with that of 2022. Meanwhile, the number of arrivals of other visitors in 2023 was around 7.24 million, which was higher than that of 2022 by 31 times. Among the visitor arrivals in 2023, around 6.92 million visitors travelled through the Airport Control Point, while around 25.67 million visitors and around 1.41 million visitors passed through land control points and sea control points respectively. In general, the total number of passengers passing through Hong Kong's control points in 2023 recovered to 70 per cent of that in 2019.

(B) Extension of e-Channel service

The ImmD launched the Contactless e-Channel service in 2021 to allow registered Hong Kong residents to undergo self-service immigration clearance

using an encrypted QR code generated by the Contactless e-Channel mobile application and facial recognition technology. Starting from July 2023, the e-Channel service has been further extended to foreign domestic helpers, non-local students and imported workers. As at the end of 2023, around 4 million Hong Kong residents had registered for the service and the number of passengers who used the service reached around 47 million, accounting for nearly 45 per cent of the number of passengers who used e-Channels for clearance during the same period. Furthermore, the Flight Token e-Channels service was launched at Hong Kong International Airport in October 2022 to tie in with the full implementation of the Flight Token service by the Airport Authority Hong Kong. Eligible Hong Kong residents using the Flight Token e-Channels service for departure could complete the departure clearance upon identity verification through facial recognition technology and, throughout the process, there is no need to present any documents or QR codes. As at the end of 2023, the number of Hong Kong residents who used the service was around 1.08 million.

### Attracting talent to create strong impetus for growth

To support the Government's initiatives to attract talent from outside Hong Kong, the ImmD has continued to enhance talent admission schemes. The number of applications under various schemes increased significantly in 2023. The ImmD has deployed additional manpower and streamlined the process to speed up the processing of relevant applications. Meanwhile, technology was also utilised to enhance electronic services, making the submission of visa applications more convenient and efficient. (For details of the numbers of applications for visas/entry permits/extension of stay received and approved under various admission schemes/policies, please refer to the Annex.)

#### (A) Attracting and retaining talent

##### (1) Suspension of annual quota under Quality Migrant Admission Scheme and revision of scoring scheme

The annual quota under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS) has been suspended since 2023 for a period of two years. The point-scoring scheme of the QMAS has also been revised to place a greater emphasis on the applicants' work experience. Under the General Points Test (GPT), applicants with not less than three years of work experience in multinational companies or reputable enterprises will be awarded 20 additional points.

##### (2) Expanding Talent List

The Government announced in May 2023 the expanded Talent List, with its coverage increased from 13 professions to 51, which were immediately applicable to the QMAS, the General Employment Policy (GEP) and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTF). Under the QMAS, eligible applicants who meet the requirements of respective professions on the list will be awarded 30 bonus points under the GPT to stand a better chance of getting approval. Furthermore, employers recruiting talent under the GEP and the ASMTF to fill vacancies falling within the professions on the

list are not required to provide proof to substantiate their difficulties in local recruitment. Instead, they can make visa applications directly, thus shortening their time for recruiting outside talent.

### (3) Expanding list of universities under Top Talent Pass Scheme

To attract high-income talent and graduates from the world's top universities to come to Hong Kong for development, the HKSAR Government launched the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) at the end of 2022. With effect from November 2023, the list of eligible universities under the TTPS has added eight top institutions from the Mainland and overseas. There are currently 185 eligible institutions on the list.

### (4) Relaxation of employment restrictions on full-time non-local postgraduate students

With effect from November 2023, the restrictions on taking up part-time jobs for full-time non-local postgraduate students have been relaxed on a trial basis for two years. Eligible students who have been approved to come to Hong Kong to study in full-time locally-accredited local programmes at the postgraduate level would be allowed to take up employment without restrictions on workplace or the number of working hours within the duration of their studies.

