

## Two owners convicted of overcharging subdivided unit tenant for water

Two co-owners of a subdivided flat on Wing Lung Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon, were convicted today (July 3) of overcharging their subdivided unit (SDU) tenant for water, in contravention of regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations. The two co-owners each pleaded guilty to eight counts (i.e. total 16 counts) of offences at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and were fined \$1,000 for each contravention for a total fine of \$16,000.

This is the 20th similar conviction case since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$16,000. This is also the fourth case convicted after enactment of the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) on April 19, 2024.

A spokesman for the Water Supplies Department (WSD) said that the amended WWO strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement, receipt or payment record for water charges. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of a maximum \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 so as to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The water fee deposit and the charge for providing a meter for each separate water meter installed under the Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Subdivided Units will be waived. Individual water bills will be provided for each water meter account. The first 12 cubic metres of water are free at four-month intervals. SDU tenants can contact the WSD to raise their request for separate water meters. Upon receiving such requests, the WSD will contact their landlords for installation of the separate meters. If the landlords refuse, the WSD may require landlords to provide information on the recovery of water charges from their tenants for suspected overcharging cases. Details of the scheme can be obtained from the WSD website ([www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html](http://www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html)).

The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow-up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also

handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.

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## **LCQ7: Assisting children of non-local talents in pursuing studies and education in Hong Kong**

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (July 3):

Question:

As at the end of April this year, a total of 290 000 applications were received under various talent admission schemes. Among them, nearly 180 000 applications had been approved, and some 120 000 talents had arrived in Hong Kong. It is learnt that many incoming talents have brought along their young children to settle in Hong Kong. Regarding assisting children of non-local talents in pursuing studies and education in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in its reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on May 22 this year, the Government indicated that as local primary and secondary schools did not need to report the admission of minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) to the Education Bureau (EDB), it did not have statistics on the number of such dependants studying in Hong Kong, whether the Government will consider requesting schools to report the relevant figures to the EDB;

(2) of (i) the vacancy of places in all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, together with a breakdown by type of school (i.e. government, aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools), and (ii) the vacancy of places in all kindergartens in Hong Kong, together with a breakdown by type of school, in the recent two years;

(3) given that many applicants approved under TTPS have reportedly indicated that as they can hardly obtain information on schools in Hong Kong from official channels in the Mainland, they have to make do with non-official information provided by Mainland key opinion leaders or bloggers, whether the Government has put in place new measures to provide such approved applicants with information on making late admission applications to schools for their children; and

(4) whether it will collaborate with any non-governmental organisations to launch new measures to assist children of talents admitted to Hong Kong under various talent admission schemes in integrating into local school life smoothly during the early period of their arrival; if so, of the details; if not, whether the Government will consider expeditiously initiating relevant collaboration with such organisations?

Reply:

President,

The Government has implemented various talent admission schemes to attract talents from the Mainland and around the globe to come to Hong Kong for development, with a view to facilitating the growth of Hong Kong into an international talent hub and making new contributions to the country's high-quality development. Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau, our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Shang Hailong is as follows:

(1), (3) and (4) Under the prevailing arrangement, persons who are permitted to reside in Hong Kong as dependents (including but not limited to dependents of successful applicants under various talent admission schemes) are not required to obtain prior permission from the Director of Immigration for receiving education in Hong Kong. They can choose to enrol in primary and secondary schools of different finance types, and the schools concerned are not required to report to the Education Bureau (EDB).

In order to assist talents interested in coming to Hong Kong or newly-arrived applicants under various talent admission schemes in understanding information about education in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE) publishes information on local education and further studies on its dedicated online platform, covering a brief introduction to the education system in Hong Kong and available options for further studies, etc, and containing hyperlinks to information or lists of Hong Kong publicly-funded primary and secondary schools, as well as the website of International Schools in Hong Kong ([internationalschools.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html](http://internationalschools.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html)). If talents have any enquiries about education and further studies, the HKTE will refer them to the EDB for follow-up as appropriate. The EDB website and designated service offices also provide school information and frequently asked questions regarding placement assistance for their reference. The EDB provides placement assistance for children aged 6 to 15 who are eligible to enrol in public sector schools. Parents may also contact individual schools directly to apply for school admission for their children.

