

## LCQ19: Online ride-hailing services

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

It is learnt that online ride-hailing services have been in the ascendant around the world in recent years, and there is considerable public demand for point-to-point transport services, resulting in competition between online car hailing platforms and the taxi trade in recent years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) the respective numbers of traffic incidents, accidents, complaints and prosecutions involving taxis and online hailed cars in the past three years, with a breakdown by month and type; of the subject matters of the complaints received;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on online ride-hailing services; if so, (i) of the public demand for online ride-hailing services, and (ii) the number of members of the public using online ride-hailing services, in each month of the past three years; whether it has analysed the utilisation rate and trend of online ride-hailing services, as well as the reasons for members of the public using online hailed cars and their usage habits (such as for long-haul or short-haul trips);

(3) whether it has compiled statistics on the impact of the use of online ride-hailing services by members of the public on the business operation of other point-to-point transport service operators in the past three years, including whether a decline in the patronage and business turnover of the taxi trade has thus been resulted; and

(4) given that in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Government has indicated that it is exploring the regulation of online car hailing platforms and plans to communicate with and listen to the views of Members of this Council, the trade and other relevant stakeholders in the middle of this year on policy and legal perspectives involved in the relevant regulation, as well as the key considerations derived from study on overseas experience, whether the study has covered the regulation over the vehicles and drivers of online car hailing platforms, the regions from which experiences have been drawn, and the conclusions reached; whether it will conduct public consultation on the regulation of online car hailing platforms?

Reply:

President,

Personalised point-to-point transport services are crucial to the local transport system. Currently, taxis constitute the majority of personalised

point-to-point transport services, while the role of hire cars with permits in the current transport system is to mainly supplement services that are not provided by existing means of public transport, with a view to meeting specific travel needs. My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng is as follows:

(1) With regard to taxis, the number of traffic accidents involving taxis in each of the past three years (i.e. 2021 to 2023) is 4 153, 3 632 and 4 585 respectively. The number of complaints received by the Transport Department against taxi drivers involving in cases of a more serious nature (i.e. overcharging, refusing hire (including refusing or neglecting to accept a hire, and refusing or neglecting to drive a taxi to the place indicated by a hirer) and driving to a destination other than by the most direct practicable route) is provided at Annex 1.

On law enforcement front, according to the information provided by the Hong Kong Police Force, the number of enforcement actions taken against taxi driver-related offences of a more serious nature in each of the past three years is set out at Annex 2.

The Government does not maintain a breakdown of traffic accidents or complaints involving online ride-hailing services. As a reference, the number of enforcement actions taken by the Police against cases involving illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward in the past three years is about 80.

(2), (3) and (4) The Government has no statistics on the questions raised, but has all long been striving to enhance personalised point-to-point transport services. While the Government is open-minded in respect of the use of different communications technologies, including the use of online or mobile applications for hailing/booking taxis or hire cars with permits, the laws and regulations must be complied with in using new technologies or platforms, thereby safeguarding the safety and interests of passengers, ensuring the efficient use of road networks, as well as maintaining the highly efficient and reliable services and the long-term healthy development of the public transport system, which is currently used by over 90 per cent of the public. In respect of taxis, the Government earlier launched a series of measures to enhance the overall quality of relevant services, including the introduction of a taxi fleet regime. Under the taxi fleet regime, Fleet Licensees are required to provide online booking channels (including mobile applications and websites), under which a passenger may book a trip, lodge enquiries and complaints, and rate the driver's performance upon completion of a trip.

The Government is aware of the public's concern and views about the illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward and the regulation of online hailing platforms. The Government is reviewing how to enhance the existing legislation in order to combat illegal activities more effectively on the one hand, and exploring how to regulate online hailing platforms on the other hand, thereby only allowing taxis and hire cars with permits to provide services through the platforms. We are studying the experiences of different places; and the Government plans to communicate with members of the

Legislative Council, the trade and other stakeholders in the middle of this year on policy and legal perspectives involved in the relevant regulation, as well as the key considerations derived from the study on experiences of other places. After hearing the views of the stakeholders, we will map out the way forward for meeting the public's demand for quality personalised point-to-point transport services.

Meanwhile, the Police will continue to combat illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward. The Police will follow up and investigate the information provided by the public to report illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward in a serious manner, and take enforcement actions against relevant activities if there is sufficient evidence.