

## LCQ10: Public facilities being vandalised

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

Since June last year, some demonstrators have wantonly vandalised public facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of sets of traffic lights which were vandalised in the past 12 months; whether the Government will enhance the design of traffic lights to prevent them from being vandalised (e.g. installing them at a higher position);

(2) of the number of roadside railings which were removed by lawbreakers in the past 12 months; as the authorities have indicated that they have enhanced the design of railings to make them more secure, of the details of the new design;

(3) of the number of cameras of the closed-circuit television systems installed in government facilities and public places which were vandalised in the past 12 months; the measures in place to prevent lawbreakers from vandalising such facilities and thereby destroying evidence of crime;

(4) of the area of paving blocks on footpaths which were dug up by demonstrators in the past 12 months; whether the Government will switch to other methods for paving footpaths;

(5) of the number of litter containers and recyclables collection bins managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department which were sabotaged or used for blocking roads in the past 12 months; the measures in place to prevent such unlawful acts while taking into account, at the same time, the need of the members of the public to dispose of litter;

(6) of the cost of the damaged public facilities as mentioned in (1) to (5), and the repair or reprovisioning cost concerned;

(7) given that a number of major trunk roads were once blocked by objects which had been thrown from a height, what measures the Government has taken to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents; and

(8) of the measures in place to step up efforts in combating the aforesaid unlawful acts and promoting law-abiding awareness among members of the public?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Security Bureau, the Food and Health Bureau, the Environmental Protection Department and other relevant departments, the consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) From June 2019 to May 2020, a total of 740 sets of traffic lights were vandalised to different extent, involving cutting of the traffic light cables or blackening of the traffic lights. In some cases, the traffic lights had their components or traffic controllers damaged or even burnt. To guard against vandalism, relevant government departments have already implemented protective measures for traffic lights at some major road junctions, including installing protective frames on traffic controllers and covering pedestrian traffic lights with protective meshes.

(2) From June 2019 to May 2020, some 60 kilometres of railings were removed. Having discussed with relevant departments, the Highways Department (HyD) has temporarily put up plastic chains to alert road users at locations where the railings have been removed. The HyD has been gradually reinstating the railings with enhanced design including strengthened connections between railings for better reinforcement. The HyD has been assessing the performance of the enhanced design and will evaluate its effectiveness.

(3) According to non-exhaustive computation, from June 2019 to May 2020, at least 177 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras installed in government facilities and public places were vandalized. Relevant departments will conduct site inspection from time to time at locations where CCTV systems were installed to check whether the facilities are functioning properly and will use more robust materials to enhance protection as appropriate.

(4) From June 2019 to May 2020, some 22 000 square metres of paving blocks of footpaths were removed. The HyD has rectified the damages and the department has been exploring various options for enhancing the design for footpath paving.

(5) From June 2019 to May 2020, about 1 320 litter bins and 130 recyclables collection bins were sabotaged. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has gradually reprovided the litter bins and recyclables collection bins and placed hanging litter bags at appropriate locations, as well as stepped up the frequency of emptying hanging litter bags as appropriate.

(6) The expenditure for repairing or reproviding the abovementioned facilities which were damaged or removed during the period between June 2019 and May 2020 are tabulated below:

Facilities	Expenditure for repair works or reprovisioning (\$ million)
Traffic lights	40
Railings	15 (Note)

CCTV cameras	1.57 (Some of the expenditure is covered by the maintenance clause of relevant contracts separately, there is no relevant breakdown.)
Paving for footpath	8
Litter bins and recyclables collection bins	1.68
	Total: 66.25 (Note)

(7) With a view to safeguarding public safety, the HyD has installed temporary protective fencing on some of the public footbridges to prevent throwing of objects onto the nearby roads, especially trunk roads.

(8) When conducting assemblies, processions and expressing their views, members of public must do so in a lawful, peaceful and orderly manner, and should respect other people's right. According to section 10 of the Police Force Ordinance (Cap. 232), it is the statutory duty of the Police to maintain public safety and public order. When unlawful acts occur, the Police must take actions to maintain public order and safeguard the lives and properties of the public.

On law enforcement actions against illegal acts, if there is any illegal act, violent act or act that is detrimental to public safety and public order, the Police will not tolerate and will definitely enforce the law resolutely. To step up enforcement actions, the Police will, having regard to operational needs, deploy suitable manpower to take all feasible and legitimate measures to prevent and detect crimes, especially targeting serious violent crimes and cases of recklessly causing serious casualties, such as arson, inflicting grievous bodily harm, hurling objects onto railway tracks, throwing miscellaneous objects onto major trunk roads and tunnel entrances from height, etc. Apart from enhancing intelligence gathering and conducting patrols at high risk locations, the Police will also make timely arrest actions with a view to curbing the culprits, thereby averting incidents of serious casualties.

With respect to publicity and education, the Police has been making use of the social media, issuing press release and producing videos to disseminate information to the public in a timely manner, so as to raise public awareness on crime prevention and law-abiding. These efforts also help explain the actions taken by the Police and actively clarify false information.

Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) established the "Police Facebook Live Cadre" in November 2019. The cadre conducts live broadcasts on social media and appeals to the public to avoid scenes of clashes. The live broadcasts will present the law enforcement actions by frontline officers, which would help clarifying false reports, increasing transparency and enhancing public trust in the Police.

Since May 2020, the Police has started publishing the sentencing of convicted criminal cases relating to public order events on various social media, so as to demonstrate the Police's determination in taking resolute enforcement actions. Members of the public are reminded to stay alert that regardless of their political stance, offenders of any illegal acts would be subject to criminal liability.

In addition, PPRB will continue to organise activities under "Junior Police Call" and "Senior Police Call" to promote fight crime messages and encourage members of the public to become partners of the Police in fighting crime.

Note: As the repair works on railings are still in progress, the final expenditure has yet been concluded. The figure is an estimate.