In addition, the HKTE actively collaborates with several working partners to introduce information about education in Hong Kong, such as having organised two free themed seminars on topics relating to local education system and study planning in Hong Kong, which enables incoming talents to have a better understanding of the education system in Hong Kong. The HKTE also organises themed seminars and workshops on education in collaboration with experts and organisations in the education sector, and invite talents who have already settled in Hong Kong to share their insights

and experiences so as to facilitate exchanges among new arrivals. Details of such activities will be announced on the HKTE's website and social media platforms in due course. On the other hand, local school councils also organise joint exhibitions and talks in the Mainland to provide information to and answer enquiries from the Mainland parents and students who are interested in studying in local schools. Some schools have even arranged school visits, class observations and experiential learning sessions for newly-arrived families and/or those intending to apply to come to Hong Kong with a view to allowing them to directly experience the learning environment and conditions in Hong Kong.

In respect of support services, the EDB has all along been committed to helping newly-arrived children (including dependents of persons permitted to stay in Hong Kong under different talent admission schemes) adapt to the learning environment in Hong Kong and integrate into the local community. The EDB provides them with support services, including a six-month full-time Initiation Programme arranged by local schools and a 60-hour Induction Programme organised by non-governmental organisations. The contents of these programmes cover language education, learning skills, personal growth and development, and social adaptation. Moreover, the EDB provides public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme admitting newly-arrived children with a School-based Support Scheme Grant, so that they can flexibly provide school-based support services, such as afterschool supplementary lessons and orientation activities/guidance programmes/extra-curricular activities, according to the children's needs. Dependants permitted to stay in Hong Kong under different talent admission schemes can benefit from the above support services. We also encourage teachers to pay close attention to the needs and adaptation of the newly-arrived children, and render necessary support to them inside and outside classroom. All in all, schools will provide support services to all newly-arrived children based on their individual needs, rather than the categories of talent admission schemes under which they come to Hong Kong. The EDB does not require schools to report the figures on minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under the Top Talent Pass Scheme.

(2) The numbers of vacant places by type of schools in secondary and primary schools from the 2022/23 to 2023/24 school years are set out at Annex 1. Regarding kindergartens (KGs), all KGs in Hong Kong are privately run and could flexibly make use of their available registered classrooms to offer half-day or whole-day classes to address the demands of parents. In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years, KGs joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (Scheme) and non-Scheme KGs participating in the Admission Arrangements for Nursery (K1) Classes in KGs and agreeing to release information on their vacancies (including Nursery (K1) to Upper KG (K3) half-day and whole-day classes), are set out at Annex 2.

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# Hong Kong Customs teams up with Australian Border Force and Australian Federal Police to curb international drug trafficking activities (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a joint operation with the Australian Border Force and the Australian Federal Police against drug trafficking activities by air consignments in June. During the operation, the authorities of the two places intercepted four air consignments that were used to conceal a total of about 13.5 kilograms of suspected methamphetamine and about 6kg of suspected cocaine. Of the total seizure, about 12.5kg of suspected methamphetamine with an estimated market value of about \$6.8 million was seized by Hong Kong Customs.

After a follow-up investigation, Hong Kong Customs searched a commercial building unit in Tsim Sha Tsui on June 23. About 500 grams of suspected liquid methamphetamine, a large batch of drug packaging paraphernalia, and materials suspected to be used to produce the moulds used for drug concealment were seized there. A 27-year-old man was also arrested.

The arrested man who declared to be unemployed has been charged with three counts of trafficking in a dangerous drug.

The Australian law enforcement officers then swiftly arrested a 17-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case in Perth, Australia, on June 25.

Customs will continue to fiercely combat cross-boundary drug trafficking activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, close co-operation with Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies, as well as strengthened mutual intelligence exchanges. Under the Dangerous Drug Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002)).



