

# Results of online voting for tropical cyclone names

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) announced today (January 17) that the public online voting stage of the Tropical Cyclone Name Collection Activity organised by the HKO has been successfully concluded. The activity received impressive response from the public and attracted over 20 000 votes. The following 20 tropical cyclone names with the highest numbers of votes have been selected from the 40 shortlisted suitable names with Hong Kong characteristics. They will be incorporated into the reserve list of tropical cyclone names of Hong Kong, China. The 20 names with the highest numbers of votes are as follows:

Name	Name in Chinese	Votes
Milktea	ǎʏŋèœŋ	15 750
Tsing-ma	éŋ' é!~	15 127
Fo-lung	çŋ«é¾ŋ	14 810
Dim-sum	é»žǎizf	14 354
Sparrow	éº»é>€	13 662
Shui-sin	æº' ä»™	13 463
Siu-lung	ǎºŋé¾ŋ	13 131
Neon	éæ"è™¹	12 713
Sing-si	ét' çŋ...	12 524
Egret	ç™¹½é·º	12 296
Heung-pin	é!™ çº‡	12 279
Hoi-wai	æµ·ǎ"ŋ	11 717
Pui-pui	è²ŋè²ŋ	11 595
Sheung-si	ç> , æ€ŋ	11 431
Red-bean	ç'...è±†	11 006
Stoneslab	çÿ³æŋi	10 940
Bak-lan	ç™¹½è~	10 616
Sampan	è^çè^"	10 474
Junk-boat	ǎ , †è^¹	10 222
Treefrog	æ"¹è>™	10 148

The meanings of these 20 tropical cyclone names are listed on the [Tropical Cyclone Name Collection Activity webpage](#). Winners will be notified via email regarding souvenir collection within January.

## [35th Meeting of APEC Expert Group on Energy Data and Analysis held in Hong Kong \(with photos\)](#)

The 35th Meeting of the Expert Group on Energy Data and Analysis (EGEDA35) of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is being held in Hong Kong today and tomorrow (January 17 and 18).

Delivering a welcoming speech at the meeting today, the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, said that Hong Kong is honoured to host the EGEDA35 to provide a platform for direct dialogue among APEC partners. Over 40 experts and delegates from nine APEC member economies as well as two international organisations are gathered to share insights and exchange experiences on energy data and analysis with their counterparts. Discussion topics of EGEDA35 include updates of the work of the EGEDA on annual data collection, an overview of energy supply and demand in APEC, the progress of APEC goals, and data collection of new energy technologies, etc.

Mr Tse said that APEC economies consume approximately 60 per cent of the world's energy. As the members continue their speedy recovery from the epidemic and their focus on economic development, energy consumption will continue to increase, leading to an exponential increase in carbon emissions. Thus, there is an imminent need to expedite the energy transition to an environmental-friendly framework to achieve a climate-safe future.

He further said that Hong Kong is striving to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and pursue the reduction of Hong Kong's carbon emissions by 50 per cent before 2035 from the 2005 level. In this connection, Hong Kong is actively engaging new energy technologies in accordance with the major decarbonisation strategies outlining in the Climate Action Plan, such as the Floating Storage and Regasification Unit at the Hong Kong Offshore Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal, district cooling systems, and new energy vehicles, etc to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. Mr Tse also encouraged the use of energy data analyses and modelling tools to provide insightful information on energy trends in driving transition towards a sustainable future.

The Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services, Mr Eric Pang, shared the latest energy developments in Hong Kong at the meeting today. He thanked APEC member economies for their continued efforts to combat climate change, and stressed that close co-operation must be maintained in order to meet the climate change challenges.

The EGEDA is an expert group under the APEC Energy Working Group, which is responsible for providing policy-relevant energy information to APEC bodies and the wider community through collecting energy data of the APEC region and managing the operation of the APEC energy database. The EGEDA comprises members from the 21 APEC economies and meets once a year. In

November 2020, Hong Kong, China hosted the Joint Meeting of EGEDA and APEC Expert Group on Energy Efficiency and Conservation.



