

LCQ16: Implementation of summer time

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 (June 9):

Question:

Summer time was implemented in Hong Kong on certain days in the summers of 1941, 1946 to 1976 and 1979, during which the clock was set forward by one hour. Some members of the public have suggested that summer time be implemented again in Hong Kong to encourage members of the public to go to bed early and rise early, thereby making optimal use of daylight and reducing the use of lighting facilities. They have pointed out that the implementation of summer time may induce members of the public to take advantage of the cooler time in the early morning for getting to work or going to school; besides, the longer duration between the time when members of the public get off work and sunset will facilitate them to conduct outdoor activities after work, which is conducive to increasing the customer flow for the retail outlets and eateries at night, thereby fuelling the early recovery of the economy from the epidemic. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the economy of Hong Kong has been hit consecutively by acts of serious violence and the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic in recent years, and that under the impact of global warming, Hong Kong recorded last month the highest temperature in May since 1963, whether the Government will explore from the perspectives of energy-saving, optimal use of daylight, facilitating economic recovery, etc. to see if it is now more imperative for Hong Kong to implement summer time as compared to the situation in 1979 or before;

(2) whether it will estimate the amount of energy to be saved and the benefits to be brought to the overall economy of Hong Kong by the implementation of summer time; and

(3) if it will conduct a public consultation on whether the implementation of summer time can cater better to the daily living, travelling as well as work and rest of members of the public and to the operation of commercial organisations?

Reply:

President,

The summer time arrangement is generally a practice of setting the clock forward by one hour to take advantage of the natural phenomenon of the sun rising earlier in summer. It is usually implemented in regions at higher latitudes where the differences in the duration of daylight between winter

and summer are more noticeable. As Hong Kong is located in a region of low latitude, there is no significant variation in its duration of daytime between winter and summer. Also, there is not much change in the temperature before and after sunrises (i.e. from 5am to 8am) in Hong Kong.

In response to the Hon Paul Tse's questions, the reply is as follows:

The implementation of summer time system has a far-reaching impact on all walks of life and should be considered in a holistic manner.

With respect to the use of energy, as people generally get to work and go to school during daytime, setting the clock forward by one hour cannot significantly reduce energy consumption in indoor lighting and air-conditioning. Besides, working hours will not be shortened in spite of the implementation of summer time. The impact on building energy consumption will accordingly not be significant.

In terms of economic implications, the implementation of summer time will lead to a time gap between the Mainland and Hong Kong in part of the year, which will not be conducive to the economic and trade exchanges between the two places. As for local business and trade activities, there is so far no specific assessment on the impact of summer time on the industrial and trade sectors in Hong Kong. Overall speaking, introducing summer time may not necessarily benefit the economic development of Hong Kong.

Under a summer time system, members of the public have to adjust to time change at least twice a year. This will require corresponding adjustments to their lifestyle and daily routine. These will involve social costs but will not bring clear benefits to society.

The implementation of summer time will affect the operations of every sector in society and should be considered carefully. Given that there is currently no evidence to show that introducing summer time will bring clear benefits to Hong Kong, the Government has no intention of conducting public consultation on the matter.