

# LCQ17: Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

## Hong Kong Port

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Question:

Recently some members of the public have relayed to me that there is room for improvement in the clearance arrangements and facilities at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Port. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government will study reserving a small number of daily quotas under the Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the HZMB for use by those who have an urgent need to go north on the same day after paying the relevant administrative fees; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as some members of the public have relayed that they had been made to wait for an extra of at least 15 minutes or more when queuing up for clearance at the HZMB Hong Kong Port, and they subsequently learnt that it was the time of shift changeover of staff, whether the authorities have provided guidelines for frontline staff currently, so that waiting vehicles are transferred to other queues during shift changeovers; if not, of the reasons for that;

(3) of the number of disputes involving vehicles queuing up for clearance at the HZMB Hong Kong Port that have occurred in the past year, and, among such cases, the number of those relating to the work handover during shift changeovers of port staff; whether the Government will deploy more staff for on-site co-ordination during peak hours or the time of shift changeovers;

(4) as it is learnt that the HZMB Zhuhai Port adopts a queuing arrangement of aggregating all vehicles waiting for clearance into a single queue before distributing them evenly among three kiosks, so as to even out the waiting time of each vehicle, whether the Government will adopt similar measures; if so, of the implementation timetable;

(5) as some members of the public have relayed that there are insufficient toilet cubicles at the HZMB Hong Kong Port and there is room for improvement in the hygiene conditions, whether the Government will provide more of the relevant facilities shortly; and

(6) as it is proposed under the Administrative Measures for Motor Vehicles of Guangdong Province Entering and Exiting the Automated Car Parks at Hong Kong Port via the HZMB Zhuhai Port (Draft for comments) issued by the Department

of Transport of Guangdong Province last month that entering and exiting the automated car parks at Hong Kong Port via the HZMB Zhuhai Port should be made the first stage of the Guangdong private cars coming to Hong Kong scheme, and there are views that the knowledge of motorists from other Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area about the road traffic rules in Hong Kong may be varied, whether the Government will require those who apply for the scheme to watch videos serving to popularise the road traffic rules in Hong Kong beforehand, so as to ensure driving safety?

Reply:

President,

The Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles (the scheme) has been well received by the public since its implementation on July 1 last year. Cross-boundary passengers and vehicles using the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Port have been continuously on the rise. The Government has been closely monitoring the operation of the control point and has made arrangements as appropriate to cope with the increasing service demands.

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, and the Health Bureau, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Hok-fung is as follows:

(1) To ensure smooth implementation of the scheme, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have agreed that northbound Hong Kong vehicles must reserve a specified date and time for travelling via the specified booking system. For each reservation received, it will take some time for the Transport Department (TD) to consolidate relevant information for transferring to the computer system of the relevant departments of both Hong Kong and the Mainland sides, so as to inform them whether bookings have been made for the vehicles passing through the port. To allow greater flexibility in travel arrangement, the TD has enhanced the booking arrangements since February 2024 by significantly shortening the time required for travel booking, from two calendar days to at/before noon on one calendar day before departure. The TD is paying close attention to the implementation of the scheme in collaboration with the relevant authorities of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Enhancement measures will be considered and implemented in a timely manner to provide greater convenience and better travel experience to citizens.

(2) to (4) The Customs and Excise Department, the Immigration Department, and the Department of Health, which implement customs clearance, immigration control and quarantine measures at the HZMB Hong Kong Port, jointly manage the operations of the private car clearance kiosks. The departments stay in close communication to adjust the number of immigration vehicle lanes in a timely manner having regard to the traffic flow of various types of cross-boundary vehicles in order to maintain a smooth operation at the port. During shift changeovers, staff of the relevant departments take over the operation of the clearance kiosks in an immediate manner to ensure that the services

and operations of all vehicle lanes will not be affected. Therefore, shift changeovers of staff will not cause extra queuing time. Over the past year, the relevant departments have not recorded any dispute cases involving or stemming from vehicles queuing up for clearance.

