

LCQ9: Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 1

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

Regarding the Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 1 currently under construction, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the latest progress of the aforesaid works, including the percentage of completion;

(2) of the latest expenditure situation of the works, and the details of various expenditure items; whether any expenditure items have incurred cost overruns at present; if not, whether it expects such situation will occur;

(3) whether it has assessed if the target that the aforesaid facilities will be fully commissioned by 2025 as scheduled can be met; and

(4) whether it has formulated contingency plans to handle the situation where the works have to be suspended due to some construction workers having been confirmed to be infected with the Coronavirus Disease 2019; if so, of the details, including the measures in place to prevent works delays and cost overruns; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 1(IWMF1), which adopts advanced incineration treatment as the core technology, can reduce the volume of waste and generate electricity through heat recovery. Capable of handling 3 000 tonnes of municipal solid waste every day, the IWMF1 is an important waste-to-energy infrastructure project in Hong Kong. Under the project, the contractor has to build an artificial island of about 16 hectares in the open sea to the southwest of Hong Kong adjacent to Shek Kwu Chau, and then construct the facilities on the artificial island. The contractor has arranged for the prefabrication of some of the concrete structures as well as electrical and mechanical (E&M) equipment of the project respectively in the Mainland and Europe, and the delivery of them to the artificial island subsequently for assembly. In so doing, the contractor can enhance quality control and speed up the progress for early completion of the project.

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Hak-kan is as follows:

(1) The IWMF1 project is now underway in compliance with contract

requirements. We have mostly completed the Deep Cement Mixing ground reinforcement of the seabed where the IWMF1 is located and the construction works for the seawalls of the artificial island. The progress achieved to date accounts for some 30 per cent of the whole project. The remaining items of the project mainly include earth filling for the artificial island, building of breakwaters, procurement and prefabrication of E&M equipment units, foundation for and construction of various plants, assembly of equipment and testing and commissioning of the facility, etc.

(2) to (4) Under the contract of the IWMF1 project, the design and construction costs are estimated to be \$18 billion. As at December 2020, the total expenditure for the project was about \$5 billion. Based on present estimation, the unspent balance is sufficient to cover all the remaining project items.

We have been closely monitoring the progress of the project. Despite the impact of inclement weather and the COVID-19 epidemic, we have worked with the contractor proactively on various measures, including improving the supply of materials, making good use of works schedule and rearranging construction sequences to expedite the works concerned. We expect the IWMF1 can be completed for commissioning in 2025 as scheduled and will keep the progress of the project under close supervision.

In line with the Government's efforts in epidemic prevention and infection control, we have required the contractor to implement strict epidemic prevention measures following the guidelines promulgated by the Centre for Health Protection; strengthen the cleaning and disinfection of work sites and related venues; and remind all personnel involved to observe personal hygiene. In order to step up epidemic prevention efforts with a view to achieving the objective of "early identification, early isolation and early treatment", we have arranged virus testings for the contractor's frontline staff and project personnel in mid-December 2020 and early this month. The test results were all negative. However, one of the contractor's engineers felt sick later and sought medical advice on January 17. He was tested positive subsequently. The contractor immediately cleaned and sterilised the construction site and the other relevant areas thoroughly. Virus testing for the relevant personnel was arranged and quarantine measures was undertaken to avoid spreading of virus in the construction site and the communities. We will continue to review the epidemic prevention measures needed for the project and arrange virus testing in line with the development of the epidemic.