

## LCQ13: Countermeasures against traffic chaos

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that since the eruption of the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments in June last year, demonstrators have extensively vandalised railway and road facilities (including traffic lights, roadside railings and slab-paved pavements), causing traffic chaos and endangering the safety of drivers and pedestrians. In addition, while railway and bus services have often been immediately suspended due to demonstrations, members of the public have difficulty in gaining access to the latest traffic conditions and arrangements, causing great inconvenience to their travelling. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of the road facilities (including traffic lights, railings and pavement surfaces) vandalised in June last year or later, of (i) their quantity (and among them, the quantity of those facilities that were vandalised for more than once), (ii) progress of the repair works and (iii) the costs incurred by the repair works (with a tabulated breakdown by type of facilities and District Council district);

(2) of the monthly numbers of traffic accidents in the past two years and the resultant casualties; the number of traffic accidents since June last year that occurred at signal-controlled junctions/pedestrian crossings where the damaged traffic lights had yet to be repaired at the time of the accidents, as well as the casualties caused by such accidents (with a tabulated breakdown by District Council district);

(3) whether it reviewed last year the mechanism and channels for disseminating the latest traffic news to members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the details of the temporary traffic safety measures (including the installation of temporary traffic lights and manual direction of traffic) taken by the authorities in the past six months at the locations where the traffic safety facilities had been damaged?

Reply:

President,

Since early June 2019, many protests, processions and public meetings across Hong Kong have ended up in violence. In different districts, violent protestors extensively vandalised road safety facilities (e.g. traffic

lights, railings and road signs), and maliciously blocked roads to paralyse the traffic. Such acts had not only caused serious impact on public transport services and created difficulties for the travelling public, but also posed a potential risk to road users.

Upon consultation with the Transport Department (TD), Highways Department (HyD) and Hong Kong Police Force (Police), my reply to the various parts of the Hon Vincent Cheng's question is as follows:

(1) From June to December 2019, a cumulative total of 740 sets of traffic lights across Hong Kong were vandalised to different extents. The vandalism mostly involved the cutting of traffic light cables or blackening of their surfaces. In some cases, the traffic lights had their components or traffic signal controllers damaged or even burnt. Among these 740 sets of traffic lights, 365 were vandalised more than once, with individual traffic light having been vandalised up to 17 times. The cumulative total number of traffic light damages across the territory amounted to about 1 590. Since many traffic lights were vandalised again after repairs, TD and relevant departments had to carry out repair works repeatedly. With the concerted efforts of relevant government departments, all the traffic lights vandalised during the above-mentioned period were repaired by January 2, 2020. The repair works incurred an additional expenditure of about \$40 million.

Apart from traffic lights, from June to December 2019, some 52 800 metres of railings and some 21 800 square metres of paving blocks of footpaths were removed.

Regarding the repairs for railings, having discussed the matter with other relevant departments, HyD has temporarily put up plastic chains or plastic tapes for the purpose of alerting road users at locations where the railings have been removed. The relevant road facilities will be reinforced or enhanced taking into consideration such factors as road safety.

As for paving blocks of footpaths, HyD has repaired most of the damaged road facilities concerned. To ensure the safety of road users and enable the traffic to return to normal as soon as possible, apart from temporary repair works such as using concrete or bituminous to fill up locations where paving blocks have been removed, HyD will carry out works to reinforce paving blocks or replace paving materials on public roads having regard to the actual circumstances.

As the repair works are still in progress, the cost of repair or replacement is being ascertained and is roughly estimated to be about \$25 million.

The distribution of damaged road facilities in various districts across the territory is at Annex 1.

(2) The monthly numbers of traffic accidents and the resultant casualties over the past two years (i.e. from January 2018 to November 2019), and the numbers of traffic accidents involving environment contributory factor of "defective traffic signal" and the resultant casualties from June to November

in 2019 are at Annex 2 and Annex 3 respectively.

(3) TD has all along been disseminating traffic information to road users through different channels in a timely, effective and extensive manner, so that they could plan their trips and select transport modes having regard to the actual traffic conditions.

Currently, apart from issuing electronic press releases to the media, TD disseminates the latest information of traffic and transport incidents to the public through its website ([www.td.gov.hk](http://www.td.gov.hk)), "HKeMobility" mobile application and variable message signs on highways. In addition, designated staff are deployed to conduct soundbites through radio stations as necessary after occurrence of incidents so as to convey messages relating to the incidents and call for public attention to the unexpected road situation of individual districts and the latest arrangements on public transport services.

TD reviews from time to time the content and arrangements of information dissemination to the public. In recent months, "HKeMobility" has been enhanced in terms of information content and dissemination arrangements to provide more specific traffic and transport information (including releasing information on the lanes, directions and areas involved in the roads being affected, providing links to websites of franchised bus companies, and adding maps about the railway service status and major road status). In addition, the voice-over function for traffic news on "HKeMobility" has been strengthened to cater for the travel needs of different road users.

(4) In view of the damage to traffic facilities, TD has posted notices on traffic light poles to be repaired so as to remind road users to take extra care and pay attention to safety. Temporary traffic control measures have also been implemented at some junctions (such as Nathan Road/Lai Chi Kok Road, Nathan Road/Public Square Street, Nathan Road/Jordan Road and Shanghai Street/Man Ming Lane, etc). Besides, TD has set up portable traffic lights at critical junctions (including Nathan Road/Argyle Street, Nathan Road/Waterloo Road, Nathan Road/Mong Kok Road and Yuen Wo Road/Shatin Rural Committee Road) to enhance road safety and relieve traffic.

Regarding manual direction of traffic, the Police has on different occasions since June 2019 deployed officers to direct traffic during peak hours at main junctions where traffic lights were damaged so as to ensure road safety. If members of the public are aware of any damaged traffic facilities at particular road sections which may pose a serious danger to road safety, they are welcome to report such to the Police. Police officers will be deployed to deal with the situation on site as soon as possible.