The relevant departments of the HZMB Hong Kong Port will continue to implement various enhancement measures to increase the clearance capacity of the control point, such as flexibly deploying manpower, making use of innovative technology, optimising workflow, exploring various queuing methods, and operating additional private car clearance kiosks during the rush hours of peak periods to cope with the service demands. They will notify the staff of the venue management services company as appropriate for on-site co-ordination should the circumstances so warrant, with a view to ensuring that cross-boundary private vehicles can queue up for clearance in a safe and smooth manner.

(5) Currently, there are 26 sets of toilets in total inside the Passenger Clearance Building (PCB) of the HZMB Hong Kong Port. In this connection, the Government Property Agency (GPA) has required the contractor to clean the toilets in a timely manner having regard to their hygiene conditions. The GPA will continue to review the usage and hygiene conditions of the toilets inside the PCB and will discuss with the relevant departments on the feasibility of increasing the toilet facilities as necessary. Meanwhile, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will monitor the usage of its public toilets and enhance the cleansing work. It also plans to set up additional portable toilets near the public toilets during peak periods to meet the needs of travellers.

(6) The Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) is developing the automated car parks located on the HZMB Hong Kong Port Island. Upon arrival of Hong Kong Port Island via the HZMB, vehicles will access the automated car parks directly through designated routes, with clear traffic signs set up along the routes. The AAHK will also remind the applicants about the relevant road traffic rules of Hong Kong through the car park booking system.

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## **LCQ12: Measures to control wild pigs**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Question:

It has been reported that an incident of a wild pig injuring a person happened in Ta Kwu Ling recently, leaving the injured person in grave condition. Subsequently, I have received requests for assistance one after

another from many members of the community in the New Territories (NT) districts who highlight the serious wild pig nuisance in various NT districts. Taking the North District as an example, farmers suffer considerable economic losses as installing fences cannot stop wild pigs from intruding into agricultural fields for foraging. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong and the respective numbers of wild pigs captured and humanely dispatched as at November this year; if so, of a breakdown of such information by District Council district; of the methods for compiling statistics on and projecting the number of wild pigs;

(2) of the specific methods currently used to capture and humanely dispatch wild pigs as well as the manpower and resources required per year to handle wild pig issues;

(3) as it is learnt that at present, installing fences and setting up traps cannot effectively stop wild pigs from intruding into agricultural fields and villages in NT, to prevent wild pigs from injuring people, whether the Government will consider providing more effective measures to control wild pigs in NT, including controlling their population; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) regarding the formulation of measures and the future work to control wild pigs in Hong Kong, whether the Government has drawn reference from the relevant experiences of the Mainland and other countries or regions; if so, of the specific details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government adopts multipronged measures in addressing the public's concerns on the issue of wild pigs in Hong Kong. Since November 2021, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been capturing and humanely dispatching wild pigs that pose nuisances and potential risks to the public, on a regular basis and upon receiving reports of their presence near residential areas. The Government amended the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) twice in December 2022 and May this year, expanding the feeding ban area of wild animals from monkey habitats to the entire territory of Hong Kong in an effort to combat human feeding of wild pigs; introducing a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for illegal feeding, as well as increasing the maximum penalty of illegal feeding from a fine of \$10,000 to \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year. The AFCD has established an inter-departmental working group on feeding ban enforcement with relevant departments, with a view to enhancing enforcement. As of December 10 this year, relevant departments had issued a total of 110 fixed penalty notices, of which 12 were related to illegal feeding of wild pigs. Moreover, the AFCD has launched a series of public education activities with the theme of "All For No Feeding", including setting up education booths in various districts, organising talks

at schools and elderly centres, placing advertisements on different platforms, releasing promotional videos, in order to raise public awareness of the latest feeding ban regulations, the negative consequences of feeding wild animals, and the do's and don'ts when encountering wild pigs.

The recent years have seen gradual improvement of the situation of wild pig nuisance in Hong Kong. According to the AFCD's statistics, the overall population of wild pigs decreased from about 1 830 in 2022 to about 1 360 in 2023, and further decreased to around 900 in 2024. The latest number of wild pig nuisance black spots is 15, reduced by about 64 per cent as compared with 42 in 2022. The number of human injury cases caused by wild pigs is seven so far this year, decreased by about 80 per cent from 36 in 2022.