## LCQ2: Demand-side management measures for residential properties

Following is a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam and a reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that adjustments would be made to the demand-side management measures for residential properties (commonly known as "the harsh measures"), including shortening the applicable period of the Special Stamp Duty from three years to two years, reducing the respective rates of the Buyer's Stamp Duty and the New Residential Stamp Duty from 15 per cent to 7.5 per cent, as well as introducing a stamp duty suspension arrangement for eligible incoming talents' acquisition of residential properties. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has assessed the impact of the aforesaid adjustments on the transaction volume and prices of residential properties so far since the implementation of such adjustments on October 25 last year; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) given that following the implementation of the aforesaid adjustments, eligible incoming talents who purchase their first residential property in Hong Kong may apply to the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) for suspension of the relevant stamp duty payment, of the current number of such applications received by the IRD; and
- (3) of the number of residential mortgage loans in negative equity last year,

and whether it has assessed the resultant negative impact on Hong Kong's economy; whether the Government will consider expeditiously assessing if it should further "reduce the harsh measures", and make preparations in respect of the timing and strength for the related arrangements; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Maintaining the healthy and steady development of the private residential property market is one of the important objectives of the Government's housing policies. With the increasing housing supply in Hong Kong in the coming years and having considered the overall situation, the Chief Executive announced the adjustments to the demand-side management measures (DSMMs) for residential properties in the 2023 Policy Address, including (i) shortening the applicable period of the Special Stamp Duty (SSD) from three years to two years; (ii) reducing the respective rates of the Buyer's Stamp Duty (BSD) and the New Residential Stamp Duty (NRSD) from 15 per cent to 7.5 per cent; and (iii) providing a mechanism for suspension of payment of BSD and NRSD for incoming talents' acquisition of residential properties in Hong Kong (the Suspension Mechanism). The relevant adjustments will be implemented through the Stamp Duty (Amendment) (Residential Properties) Bill 2023 (the Bill). I would like to express my gratitude to the Bills Committee for the completion of scrutiny of the Bill last week. The Bills Committee will present the relevant report to the House Committee this Friday (January 19), and the Government plans to resume the Second Reading debate on the Bill at the Legislative Council meeting on January 31. In consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lam is as follows:

(1) The residential property market is affected by various factors, including the global and local economic outlook, interest rates trend, the local housing demand-supply situation, etc. It is hence difficult to assess the impact of individual factors or measures on property prices and transaction volume. Hong Kong is a small and open economy susceptible to the influence of external economic environment. With the external environment remaining challenging at the moment and interest rates staying at a relatively high level, the market sentiment has been more cautious. We observed that since the announcement of the adjustments to the DSMMs on October 25 last year, the number of sale and purchase agreements for residential property received by the Land Registry in December 2023 was 2 929. While the number may not be comparable to the monthly average of 4 370 cases in the first half of 2023, it represents an increase in two consecutive months as compared to 2 123 cases in October and 2 554 cases in November. As for property prices, the overall residential property prices continued to adjust downward slightly in recent months, with the month-on-month statistics in November falling by about 2 per cent. That said, the adjustments are still in an orderly manner.

(2) With regard to the number of applications of the Suspension Mechanism,

within a short span of roughly two months from the announcement of the measure to January 12, 2024, the Inland Revenue Department has received 474 suspension applications from incoming talents, of which 394 applications have been approved. As demonstrated by these figures, the Suspension Mechanism is well-received by incoming talents, and helps increase the incoming talents' sense of belonging and propensity of staying in Hong Kong for development. It also underlines the attractiveness of Hong Kong.

