

LCQ15: Installation of village lights in the rural areas

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Che-cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

Some residents in the rural areas of Yuen Long have relayed that a road section near their residences, which is about one kilometre long and used by both pedestrians and vehicles, was opened five years ago, but has not yet been installed with village lights so far. As the road section is extremely dark at night, accidents of vehicles bumping into objects on the roadsides have occurred from time to time, the rescue work of ambulances has been affected, and residents walking on the road section have their hearts in their mouths as they are worried about stepping on snakes. They have applied for the installation of village lights, but the District Office in the district has advised that their application needs to wait for at least six years before it will be processed. Regarding the installation of village lights, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of applications for the installation of village lights received, (ii) the number of applications in respect of which the installation works of village lights had yet to be completed, (iii) the quota on village lights to be installed, and (iv) the number of village lights installed and the number of applications involved, in each of the past four years, with a breakdown by District Council district;

(2) of the total number of unlit road sections of 500 metres or above in length which were involved in the applications for the installation of village lights currently on the waiting list;

(3) whether it will, when planning new rural roads, ensure that the installation of village lights will be completed in tandem with the construction of roads; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will expedite the installation of village lights, so as to clear the backlog of applications expeditiously; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Under the current practice, the Highways Department (HyD) will determine an overall quota on a territory-wide basis for the Village Lighting Programme (VLP) based on its resources every year, and carry out works to install new village lights for rural roads in need or to relocate existing village lights to cater for the needs of land development. Applications for installation of

village lights from various districts are received, coordinated and prioritised mainly based on the date of application by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and various District Offices (DOs). They will then be incorporated into the VLP for implementation by the HyD. The HAD will allocate quota to districts in proportion to the total number of applications received from each district.

Before the commencement of the village light installation works, the HyD and the HAD will carry out a series of preparation and follow-up work, including arranging site meetings with village representatives, applicants and relevant departments. If the application involves private land, consent from the land owner would need to be obtained.

Having consulted the HAD and the HyD, my reply to the various parts of the Hon Leung Che-cheung's question is as follows:

(1) Based on the information provided by HAD, the number of applications for the installation of village lights received and the quota on village lights to be installed in various districts in the New Territories from financial year 2017-18 to 2020-21 are set out at Annex 1.

Based on the information provided by HyD, the number of village lights installed and the number of village lights being installed/under planning in various districts in the New Territories from financial year 2017-18 to 2020-21 are set out at Annex 2.

(2) In the course of processing applications for the installation of village lights, the relevant departments will invite the applicant and village representatives concerned to meet at the site under application for installation of village lights so as to jointly draw up the number and the specific location of village lights to be installed. The Government does not maintain the relevant information requested.

(3) Generally speaking, in implementing any new road works, the works departments will design and install road lights in accordance with the Public Lighting Design Manual published by the HyD. The aim is to ensure sufficient public lighting facilities upon the commissioning of the road section concerned.

(4) In the course of processing applications for the installation of village lights, the HyD needs to discuss the location of installation or the routing of cables with the applicants. It may take a longer time to handle cases where the proposed village light or associated cables is located within private land, there is a need to handle objections, or stakeholders such as the applicant and village representatives cannot reach a consensus on the location of the village light or associated cables.

In recent years, the HyD, the HAD and DOs have allocated additional resources and adopted measures to expedite the handling of applications for installation of village lights. For the village lighting applications already incorporated into the VLP, the HAD and the HyD will regularly review the applications and consider whether to remove the cases that remain unresolved

for a long time due to various reasons, such as lighting location subject to objections or site constraints, to spare resources for processing the remaining applications. Under the current practice, DOs will inform the applicants of the removal of their applications. The HAD and the HyD also hold regular meetings to review the progress of follow-up actions and examine individual special cases.

Moreover, subject to availability of resources, the HyD and DOs will initiate preliminary work such as site inspection and identification of location for applications yet to be incorporated into the VLP, so as to commence the installation works as soon as possible once these applications are formally incorporated into the VLP.