Regarding the injury case caused by wild pigs at Lei Uk Sun Tsuen, Ta Kwu Ling, which took place on November 15 this year, the AFCD had promptly deployed staff to conduct on-site investigation, inspected the area with village representatives and local farmers, placed multiple traps near the place where the incident occurred, as well as set up surveillance cameras, with a view to capturing the wild pigs concerned as soon as possible. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has also put in place rubbish bins with improved design at the refuse collection points in the area concerned to prevent wild pigs from climbing into the bins and scavenging for food, thereby reducing the incentive for their presence.

Having consulted the AFCD, our replies to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan are as follows:

(1) From January to November this year, the relevant figures of the wild pig capture and dispatch operations conducted by the AFCD with a breakdown by District Council districts are tabulated as follows:

District	Number of operations	Number of wild pigs humanely dispatched
North	10	15
Sha Tin	26	53
Tai Po	29	55
Sai Kung	27	52
Tuen Mun	24	80
Yuen Long	14	25
Tsuen Wan	22	38
Kwai Ching	0	0
Islands	0	0
Sham Shui Po	11	28
Kwun Tong	6	21
Wong Tai Sin	6	6
Kowloon City	0	0

Yau Tsim Mong	0	0
Central and Western	30	55
Eastern	37	66
Southern	48	96
Wan Chai	27	43
Total	317	633

Since 2019, the AFCD has commissioned an expert of wildlife ecology and statistics to collect data by setting up infrared camera traps at various locations in Hong Kong's countryside, and utilise ecological statistical models to analyse and estimate the population density of wild pigs, thereby assessing the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong. The statistical results indicate that the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong has decreased from about 2 500 in 2019 to around 900 in 2024.

(2) When capturing wild pigs that pose a danger to the public, veterinary officers of the AFCD will first use dart guns with anaesthetic to capture the wild pigs, and then dispatch them humanely through injection of drugs. Since 2023, the AFCD has further allocated resources to expand operations to cover more rural areas, and increased operation frequency to an average of at least 28 operations per month. Efficiency of such operations has also been enhanced through installation of surveillance cameras and deploying new trapping devices.

Over the past three years, the AFCD had deployed an average of 33 officers each year to handle wild pig management-related work, and the relevant average annual expenditure was about \$21 million.

(3) In respect of the nuisance and damages caused by the occurrence of wild pigs on farmlands and in rural areas, the Tai Lung Experimental Station of the AFCD regularly holds seminars to explain the methods for preventing wild pigs on farmlands (such as building sturdy fences or electric fences, and using sound or light to drive them away, etc.), provides demonstration facilities for reference and offers on-site technical support to farmers. Eligible farmers can apply for a grant from the AFCD through the Farm Improvement Scheme under the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund to purchase facilities for preventing wild pigs. The grant will be issued on a reimbursement basis, covering 90 per cent of the relevant costs (with a cap of \$50,000 or \$100,000, depending on the number of production units owned by the farmers). Farmers may also choose to apply for low-interest loans from the loan funds managed by the AFCD to purchase the relevant facilities.

Furthermore, upon receiving enquiries or complaints regarding wild pig sightings on farmlands, the AFCD will deploy staff to conduct on-site investigations, provide affected farmers with advice on preventive measures against wild pig nuisance, install surveillance cameras at relevant locations and carry out capture operations as necessary. From January to December 10 this year, the AFCD had conducted a total of 101 capture operations in response to nuisance or damages caused by wild pigs on farmlands or in rural

areas, with 224 wild pigs humanely dispatched. The AFCD will continue to step up its efforts in this regard in the future.

(4) The AFCD is conducting a comprehensive review of the current wild pig management strategies and relevant measures. In this regard, the department has commissioned a wildlife management expert to assist in conducting an in-depth review and formulating an enhanced wild pig management action plan, which would also outline an implementation timeline and monitoring protocol, covering strategies to couple with nuisance caused by wild pigs on farmlands and in rural areas as well. In the course of formulating the new wild pig management action plan, the AFCD will widely make reference to the Mainland and overseas practices and experiences of wild pig management, as well as proactively exchange views with relevant experts and organisations. The AFCD aims to complete the review in the first half of 2025.