### (5) Relaxation of entry arrangements for nationals of Vietnam, Laos and Nepal

With effect from October 2023, the ImmD relaxed the visa policy in respect of employment for Vietnamese talent and the criteria for Vietnamese applying for multiple 'journey visit visa to come to Hong Kong to facilitate their visit for business and travel purposes. Meanwhile, Laotian and Nepalese talent has also been allowed to come to Hong Kong for employment, training and study in full-time locally accredited local programmes at undergraduate or above level offered by the University Grants Committee-funded institutions.

### (B) Importation of labour in shortage

In June 2023, the HKSAR Government launched the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes to allow operators of residential care homes having difficulties in recruiting suitable care workers locally to import care workers, with the quota capped at 7 000, including 4 000 plus care workers approved under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) who are working in Hong Kong. In addition, the HKSAR Government introduced in July 2023 the sector-specific labour importation schemes to allow employers of the construction and the transport sectors (including the aviation industry and the public light bus/coach trade) to apply for quotas for the importation of labour subject to fulfilment of the specified parameters, comprising 12 000 for the construction sector and 8 000 for the transport sector, of which 6 300 were for the aviation industry and 1 700 for the public light bus/coach trade. In September 2023, the HKSAR Government launched the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme, including suspending the general exclusion of 26

job categories as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from the SLS for two years. The ImmD also relaxed the limit of stay of imported workers to a maximum of 24 months.

Be people-oriented    Address people's concerns and difficulties

#### (A) Conclusion of Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise

The Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise commenced in 2018 and ended on March 3, 2023. As at the end date, the ImmD had issued a total of more than 8 million new smart identity cards, of which around 6.84 million were issued under the Replacement Exercise. Moreover, upon the conclusion of the Replacement Exercise, the Service Teams of On-site Identity Card Replacement Service, which have once been suspended due to the pandemic, resumed to visit residential care homes (RCHs) for completing the replacement procedure for all eligible residents. As at the end of 2023, the Service Teams had visited over 700 RCHs to complete the replacement procedure for over 34 100 residents. The ImmD will continue to closely monitor the replacement progress of members of the public and the HKSAR Government will announce the arrangements to declare the old form of smart identity card invalid at an appropriate time.

#### (B) Arrangements for services in response to surging demand for identity card application and collection

With the conclusion of the Replacement Exercise and the cessation of operation of the Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres, a significant number of residents outside Hong Kong gradually returning to Hong Kong upon the resumption of normal travel, and the soaring number of first-time applications for identity cards arising from the Government's introduction of various initiatives for attracting talent and the importation of labour, there was an upsurge in demand for the identity card application services at the Registration of Persons (ROP) Offices. Therefore, the ImmD launched numerous measures to boost the capacity of processing identity card applications. The average weekly processing capacity rose from about 10 000 applications before the pandemic to about 25 000 applications, representing an increase of 1.5 times. Moreover, starting from March 2023, the ImmD has unprecedentedly extended the service hours of four ROP Offices to 10pm. In addition, the ROP – Hong Kong Office launched Special Service Days on two public holidays in April 2023 to process all kinds of identity card applications, while the available booking period of identity card application at all ROP Offices was also extended to 96 working days in the same month. In November 2023, the ImmD further established the ROP – Kwun Tong (Temporary) Office and adjusted the scope of services of other ROP Offices to meet the surging demand for application and collection of identity cards.

#### (C) Responding to demand for travel document services

With the gradual resumption of normalcy in society, the ImmD received a total of more than 1.45 million HKSAR passport applications in 2023, which has doubled the annual total figure before the pandemic. Over 195 000

