

LCQ13: Driving tests of Transport Department

Following is a question by the Hon Rock Chen and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

It has been reported that the waiting time for certain types of driving tests has been more than 200 days in recent years. On the other hand, the Office of The Ombudsman published results of direct investigation operation into the arrangements of the Transport Department (TD) for driving tests in September last year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that TD removed the target waiting time of the driving tests for non-commercial vehicles in 2016, but it undertook later that it would explore resetting such target in 2024 and endeavour to identify suitable sites for setting up additional driving test centres to meet long-term demand, whether significant progress has been made in respect of such work; if so, of the latest progress; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it has been reported that the waiting time for driving tests is rather long at present, whether the Government will consider adopting measures (including but not limited to increasing the number of driving examiners, providing test slots on weekends and during non-peak periods, as well as adopting an electronic and automated driving test system), so as to shorten the waiting period for driving tests and enhance the overall efficiency of tests; if so, of the specific plans; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by TD for direct issue of Hong Kong driving licence on the strength of driving licence issued by the Mainland or overseas places in the past three years, together with a breakdown by the issuing country or place; whether there is any change in the number of such applications; if so, whether it has studied the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along attached great importance to the provision of driving test services and strives to maintain an effective driving training and testing system for promotion of road safety. We also understand the public's concern over the waiting time for driving tests.

Having consulted the Transport Department (TD), our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows.

(1) and (2) The public demand for driving test services has been on the rise. Based on the number of driving test forms, the number of applications for driving tests rose from around 110 000 in 2010 to around 190 000 in 2024, i.e. an increase of over 70 per cent over the past 15 years. To tie in with the Government's anti-epidemic and social distancing measures, driving test services were intermittently suspended during the epidemic. Since the resumption of services, the TD has done its best to deploy resources for arranging rescheduled tests, including the assignment of driving examiners to take on additional duties on Saturdays to provide services for candidates as far as practicable, thereby boosting the road test output. Besides, to maintain a sufficient number of driving examiners, the TD has completed four rounds of recruitment of driving examiners in the past decade. The TD will continue to fill the manpower gap through recruitment of driving examiners or extension of employment of retired driving examiners.

At present, the waiting time for road tests has improved significantly comparing to the peak periods. The waiting time for combined driving tests for private car (including "Part B – basic driving skill tests" (Part B tests) and "Part C – road tests" (Part C tests)) and combined driving tests for light goods vehicle has notably decreased from an average of over 300 days in 2022 to about 190 days at end-December 2024, i.e. back to the pre-pandemic level. The TD will keep closely in view the situation while allocating resources and taking feasible measures to shorten the waiting time for road tests as far as practicable.

On the other hand, the TD has spared no effort in identifying suitable sites in the territory for setting up additional and more widely-distributed driving test centres (DTCs), with a view to increasing the road test output. As such sites have to meet various requirements such as being suitably located for testing whether the candidates have mastered all necessary driving skills, having sufficient traffic flow for the observation of the candidates' abilities in handling different road conditions, as well as taking into account the views of different stakeholders in the vicinity, before being considered well suited for conducting driving tests, the identification of suitable sites is no easy task. The TD will maintain close liaison with relevant departments and strive to identify suitable sites for setting up more DTCs.

In addition, the TD is studying the introduction of new technologies in driving tests to assist with the assessment. Given that most of the road tests are conducted on public roads and test vehicles are privately owned, the TD has to carefully consider the detailed arrangements before the introduction of new technologies, so as to balance such factors as whether the relevant technology can accurately assess the driving skills of candidates, protection of the privacy of candidates, cost-effectiveness and the views of stakeholders.

The TD is now reviewing the number of waiting days before taking driving tests in the past, the actual waiting time for driving tests at present, as well as the demand and supply of driving tests in the foreseeable future, with a view to setting a pledged service target for non-commercial vehicle driving tests, which will be announced as soon as possible.

(3) Currently, a person holding a driving licence issued by countries or places specified in the Fourth Schedule to the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B) may apply to the TD for direct issue of a Hong Kong full driving licence without test for driving private cars, light goods vehicles, motor cycles and motor tricycles. The numbers of applications approved in the past three years, broken down by the issuing country or place of the driving licences held by applicants for direct issue of a Hong Kong full driving licence without test, are tabulated below. The TD does not maintain a record of applicants' grounds for application.

Issuing country or place of driving licences	2022	2023	2024 (up to end-November)
People's Republic of China • the Mainland • Taiwan • Macao	20 289 784 220	57 894 1 115 670	59 975 994 508
Denmark	8	7	10
Pakistan	1 591	697	432
Japan	220	221	187
Belgium	30	26	20
Israel	9	10	14
Canada	597	1 039	965
Federal Republic of Nigeria	24	24	15
Republic of Iceland	7	0	0
India	970	747	528
Spain	28	43	35
People's Republic of Bangladesh	12	23	22
France	182	181	179
Finland	4	1	5
Republic of South Africa together with S.W. Africa	117	100	94
United States of America	1 142	1 592	1 361
Norway	11	8	5
New Zealand	112	123	122
Malaysia	226	295	225
Netherlands	36	58	45
Austria	9	7	7
Italy	46	47	38
Republic of Ireland	20	30	25

Singapore	170	182	182
Switzerland	39	47	40
Sweden	32	25	17
Portugal	7	5	6
Federal Republic of Germany	62	103	83
Australia	627	737	680
Luxembourg	5	6	3
United Kingdom	985	1 133	1 167
Republic of Korea	247	275	242
Total	28 868	67 471	68 231