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## LCQ19: Making optimal use of performance venues for hosting mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Adrian Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Question:

To alleviate the difficulties and challenges faced by the performing arts sector in hosting activities such as large-scale performances and concerts, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department reduced the hire charges of four of the performance venues under its management (i.e. the Hong Kong Coliseum (HKC), Queen Elizabeth Stadium, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and the Hong Kong City Hall) from 20 per cent of the gross ticket proceeds to 10 per cent in December 2022, but such arrangement will expire in April next year. Separately, some members of the sector have relayed that as regards the HKC, a key venue for large-scale sports events, concerts for both international and local music sectors as well as arts and cultural programmes, the application threshold for hiring the venue has remained too high. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of large-scale performances and concerts as well as total numbers of shows held at various venues (including the aforesaid four performance venues) in each of the years since 2022;

(2) of the respective numbers and ratios of occupied and idle days for each of the aforesaid four performance venues in each of the years since 2022;

whether the authorities have reviewed the reasons for the venues being left idle and looked into the options to increase the utilisation rates; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the total number of applications received by the Government for hiring the HKC in each of the years since 2022 and, among them, the respective numbers of applications approved and rejected; the reasons for rejecting the applications;

(4) given that the arrangement of reducing the hire charges of the aforesaid four performance venues will soon come to an end, whether the authorities have plans to extend the relevant arrangement or even reduce the hire charges to 5 per cent of the gross ticket proceeds as well as relax other application criteria for hiring the venues to enable more organisers to stage performances, so as to further enhance the utilisation rates of venues such as the HKC; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) to further promote the hosting of international mega events in Hong Kong and attract world-renowned performers to come to Hong Kong to stage concerts, coupled with the fact that the Kai Tak Sports Park will soon come into operation, of the authorities' plans to co-operate and co-ordinate with the management units of various major venues and outdoor venues to properly perform the role of attracting the hosting of mega events and performing arts activities in Hong Kong, so as to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and make an all-out effort in developing Hong Kong into an events capital?

Reply:

President,

Arts and cultural programmes and pop concerts have been well-received in Hong Kong. The usage rates of suitable venues are thus high. Relevant government departments have been providing appropriate facilitation measures to assist the staging of large-scale events, including concerts, in Hong Kong. The reply to the question raised by the Hon Adrian Ho is as follows:

(1) The number of large-scale arts performances, film screenings and pop concerts/performances held at the Grand Theatre and Concert Hall of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) and the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong City Hall (HKCH) from 2022 to November 30, 2024 are listed below (with the number of sessions indicated in parentheses):

Year/Venue	HKCC Grand Theatre	HKCC Concert Hall	HKCH Concert Hall
2022*	39 (98)	80 (122)	91 (140)
2023	73 (185)	144 (195)	162 (241)



2024	61 (163)	107 (183)	139 (179)
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The numbers of large-scale arts performances, sports events and pop concerts held at the Hong Kong Coliseum (HKC) and the Queen Elizabeth Stadium (QES) from 2022 to November 30, 2024 are listed below (with the number of sessions indicated in parentheses):

Year/Venue	HKC	QES
2022*	19 (82)	29 (51)
2023	24 (106)	53 (141)
2024	23 (109)	57 (145)

\*The four venues were closed from January 7 to April 20, 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(2) The usage rate of the aforementioned four venues from 2022 to November 30, 2024 are listed below (with the number of days not hired indicated in parentheses):

Year/ Usage rate	HKCC		HKCH Concert Hall	HKC	QES
	Grand Theatre	Concert Hall			
2022*	100% (0)	100% (0)	98.64%# (3)	100% (0)	95.3% (8)
2023	100% (0)	100% (0)	100% (0)	100% (0)	98.6% (4)
2024	100% (0)	100% (0)	100% (0)	100% (0)	97.4% (7)

\*The four venues were closed from January 7 to April 20, 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The usage rates are calculated based on the number of days available for hire.

#Three bookings for the HKCH were cancelled in 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(3) The booking applications for the HKC received from 2022 to November 30, 2024 are summarised as follows:

Year	Total no. of booking applications received	No. of successful applications	No. of unsuccessful applications
2022	130	42	88
2023	225	35	190
2024	220	37	183

Under the existing policy, the HKC is an important sports venue. Priority will thus be given to booking applications for large sports events at the HKC. In the meantime, the HKC has always been popular among organisers of large-scale events and concerts. For example, in 2024, 22 per cent of the successful applications were for large-scale sports events; whereas the remainder were for performing arts activities, of which 59 per cent are concerts. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), when processing the applications, will consider the nature, significance and attraction of the events, audience appeal of the performers and booking history of the applicants, etc. when more than one organisation applying for the same time slot, due to the strong demand for the usage of the HKC.