applications were recorded in the single month of March. Both the numbers of applications for the whole year or by month reached record highs since the ImmD commenced the issuance of HKSAR passports in July 1997. To meet the public demand for application for and collection of HKSAR passports, the service hours of individual offices in various districts were extended according to the actual circumstances of any working days for the processing of all passport issuance and related work. Some Immigration Divisions of Mainland Offices also provided outreach services by deploying officers to Liaison Units, local schools or chambers of commerce in different cities within their service area to assist Hong Kong residents residing on the Mainland for application submission and collection of travel documents. In early 2023, the ImmD also made special arrangements for cross-boundary students to apply for re-entry permits through their schools. Seven Immigration branch offices also set up temporary designated counters from July to September for accepting and preliminarily processing all re-entry permit applications without setting any service quota. In view of the increased demand for travel document collection services during summer holidays, all document-handling offices under the ImmD provided additional special service sessions for the collection of travel documents on two consecutive Saturdays (i.e. July 15 and 22, 2023) to enable members of the public to collect their new travel documents.

(D) Introduction of electronic services for registration of births and deaths

The Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 came into effect on March 31, 2023. The Amendment Ordinance extended the statutory time limit for the registration of deaths from natural causes from 24 hours to 14 days. It also removed the requirement for applicants for the registration of births and deaths to attend the registries in person. On the day the Amendment Ordinance was enacted, the ImmD concurrently introduced new electronic services for online registration of births and deaths. Eligible informants may complete the registration of births or deaths entirely online and choose to receive the relevant certificates by post. From December 15, 2023, onwards, informants may also opt to collect the relevant certificates in person at any registries they select.

(E) Granting of visa-free access for HKSAR passport holders

In 2023, Malaysia, the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Uganda extended the period of visa-free entry for HKSAR passport holders to 90 days. The Republic of Angola, Georgia and the Kyrgyz Republic also agreed to grant HKSAR passport holders visa-free access for a stay of up to 30 days. As at the end of 2023, 171 countries or territories had granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival for HKSAR passport holders. The ImmD will continue to lobby more countries or territories to grant visa-free access or visa-on-arrival for HKSAR passport holders to provide travel convenience.

(F) Services and support for Hong Kong residents in distress outside Hong Kong

The ImmD's Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) has been making

every effort to provide practical assistance to Hong Kong residents in distress outside Hong Kong. The AHU maintains close ties with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (OCMFA) in the HKSAR, Chinese diplomatic and consular missions overseas and other relevant HKSAR government departments to provide all practicable help and support to assistance seekers. In 2023, the AHU handled 3 035 requests for assistance in total, most of which involved loss of travel documents, hospitalisation, casualties, etc, outside Hong Kong. In February 2023, the HKSAR Government sent a rescue team including two ImmD officers to the quake-stricken areas in Türkiye to take part in the earthquake rescue mission. This was the first overseas rescue operation conducted since the establishment of the HKSAR. In October 2023, the AHU received 59 requests for assistance from Hong Kong residents in relation to the heightened tensions between Palestine and Israel. The AHU not only liaised with airlines to secure flight bookings for Hong Kong residents to leave as soon as possible, but also maintained close liaison with the OCMFA, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Israel, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Office of the People's Republic of China to the State of Palestine to share information on transportation arrangements for leaving the area by sea, land and air. The AHU also rendered assistance to the Hong Kong residents concerned based on their wishes. Eventually, all assistance seekers left or took flights to return to Hong Kong safely.

#### (G) Grand Award of The Ombudsman's Awards for Public Organisations

In 2023, the Department won the Grand Award of The Ombudsman's Awards for Public Organisations under the Ombudsman's Awards Scheme. This was the sixth time that the ImmD had been awarded this honour, an achievement surpassing all others over the years in terms of high frequency of winning the Grand Award. The Ombudsman's Award was a recognition of the department's professionalism in complaint handling and devotion to providing quality services for the public, in particular its continuous provision of flexible, efficient and people-oriented public services amid the surge in demand for various services in early 2023.