(3) With regard to the figures of residential mortgage loans (RMLs) in negative equity, as we all know, the figure only represents an estimate of the situation where the assessed market value of the mortgaged property is below the outstanding loan amount. It neither means that the relevant owner could no longer continue to make mortgage repayment on schedule, nor the property concerned has already been sold at a low price. As property prices began to soften since the latter part of the second quarter of 2023, based on the statistics published by the HKMA earlier, statistical estimation of RMLs in negative equity of the banking sector was 11 000 as at end-September 2023. Among the number, the majority are RMLs under the Mortgage Insurance Programme, which generally have a higher loan-to-value (LTV) ratio that can be as high as 90 per cent. Hence, in case of downward adjustment of property prices, those properties with higher LTV ratio are more prone to becoming so-called properties in negative equity under statistical estimation. It is worth noting that, even if the properties are statistically estimated to be in negative equity at the moment, the relevant repayment rate of RMLs has remained very high in recent years, standing at 99.98 per cent as at end-September 2023. As the vast majority of residential mortgage borrowers are able to continue making mortgage repayments on schedule, banks would not demand early repayment of RMLs merely due to a decline in the value of the mortgaged properties. As such, the HKMA assessed that the current situation as reflected by the statistics would not cause significant impact on the local economy.

The adjustments to the DSMs in the 2023 Policy Address are pragmatic arrangements by the Government after careful evaluation of the overall economic and market situation. We consider that the relevant adjustments can strike a proper balance between responding to market changes appropriately under the current circumstances, and safeguarding the effectiveness of the DSMs while addressing the home ownership needs of Hong Kong Permanent Residents (young families and young people in particular). After all, the current mortgage-to-income ratio (i.e. the home purchase affordability ratio) is 72 per cent, which is higher than the long-term average of 51 per cent over the 20-year period from 2003 to 2022. On the housing supply side, the projected supply of first-hand private residential units for the coming three to four years stayed at a high level of around 107 000 units, reflecting a stable supply in the private residential property market. The Government will continue to closely monitor the property market to ensure its healthy and steady development.

Thank you President.

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## LCQ19: Non-refoulement claim-related judicial review cases

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kiok and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

It is learnt that non-refoulement claim-related judicial review (JR) cases have accounted for over 90 per cent of the JR cases received by the court. There are views that this has put judicial resources under tremendous pressure. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of non-refoulement claim-related cases handled by the various levels of courts (i.e. the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI), the Court of Appeal of the High Court (CA) and the Court of Final Appeal (CFA)) in each of the past three years;

(2) of the number of non-refoulement claim-related leave applications for JR approved by the CFI in each of the past three years;

(3) of the numbers of non-refoulement claim-related leave applications for appeal approved by the CA and the CFA in each of the past three years;

(4) of the current numbers of non-refoulement claim-related outstanding cases at the various levels of courts;

(5) among the legal aid applications received and refused and the legal aid certificates granted by the Legal Aid Department (LAD) in each of the past three years, of the respective numbers and percentages of those involving non-refoulement claims; among the non-refoulement claim-related cases in which legal aid was granted, of the respective numbers of successful cases at the various levels of courts; and

(6) as there are views that the LAD does not maintain the breakdown of the expenditure on legal costs involved in handling non-refoulement claim-related JR cases, making it impossible for society to grasp the amount of judicial resources taken up by the relevant cases, whether the authorities will consider making improvements in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

With the Judiciary consulted, my reply to the Hon Lai Tung-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) to (4)

According to the Judiciary, in consideration of the need to ensure the effective operation of all levels of court and, where reasonably feasible, they have been actively implementing a host of measures to expedite the processing of non-refoulement claim-related cases. These measures include increasing judicial manpower (including deployment of dedicated temporary judicial manpower) to specifically deal with related matters, streamlining the relevant court procedures and promoting the wider adoption of paper disposals to deal with suitable cases. The Judiciary will continue to closely monitor the progress of cases and flexibly deploy resources in response to operational needs, with a view to enhancing the efficiency in handling non-refoulement claim-related cases as far as practicable.