(4) Lowering the hire charge based on percentage of gross ticket proceeds to 10 per cent is a special measure that the LCSD implemented at the four aforementioned venues during the pandemic, with an aim to help the industry tide over the difficult times. The special measure is set to last until the end of 28 months after resumption of the operation at original seating capacity (i.e. April 21, 2025) at the venues. In view that society has returned to normalcy steadily, the government needs to gradually lift special measures that have been implemented in response to the pandemic, including the termination of various fee reduction arrangements implemented by the LCSD at performance venues on December 31, 2023 as the pandemic was over. In fact, as pointed out in the reply for part (2) above, competition for use of the HKC has been intense, and the usage rate has reached 100 per cent in the past three years.

(5) To facilitate members of the public and visitors to check information on concerts held at different venues in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has set up a dedicated page with detailed information on all concerts in Hong Kong.

The HKTB has set up the Mega Events Development and Advancement Division (MEDA) since March 1 this year to serve as the first point of contact for mega events. The MEDA also works closely with stakeholders, such as organisers of large-scale performances and concerts, to render various kinds of support, including helping organisers to search for venues, arranging site reces, advising on event planning and assisting in publicity, etc.

Opening in the first quarter of 2025, the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) is the largest sports infrastructure project ever commissioned in Hong Kong. The KTSP, upon completion, will provide a new and attractive venue for sports and

cultural mega events, including a 50 000-seat Kai Tak Stadium, a 10 000-seat Kai Tak Arena, a 5 000-seat Kai Tak Youth Sports Ground and about 14-hectare landscaped open space and other ancillary facilities. The Kai Tak Sports Park Limited (KTSPL) has, all along, proactively reached out to local stakeholders from sectors including sports, arts and culture, entertainment as well as performance, and has showcased the advantages of the KTSP's multi-purposes facilities to over 200 local and international organisations through various channels. We believe that the facilities of the KTSP will be welcomed by organisers of large-scale events. We will continue to maintain close liaison with the KTSPL with a view to jointly promoting the KTSP as the destination for local and international large-scale sports, performing and entertainment events. The four aforementioned venues under the LCSD's management and the KTSP each have their own unique features and offer different seating capacities and facilities for event organisers to choose from. We believe that they will play an important role in solidifying Hong Kong's status as an events capital.

The HKTB will continue to play its role as the first point of contact and work closely with government departments and event organisers with a view to attracting more new events and mega activities to Hong Kong. Leveraging on the opening of the KTSP, the HKTB will make every effort to promote Hong Kong as an events capital and maximise benefits.

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## **Open call for funding applications for investigator-initiated research projects and health promotion projects under HMRF begins**

The Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) administered by the Health Bureau invites funding applications for investigator-initiated research projects and health promotion projects from today (December 18) onwards. Applications from locally based tertiary institutions, hospitals, medical schools, non-governmental organisations or other appropriate centres, units and services are invited.

The HMRF aims to build research capacity and to encourage, facilitate and support health and medical research to inform health policies, improve population health, strengthen the healthcare system, enhance healthcare practices, advance the standard and quality of care, and promote clinical excellence through generation and application of evidence-based scientific knowledge derived from local health and medical research. It also provides funding support to evidence-based health promotion projects that help people adopt healthier lifestyles by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health

behaviours and creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices.

The HMRF emphasises the importance of the translational potential of research findings, and therefore supports applications for the following research projects:

1. clinical research (including patient-oriented research, epidemiological and behavioural studies, outcomes research and health services research);
2. infectious diseases research with public health implications from bench to bedside and at the community level, and with translational value; and
3. clinical research based on Chinese medicine theory or clinical research on Chinese medicine theory and methodology.