Stringent law enforcement    Securing social stability

#### (A) Law Enforcement

##### (1) Combating illegal employment

In 2023, the ImmD conducted a total of 17 248 operations against illegal employment, including those against illegal workers who were non-ethnic Chinese illegal immigrants or non-refoulement claimants and their employers. Over the year, 2 924 illegal workers and 502 local employers in total were arrested. As for the enforcement operations against non-ethnic Chinese illegal workers, a total of 628 non-ethnic Chinese illegal workers and 250 local employers were arrested.

##### (2) Detection of bogus marriages

The ImmD's special task force carried out enforcement action against non-Hong Kong residents obtaining residency by means of contracting bogus marriages with Hong Kong residents. The special task force gathered intelligence through various means and conducted in-depth investigation into each suspected case. In the two large-scale enforcement operations codenamed "Flashspear", two bogus marriage syndicates were smashed and three masterminds arrested. As of 2023, a total of 30 persons, including the three masterminds, were convicted of offences involving bogus marriages and sentenced to imprisonment for a term ranging from nine to 36 months. The operation is ongoing and more persons may be arrested.

### (3) Counter-terrorism investigation and combating illegal transnational migration and document fraud

Officers of the ImmD intercepted suspicious persons at immigration control points in the light of terrorist threat assessments and actual circumstances, and kept visitors in suspected association with terrorist activities under surveillance, so as to prevent such persons from attempting to enter Hong Kong. In 2023, the ImmD conducted a total of 13 370 related inspection operations at various immigration control points, and intercepted 20 811 passengers in total for enquiries. Moreover, the ImmD has been working with different law enforcement agencies to combat illegal transnational migration, with the focus on investigation into document fraud, in order to prevent anyone from entering Hong Kong or travelling to other countries or territories via Hong Kong with forged travel documents. The ImmD's Anti-Illegal Migration Agency conducted a total of 28 137 operations against forgery activities, including joint operations with overseas and local law enforcement agencies against illegal transnational migration. A total of 23 464 passengers were intercepted for enquiries.

### (B) Handling non-refoulement claims

#### (1) Combating illegal entry of non-ethnic Chinese

The ImmD has commenced dedicated operations with the Mainland and local law enforcement agencies since 2016 in order to take sustained enforcement action against illegal immigration activities of non-ethnic Chinese. In response to the illegal immigration of non-ethnic Chinese into Hong Kong in the second half of 2023, the ImmD mounted two joint enforcement operations codenamed "Mungoshunt-3" with the Guangdong law enforcement agencies in November 2023. During the operations, over 200 persons were arrested in Guangdong and Hong Kong, of whom most were non-ethnic Chinese illegal immigrants (NECIIs). About 20 arrangers were also arrested in the operations. After ongoing efforts of the ImmD with other law enforcement units, the number of NECIIs intercepted in December 2023 declined by about 74 per cent from the peak in October 2023.

#### (2) Stepping up screening process

The ImmD has speeded up the screening of non-refoulement claims with enhancement of screening procedures and flexible deployment of manpower. In

2023, the ImmD determined over 1 400 non-refoulement claims. As at the end of last year, there were about 850 claims pending screening by the ImmD. Under the unified screening mechanism, over 95 per cent of the claimants rejected by the ImmD lodged appeals against the decisions. As at the end of 2023, there were about 1 050 claimants who had lodged appeals pending decision by the Torture Claims Appeal Board/Non-refoulement Claims Petition Office.

### (3) Better management of detainees

To strengthen various treatments of detainees at the Castle Peak Bay Immigration Centre (CIC) as well as striking an appropriate balance between upholding discipline and order at the CIC and the fundamental rights and welfare of the detainees, the Immigration (Treatment of Detainees) Order (Cap. 115E) governing the treatment of detainees at the CIC was amended and came into effect on November 1, 2023. The amendments include: empowering the relevant officers at the CIC to conduct body cavity search on a detainee where reasonable and necessary, and to require a detainee to submit urine specimen for examination and analysis for the purpose of assisting in the detection of drug possession and trafficking among the detainees; providing for more comprehensive offences against discipline; increasing the punishment for committing an offence against discipline; and putting in place an appeal mechanism against the punishment order. Moreover, with effect from May 18, 2023, the Nei Kwu Correctional Institution was included as a place of detention of the ImmD, thereby increasing the overall detention capacity by around one-third from 660 to 900.

