

LCQ14: Effective implementation of policies by the Government

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (February 27):

Question:

It has been reported that recently, quite a number of members of the public were dissatisfied with the Government's implementation of policies. For instances, the raising of the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance to 65 has caused a great furore; the arrangements for giving out up to \$4,000 under the Caring and Sharing Scheme have caused nuisance to the public and are time-consuming; the toll adjustment proposal for the rationalisation of traffic distribution among the three road harbour crossings has been temporarily withdrawn as the proposal was ill-considered; and healthcare personnel have staged demonstrations to protest against the Government's failure to squarely address the long-standing overload situation and manpower shortage of the public healthcare system. On the other hand, as revealed by the findings of a global survey, Hong Kong was ranked the seventh among the top ten unhappiest places in the world. The findings of another survey revealed that only 50 per cent of Hong Kong people claimed that they were leading a happy life; most respondents were dissatisfied with the Government's implementation of policies; and the satisfaction level of members of the public with the public healthcare services dropped to a record low in three years. The findings of these two surveys reflect the ineffectiveness of the Government's implementation of policies and its failure to enable members of the public to lead a happy life. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government has put in place a mechanism for gauging, before the introduction of any policy, the public's overall reaction to and acceptance of the policy concerned;

(2) whether it has assessed if the fact that quite a number of government policies have recently been criticised for causing nuisance to the public as well as being divorced from reality and ill-considered has aggravated the public's sense of alienation from and dissatisfaction with the Government; and

(3) given that the Government of Bhutan, which was once ranked the world's happiest country, has formulated a Gross National Happiness Index, set up a relevant commission and required that before any bill is submitted to the Cabinet, consideration must be given to whether the bill can boost the Index, whether the Government will consider, by drawing reference from this practice, formulating a gross happiness index for Hong Kong residents that comprises elements such as building a just society, promoting economic

development, enhancing cultural conservation and environmental protection, and fostering good governance, as well as giving, when formulating policies in the future, consideration to the impacts of such policies on this index?

Reply:

President,

The current-term Government endeavours to "care", "listen" and "act" while being "innovative", "interactive" and "collaborative" in implementing our policies and measures to serve the people of Hong Kong. The recent concern over some livelihood policies and measures has led us to reflect on and rethink our work. We agree that we could have been more prudent in handling the implementation of the relevant policies and measures and clearer in explaining the policy objectives and implementation details to the public, in addition to the introduction of suitable complementary measures.

My consolidated reply to the three parts of the question raised by Hon Tse is set out below.

In formulating policies and measures, the Government has all along adhered to the principles of openness, transparency and public accountability. Having regard to the nature and needs of individual policy areas, we will assess the implications of our policy proposals on various aspects, including environment, sustainable development, family, economy, finance, manpower, etc. We will also gauge and assess public views and responses by conducting consultation through various channels.

In light of our recent experience in introducing new policies and measures, we will further enhance our work in relation to the implementation of policies and measures. In this regard, the Policy Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, in discussing major items relating to people's livelihood in future, will not only carefully consider and formulate policy direction and content, but also carefully examine their concrete implementation details. Before formally launching any initiative, the relevant bureaux and/or departments will conduct a "reality check" to review the implementation details from the perspective of a member of the public and a user, with a view to ensuring that the proposal will be implemented in a people-oriented, pragmatic and effective manner. Should there be any cross-bureau and cross-department issues, the Policy Committee will also iron out and resolve the issues right away.

In fact, regarding the four cases mentioned in the question, the Government has, having listened to the views of various sectors and individuals of the community, introduced various measures to actively address their demands.

Regarding the formulation of a "gross happiness index for Hong Kong residents" as mentioned in the question, we have no plan to do so at present. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to gauge the views of and engage the public in the course of policy formulation in a humble, receptive and

conscientious manner. From policy formulation to implementation, we will carefully examine the details of our proposals and consider their implications and assess the responses from the public. We will also strengthen collaboration among policy bureaux and departments with a view to bringing benefits and convenience to the public.