Applications in the following areas will be accepted for consideration by the HMRF:

1. public health, human health and health services (e.g. primary healthcare, non-communicable diseases, Chinese medicine);
2. prevention, treatment and control of infectious diseases with public health implications;
3. advanced medical research which applies advanced technologies to facilitate the translation of knowledge generated from health and health services or infectious diseases studies into clinical practice and to inform health policy; and
4. health promotion that facilitates mobilisation of local resources to promote good health and prevention of illness in the community.

Higher priority for funding will be given to proposals addressing this year's thematic priorities, which are infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, primary healthcare, preventive medicine, digital health and advanced technology as well as clinical trials and implementation science.

The grant ceiling is \$1.5 million per project with a grant duration not exceeding three years. As for larger-scale pilot studies such as those evaluating trialability and scalability for future implementation, or small-scale research with achievable objectives, submissions can be made to apply for a seed grant which has a grant ceiling of \$500,000 per project.

Only one application from each principal applicant is allowed; either a new submission or a resubmission of an application. The principal applicant shall be employed by an administering institution which is based in Hong Kong at the time of application and throughout the project period.

Applications will be subject to a two-tier peer review. The vetting will take into account scientific merit, local relevance, translational potential or value of the proposals, sustainability of health promotion projects, capacity of the administering institutions, track record of applicants, value for money of the proposals and research ethics, where applicable.

Completed electronic application forms should be submitted via the [electronic Grant Management System \(eGMS\)](#) on or before 6pm on March 31, 2025

(Hong Kong time). Briefing sessions on grant applications, to be held in January 2025, are now open for [registration](#).

Details are now available on [the website](#) of the Research Fund Secretariat. Enquiries can be made by e-mail to [rfs@healthbureau.gov.hk](mailto:rfs@healthbureau.gov.hk).

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## **LC: Speech by CS in presenting Government Minute in response to Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2024**

Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in presenting the Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2024 in the Legislative Council today (December 18):

Mr President,

On July 3 this year, I submitted the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2024 to the Legislative Council. I am submitting today the Government Minute in response to the recommendations as set out in the Annual Report.

The Office of The Ombudsman received a total of about 4 400 complaint cases in 2023-24, which is the lowest in the recent five years.

In the Annual Report, The Ombudsman summed up 10 direct investigation and 95 full investigation cases, making a total of 186 recommendations. The vast majority of the recommendations were accepted, and the relevant Government departments and public bodies have taken or are actively taking follow-up actions. Members may refer to the Government Minute for the detailed response to all recommendations. As for the two cases where recommendations have not been fully accepted, the authorities concerned have already explained the reasons to The Ombudsman and provided a detailed account in the Government Minute.

As reflected in the Annual Report, about 60 per cent of the 95 full investigation cases were found to be unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, The Ombudsman has made recommendations regarding some of these cases to facilitate relevant Government departments and public bodies to improve their administration. For those cases where The Ombudsman made recommendations for improvement, government departments and public bodies have made specific responses and actively taken follow-up actions, with a view to continuously enhancing the quality of public services.

In addition to investigation, the Office resolved 187 complaint cases by way of mediation in 2023-24. About 92 per cent of the respondent complainants

and organisations participating in mediation were satisfied with the Office's mediation service. Various Government departments and public bodies will continue to work with the Office to promote mediation which can resolve complaints amicably within a short period of time.

On access to information, about 12 000 requests for information made under the Code on Access to Information from members of the public were received by government departments in 2023-24, representing an increase of 9 per cent as compared to the previous year. Since the promulgation of the Code, about 94 per cent of the cases have been provided with all the information requested and about 3 per cent have been provided with part of the information requested. The number of complaints concerning the Code received during the year was 79, which is about the average number for the past three years.

To commend government departments and public officers for their excellent performance in handling complaints and serving the public, the Office organised the Presentation Ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards in November 2023 and presented awards to four government departments and offices, and also 62 public officers.

In conclusion, we appreciate the ever-growing public expectations towards public services. We will continue to foster a result-oriented governance, address pressing community concerns with dedication. Our gratitude extends to The Ombudsman and his professional team. This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Office. Since its establishment, the Office has always provided valuable recommendations in driving a fair and efficient public administration. We will continue to support and collaborate with the Office. Together, we will build a better Hong Kong, enhancing public confidence and trust.

Thank you, Mr President.