### (4) Enhancing efficiency of removing unsubstantiated claimants

The ImmD has been committed to promptly removing unsubstantiated non-refoulement claimants from Hong Kong. The number of removals in 2023 increased substantially by 63 per cent when compared with that in 2022. Under the updated removal policy effective from December 7, 2022, the ImmD may generally proceed with the removal of a claimant whose judicial review case has been dismissed by the Court of First Instance of the High Court, thereby enhancing the efficiency of and efforts in removing unsubstantiated claimants. Since the implementation of the policy till the end of 2023, the ImmD removed a total of 1 851 claimants from Hong Kong, including 215 claimants who were removed under the updated removal policy. Furthermore, the ImmD signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Immigration Department of Vietnam in August 2023 to further enhance co-operation in respect of verification and repatriation of Vietnamese illegal immigrants.

Nurturing young people Strengthening patriotic teams

### (A) Hong Kong will prosper only when its young people thrive

#### (1) Immigration Department Youth Leaders Corps

The ImmD formed the Immigration Department Youth Leaders Corps (IDYL) to provide systematic and regular disciplinary and leadership training for members by sending dedicated training officers to schools, and to build



lasting relationships with a view to nurturing them to become pillars of society who love the country and Hong Kong. In 2023, the IDYL established the post-secondary student team "IDYL Plus" to enable members who have been admitted to post-secondary institutes to be experienced leaders to pass the values of the IDYL and their personal experiences to younger members. As at the end of 2023, a total of over 750 students from 24 secondary schools participated in the IDYL. To mark the 10th anniversary of the IDYL in 2023, the ImmD organised two highlight events, including a summer exchange tour to the Greater Bay Area in July, and the 10th Anniversary Grand Parade reviewed by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in December.

## (2) Immigration Department Youth Ambassador Programme

The ImmD launched the Immigration Department Youth Ambassador Programme in November 2023 and appointed eight Hong Kong students who are currently studying in Beijing as Youth Ambassadors. The Programme aims to identify and nurture more young talent who are committed individuals with aspirations and a willingness to strive for the future of the country and Hong Kong, so as to assemble a youth force that demonstrates their love for the country and Hong Kong. During the one-year term, the appointed Youth Ambassadors will receive diversified training offered by the ImmD to gain an in-depth understanding of the operations of the HKSAR Government and the scope of work of the ImmD, laying solid groundwork for their different future positions in society. Meanwhile, the Youth Ambassadors will tell the good stories of Hong Kong and assist the ImmD in disseminating its information and latest developments through their own social networks, and act as a bridge of communication between the ImmD and young people as well as Hong Kong residents on the Mainland.

## (B) Staff training and continuous development

### (1) Recruitment of service members

The ImmD launched a new round of in-service appointment and open recruitment of Immigration Officers in June 2023, while the open recruitment of Immigration Assistants continued to be conducted all year round. During the recruitment exercises in 2023, the department recruited about 140 Immigration Officers and 260 Immigration Assistants.

### (2) National studies

In order to consolidate the concept of national security among young Immigration Officers, deepen their understanding of the history and development of the motherland as well as enhancing their knowledge of the country's immigration regime, with the staunch support of the Ministry of Public Security and the China People's Police University, the ImmD organised the first National Affairs and Immigration Control Training Course for Immigration Officer Trainees in October 2023 at the Guangzhou Campus of the China People's Police University, with participation of 103 Immigration Officer Trainees. Following the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, Mainland study programmes for the ImmD service members

were also resumed. In 2023, arrangements were made for a total of 138 service members to attend training courses in various Mainland institutes, such as the China People's Police University, the China Foreign Affairs University and the First Standing Force of the National Immigration Administration.

