

LCQ3: Using China-made new energy vehicles in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

It is learnt that different brands of China-made new energy vehicles have shown an interest in entering the Hong Kong market one after another. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that at present, Hong Kong mainly adopts the European standards for conducting examinations of imported vehicles and has not formally adopted China's standards, which has resulted in the examination process of China-made vehicles running into difficulties of varying degrees time and again and has deterred members of the public who intend to buy such vehicles from doing so, whether the authorities will consider adopting China's standards for vehicle examination in the future; if so, of the specific timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that many members of the public wish to purchase left-hand drive vehicles imported from the Mainland, and regions where right-hand drive vehicles are predominately used such as Japan and Europe also accept the use of left-hand drive vehicles, whether the authorities will, in the light of the increasing digitisation and intelligentisation of road traffic in Hong Kong, consider relaxing the vehicle registration of left-hand drive vehicles; if so, of the specific timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) with technological advancement, whether the authorities have plans to rearrange manpower for the work of the examination of imported vehicles, so as to tie in with the use of China-made new energy vehicles in Hong Kong; if so, of the specific timetable and plan; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Transport Department (TD), my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows:

(1) The TD approves vehicle construction in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation. The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulates requirements for vehicle construction and various parts of a vehicle, including the maximum dimensions, maximum weight, overhang, motive power, axle loading, of the vehicle. The legal provisions do not stipulate standards of certain regions but the objective vehicle construction standards. The TD has been accepting submissions of Guobiao (GB) from the

trade to substantiate that vehicles or their components comply with the objective vehicle construction standards stipulated in the legislation. In addition to GB, the TD also accepts other international standards, including those of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Regarding individual vehicle components, such as public light bus seats and their anchorages, head restraints (headrests), speedometers, speed limiters, etc, the TD will list the standards of different regions in the legislation for the trade's reference.

In addition, the TD will also provide the trade with the latest technical guidelines in response to the development of automotive technology, in which applicable GB standards and standards of other regions will be suitably listed. The TD has been regularly reviewing and revising existing legislation and guidelines in response to relevant vehicle standards in different countries and regions to cope with the latest development of the automotive market. Since 2010, the TD has accepted GB standards as one of the approved specifications for approving electric vehicles (EVs).

(2) Hong Kong currently follows the traffic rule of driving on the left side of the road (left-hand traffic), and transport infrastructure and traffic management measures are designed and developed based on this traffic rule. On left-hand traffic roads, the steering wheel of a vehicle is positioned on the right side, which corresponds to a right-hand drive vehicle. The design of left-hand drive vehicles generally does not align with the transportation and road systems of left-hand traffic.

In fact, different regions around the world have their own considerations when formulating traffic rules and vehicle standards. Many regions impose restrictions on the use of vehicles that are incompatible with their road systems.

Under the prevailing left-hand traffic rule, when right-hand drive vehicles are driven on Hong Kong's roads, motorists enjoy a relatively wider field of vision. This is particularly important when overtaking a vehicle in front. On the contrary, when left-hand drive vehicles are driven on Hong Kong's roads, the field of vision of motorists will be narrowed and limited, which may pose a higher risk on the motorists, especially when overtaking, turning right at priority junctions, using roundabouts, or merging onto expressways from slip roads. Besides, most of the payment facilities at car park entrances or exits in Hong Kong are positioned on the right side of the vehicle for the convenience of the motorists, whereas the doors for picking up and dropping off passengers and the facilities for passenger queuing are mainly positioned on the left side of the vehicle.

However, according to the provisions of Cap. 374A, the TD may also, subject to certain terms and conditions as considered appropriate, issue permits to authorise the use of individual left-hand drive vehicles on Hong Kong's roads under particular circumstances, such as cross-border Mainland official vehicles or corporate vehicles with quotas, special purpose vehicles, etc. In view of the above-mentioned road safety and traffic management considerations, the established practice in Hong Kong is to adopt

right-hand drive vehicles on left-hand traffic roads and restrict the use and registration of left-hand drive vehicles.

(3) All vehicles, regardless of new energy vehicles or fossil fuel vehicles, must comply with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance before they can be registered and licensed. All vehicle examinations are conducted in accordance with these requirements.

With a view to supporting the introduction of different new energy vehicles, the TD issued guidelines on Vehicle Construction Approval Requirements for Electric Vehicles in 2010. The latest version had been released in May 2023, facilitating different vehicle trades in providing relevant technical information on EVs to simplify applications for EV approval.

The TD has also issued new guidelines on the batch processing mechanism to the trade in 2022 to allow the trade to introduce EVs in batches and simplify the application process for EV approval of the same model. As of the end of February 2024, more than 400 EV models have been approved by the TD, including about 70 models of China-made EVs.

The TD will review the vehicle examination process and manpower arrangement while revising the vehicle standards to achieve better cost-effectiveness. The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the trade and update guidelines, vehicle examination process and manpower arrangement in a timely manner.

â€‹Thank you, President.