The relevant statistics on judicial review leave applications and appeals for non-refoulement claims are set out in the tables below (Note 1: the statistics in the following tables reflect the live data generated from the computer system as at the report generation date and time. They may be subject to further updating/refinements, where necessary.):

Table 1: The number of cases relating to leave applications for judicial review on non-refoulement claims and related appeals completed each year by various levels of court in the past three years

Year	Number of cases		
	Court of First Instance	Court of Appeal	Court of Final Appeal
2021	1 525	846	481
2022	1 438	718	523
2023 (as at October 31)	1 243	449	250

Table 2: The number of leave granted each year for judicial review on non-refoulement claims by the Court of First Instance in the past three years

Year	Number of cases
2021	50
2022	44
2023 (as at October 31)	26

Table 3: The number of appeals allowed by the Court of Appeal and leave to appeal granted by the Court of Final Appeal each year for cases relating to judicial review on non-refoulement claims in the past three years

Year	Number of cases	
	Court of Appeal	Court of Final Appeal (Note 2)
2021	13	–
2022	16	–
2023 (as at October 31)	3	–

Note 2: For the past three years, the Court of Final Appeal did not grant leave to appeal in any cases relating to judicial review on non-refoulement claims.

Table 4: The number of outstanding cases relating to leave applications for judicial review on non-refoulement claims and related appeals at various levels of court as at October 31, 2023; and the number of concerned cases completed from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2023

Level of Court	Number of outstanding cases (as at October 31, 2023)	Number of cases completed (from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2023)
Court of First Instance	7 423	7 480
Court of Appeal	403	3 173
Court of Final Appeal	470	1 632

(5) to (6)

In the past three years, among the civil legal aid applications received and refused as well as the legal aid certificates granted by the Legal Aid Department (LAD), the number and percentage of those involving non-refoulement claims are as follows:

Year	Civil legal aid applications	Civil legal aid applications involving non-refoulement claims [percentage to the civil legal aid applications]	Civil legal aid certificates granted (Note 3)	Civil legal aid certificates granted involving non-refoulement claims (Note 3) [percentage to the civil legal aid certificates granted]	Civil legal aid applications refused (Note 4)	Civil legal aid applications involving non-refoulement claims refused (Note 4) [percentage to the civil legal aid applications refused]
2021	11 875	427 [3.6%]	4 916	70 [1.4%]	5 496	320 [5.8%]
2022	9 480	448 [4.7%]	3 919	80 [2.0%]	4 398	334 [7.6%]
2023	9 558	378 [4.0%]	4 024	75 [1.9%]	4 220	253 [6.0%]

Note 3: Certificates may not be granted in the same year as the applications were received.



Note 4: Refusal may not be issued in the same year as the applications were received.

The LAD has put in place a mechanism to guard against abuse of legal aid. The Legal Aid Ordinance (Cap. 91) provides that legal aid will only be granted to applicants who have satisfied both the merits test and the means test. As such, all legal aid applications (including the applications for judicial review in relation to non-refoulement claims) are processed by Legal Aid Counsel employed by the LAD. In assessing the merits of an application, the LAD will carefully look into and consider the facts of the case, evidence available and the legal principles applicable to the case to determine whether there are reasonable grounds for legal aid to be granted. Even if an applicant is successfully granted legal aid, the LAD will still monitor his/her case from time to time to ensure that there are sufficient grounds for the aided person to continue to receive legal aid. Otherwise, the LAD will discharge the legal aid certificate.

The LAD does not maintain the breakdown of the statistics of the outcome and legal expenses for legally aided judicial review cases related to non-refoulement claims. The LAD is revamping its Case Management and Case Accounting System, upon completion of which more legal aid statistics related to non-refoulement claims will be made available.