#### Relocation of headquarters with service enhancements

##### (A) New headquarters in Tseung Kwan O

The construction of the new ImmD headquarters in Tseung Kwan O was completed in September 2023 and the building has already been handed over to the ImmD. It is currently at the final stage of installation and testing of building facilities and information systems. The ImmD scheduled to relocate offices and facilities concerned to the new headquarters in phases starting from March 2024, and the new headquarters will officially commence operations and provide services to the public starting from June 11, 2024. In view of the launch of the new headquarters, certain counter services and arrangements will be reorganised, and the relevant adjustments will be announced in due course. The completion of the new headquarters for the ImmD marks an important milestone in its development, providing the department with better facilities and infrastructure to deliver higher-quality public services to citizens.

##### (B) New submission and collection kiosks for personal documentation

The new Personal Documentation Submission Kiosks (PDSKs) and Personal Documentation Collection Kiosks (PDCKs) will be set up at the new headquarters to further leverage technology for enhancing the capacity in processing identity card applications. The current Travel Document Submission Kiosks allow members of the public to submit their applications for HKSAR passports, while the new PDSKs will integrate the functions of submitting applications for identity cards (ICs) and HKSAR passports. Eligible applicants may submit their applications in a fully automated manner to have their ICs replaced. Furthermore, they can submit their HKSAR passport applications in one go. Regarding the collection of documents, members of the public can collect both ICs and HKSAR passports in a fully automated manner using the new PDCKs. In the future, the department will continue to provide a better user experience for the public in using the services, so that they will be able to apply for or collect documents using the self-service kiosks outside office hours.

##### (C) Upgrading infrastructure of boundary control points

To tie in with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development blueprint and facilitate smooth and efficient people and cargo flows within the area, the HKSAR Government has been forging ahead with a series of measures to further enhance the capacity of control points and the clearance efficiency, with the redevelopment of the Huanggang Port as one of the key projects. Upon the redevelopment of the port, the implementation of the "co-location arrangement" and the adoption of a new clearance mode of "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" will be explored. Automatic channels and counters for both the HKSAR and Shenzhen will then be set up at

the boundary line of the two territories, so that visitors only need to queue up once to complete the respective immigration procedures. The ImmD will continue to maintain close liaison with the authorities of both Hong Kong and the Mainland in doing all the preparatory work.

(D) Implementation of new Capital Investment Entrant Scheme and Vocational Professionals Admission Scheme

To facilitate the HKSAR Government's measures for attracting and retaining talent, the ImmD will implement the new Capital Investment Entrant Scheme and the Vocational Professionals Admission Scheme in 2024. The ImmD will continue to adopt an open policy of attracting talent and promote various talent admission schemes in collaboration with relevant organisations to support the long-term economic development of Hong Kong.

(E) Enhancement of 1868 hotline system

To step up its services and support for Hong Kong residents in distress outside Hong Kong, the ImmD upgraded the 1868 System in December 2023. Upon the upgrade, the system has provided new functions such as speech recognition, automatic transcription and a knowledge base to assist officers in handling requests for assistance more effectively. The ImmD is planning to introduce advanced functions to the system and provide additional communication channels in the first quarter of 2024, including instant messaging in the Hong Kong Immigration Mobile Application and the 1868 assistance hotline in the ImmD's WeChat official account.

(F) Commencement of study of Fourth Information Systems Strategy (ISS-4)

To further work in tandem with the HKSAR Government's smart city initiative and proactively seize the opportunities of innovative technology and artificial intelligence technology, the ImmD will commission a consultant to embark on a new round of review and formulate the ISS-4 as the department's long-term information technology development blueprint. The ImmD will continue to endeavour to make better use of innovative technology in different areas of work and promote digitalisation of the HKSAR Government's services with the aim of providing more professional and quality services to members of the public.