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## [LCQ11: Encouraging public in practising waste reduction and recycling](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

The Government will implement the municipal solid waste (MSW) charging on 1 April this year, with charges to be levied by purchasing and using either designated bags (DBs) or designated labels (applicable to waste which cannot fit into DBs). However, it is learnt that many members of the public, residents' organisations, property management companies and private enterprises are not clear about the relevant arrangements. Regarding encouraging the public in practising waste reduction and recycling, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider, during the first six months of implementation of MSW charging, distributing 30 free DBs to each residential unit every

month, so as to facilitate the public to adapt to the charging arrangements, thereby ensuring the smooth implementation of the relevant charging;

(2) whether it will provide additional resources (e.g. provision of DBs) to the relevant organisations of buildings as well as the District Service and Community Care Teams, so that such organisations can have sufficient resources to help promote MSW charging and encourage the public in practising waste separation and recycling;

(3) apart from the 12th Recycling Station under GREEN@COMMUNITY, which is expected to commence operation in the fourth quarter of this year, whether the authorities will set up more Recycling Stations so as to make waste separation a part of people's life;

(4) during the initial stage of implementation of MSW charging, whether the Government will increase the bonus points earned by members of the public who deliver recyclables to facilities under GREEN@COMMUNITY, in a bid to encourage their more active participation in waste separation and recycling; and

(5) as it is learnt that a number of cases have occurred earlier involving fly-tipping of construction waste or refuse on private land, in rural areas or on idle sites, and there are views that such a situation may be aggravated by the implementation of MSW charging, whether the Government has put in place a mechanism to prevent the occurrence of such a scenario after the implementation of MSW charging; of the government department responsible for law enforcement and instituting prosecutions in respect of the relevant non-compliant acts?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) and (2) The policy objective of municipal solid waste charging (MSW charging) is to encourage the community to reduce waste at source and strengthen recycling efforts by creating financial disincentives through quantity-based charging, with a view to reducing the overall waste disposal amount. To be prudent in the use of public resources, we will focus on assisting households that genuinely require more support in adapting to MSW charging. The Government will distribute free designated bags (DBs) to residents of "three-nil" buildings, rural village houses and public rental housing (PRH) estates during the initial stage of implementation of MSW charging, taking into account that many of the "three-nil" buildings and rural village houses are old buildings without proper building management hence their residents might require longer time and more support to adapt to MSW charging as compared with residential buildings with property management companies. Moreover, residents of PRH estates account for about 30 per cent of the Hong Kong population with grassroots as the majority, and many of whom

are the elderly. They might also need more backing to adapt to MSW charging and change their habits.

As for other private residential premises, property management, security or cleaning companies may apply for bulk purchase of DBs from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) with the approval of relevant owners' organisations, and distribute the DBs to residents for use to facilitate the residents to adapt to the MSW charging arrangements. After the applications are approved, the EPD will offer a service fee equivalent to 3 per cent of the statutory price of each DB to applicants so as to cover their additional operating expenses.

Furthermore, we have arranged briefings for different building organisations (including the property management trade, cleaning companies and owners' organisations). As at end December 2023, the EPD has organised 52 briefings, reaching out to over 6 000 stakeholders. To facilitate the property management industry in better understanding the arrangements of MSW charging, the EPD is working with the Property Management Services Authority to organise continuing professional development seminars on MSW charging under its Continuing Professional Development Scheme, which are targeted at holders of the Property Management Practitioner Licence and representatives of licensed property management companies, to enhance their knowledge on MSW charging for handling property management duties.

The EPD's Green Outreach has commenced promotion for MSW charging in mid-August 2023 by providing support for waste reduction and recycling in the community and through promotional activities and on-site demonstrations at housing estates, residential buildings, GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities (such as Recycling Spots in old districts), etc, to engage different groups of citizens, including students, the elderly, housewives, residents of single-block buildings and "three-nil" buildings, foreign domestic helpers, ethnic minorities, etc, so as to enhance public understanding of MSW charging and educate citizens and frontline staff of housing estates and residential buildings to comply with the legislative requirements and proactively practise waste reduction and recycling for the implementation of MSW charging. As at end December 2023, the Green Outreach has organised about 900 promotional activities in relation to MSW charging, attracting over 90 000 participants, with the promotions covering housing estates and residential buildings which house around 60 per cent of the Hong Kong population. We are also discussing with the Home Affairs Department on promoting MSW charging through Care Teams in the 18 Districts at their respective districts.

(3) To encourage members of the public for the active participation in waste separation and recycling, the EPD has been expanding the community recycling network to strengthen support for recycling facilities at the district level. There are currently 11 Recycling Stations emphasising on both environmental education and recycling support, 34 Recycling Stores located in close proximity to residential buildings and over 130 Recycling Spots operating weekly at fixed time and locations in the form of kerb-side collection booths under the GREEN@COMMUNITY throughout the 18 districts in Hong Kong for the collection of nine common types of recyclables. These include glass

containers, plastics, small electrical appliances, fluorescent lamps, rechargeable batteries and beverage cartons, which are lack of commercial recycling values. The service of GREEN@COMMUNITY has already covered about 80 per cent of the single-block buildings (including "three-nil" buildings) across the territory.

The 12th Recycling Station, GREEN@WONG TAI SIN, is currently under construction and expected to commence services in the fourth quarter of 2024. Moreover, GREEN@TSING YI, the first Recycling Store located inside an MTR station, will also commence services in the first quarter of 2024. The operator has already started providing Recycling Spots and housing collection services in Kwai Tsing district since October 2023.

The strengthening of the recycling support in PRH estates will support the implementation of MSW charging. The EPD is establishing small-scale Recycling Stores in 50 PRH estates progressively, thereby providing a more convenient means for PRH and nearby residents to practise clean recycling so as to complement the implementation of MSW charging. Three of the small-scale Recycling Stores have already commenced operation, including GREEN@KWAI FONG, GREEN@TAI WO HAU and GREEN@KAI YIP, with the rest of these Recycling Stores to commence operation gradually from this month onwards. The EPD will review from time to time the operation of all community recycling facilities and specific needs of individual districts for recycling facilities with a view to improving the service of the community recycling network.

(4) The implementation of MSW charging will help promote and encourage the public to actively participate in waste separation and recycling, thereby reducing the cost of purchasing DBs. We will closely monitor the recycling situation in the early stage of implementing MSW charging, and review and improve the measures including the GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme so as to further draw and encourage more members of the public to participate in clean recycling. Currently, the general public can use GREEN\$ to redeem gifts and daily necessities. We plan to include DBs in the gift redemption list before the implementation of MSW charging. Details will be announced later.

(5) The Government is committed to enhancing the environmental hygiene and cityscape of Hong Kong. In 2023, the Government amended the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness and Obstruction) Ordinance (Cap. 570) to raise the fixed penalty level for the scheduled offences under the Fixed Penalty Ordinance, with a view to enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and deterrent effect of enforcement actions against environmental hygiene problems. To tackle illegal disposal of a large amount of construction waste or other waste, the fixed penalty for "unlawful depositing of waste" has been increased from \$1,500 to \$6,000. The relevant enforcement departments including the EPD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and the Housing Department will monitor the illegal waste disposal situation and take enforcement actions in accordance with their respective authorities.

The EPD and the FEHD have installed surveillance camera systems, which

operate 24 hours a day, at more than 600 popular locations across Hong Kong for illegal disposal of construction waste or refuse. They use the information collected from the video footage to institute prosecutions and plan more effective law enforcement actions, so as to increase deterrence.

The FEHD will also adopt a risk-based approach and flexibly deploy internal resources to strengthen special cleaning and clearance operations at black spots of illegal refuse disposal in public places, as well as strengthening inspections and monitoring, etc.

Relevant departments have been maintaining close communication through inter-departmental collaboration, including exchange of intelligence, sharing of information and holding joint meetings, etc, to collectively monitor the overall illegal waste disposal situation and make concerted efforts to combat illegal disposal activities.