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## Missing man in Sham Shui Po located

Â Â Â Â A man who went missing in Sham Shui Po has been located.

Â Â Â Â Lo Wai-tong, aged 61, went missing after he left his residence on Poplar Street in the small hours on July 1. His family made a report to Police on the same day. Â

Â Â Â Â The man was located on Lai Chi Kok Road this morning (July 3). No suspicious circumstances were detected.

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## LCQ3: Use of private properties for immersive cultural and recreational activities

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (July 3):

Question:

It is learnt that various kinds of immersive arts, cultural and recreational activities have emerged around the world in recent years, including a blend of scenography and technology to enhance audience engagement and interaction. However, some industry players have relayed that the development of the immersion industry has been hindered due to a lack of suitable venues for immersive performances (e.g. black box theatres) in Hong Kong, coupled with the fact that some private properties such as industrial buildings can hardly serve as venues for exhibitions and performances. In

this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of applications received by the authorities for redevelopment and wholesale conversion of industrial buildings since the Revitalisation Scheme for Industrial Buildings was reactivated in 2018, and the area of the additional venues used for arts and cultural or sports and recreational purposes as a result of the Scheme;

(2) as it is learnt that many immersive arts, cultural and recreational activities have a quota on the number of participants, whether the authorities will consider including small-scale exhibitions and performances as permitted uses under the arrangement for the relaxation of waiver application for existing industrial buildings (on the premise that such activities comply with the safety requirements), so as to provide more room for operation of the arts and cultural sector as well as the creative industries; and

(3) as it is learnt that immersive arts, cultural and recreational activities are well received by members of the public, whether the authorities have put in place measures to encourage and facilitate the formation of new industries by such activities; if so, of the details of the relevant software and hardware support facilities (e.g. venues, techniques and talent training); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

With regard to the Hon Kenneth Leung's question, after consulting the Development Bureau, the reply is provided as follows:

(1) The Government reactivated the Revitalisation Scheme for Industrial Buildings in 2018 mainly to make more effective use of existing industrial buildings to optimise the use of precious land resources, and to address fire safety and unauthorised use issues more effectively.

On the redevelopment of industrial buildings, Development Bureau's policy is to allow relaxation of the maximum permitted non-domestic plot ratio up to 20 per cent to provide incentives to promote the redevelopment of industrial buildings. As at end June 2024, the Town Planning Board approved 71 applications for relaxation of plot ratios for redevelopment of industrial buildings, which are expected to provide about 1.5 million square metres of new commercial or industrial floor space upon completion. Among them, the commercial floors space of redeveloped industrial buildings can also be used for arts and cultural purposes or as places of recreation, sports and entertainment, etc. However, the final use of the floors is a commercial decision of the owners concerned, and the Government does not have a breakdown of the amount of floor area of redeveloped industrial buildings used for arts and cultural purposes or as places of recreation, sports and entertainment.

For wholesale conversion of industrial buildings, the Development Bureau will exempt waiver fees on the condition that not less than 10 per cent of the floor area of the converted industrial building will be used for purposes designated by the Government (e.g. arts and cultural studios, incubators for innovation and technology start-ups). As at end June 2024, the Lands Department has received nine applications for wholesale conversion of industrial buildings. Among the approved applications, the proposed uses of the two converted buildings include non-industrial uses such as offices, restaurants, recreational, sports and cultural venues, and the total gross floor area involved is about 15 000 square metres, of which 10 per cent (about 1 500 square metres) is required to be used for government-designated uses (including arts and cultural studios).

(2) At present, industrial building owners may redevelop or convert their industrial buildings for non-industrial uses through the two measures mentioned in the first part of the reply. However, the Government also understands that some industrial buildings may not be able to be redeveloped or converted due to reasons such as fragmented ownership. In response to the community's demand for safe and lawful use of industrial building units, and to meet the changing social and economic needs of Hong Kong and optimise the use of valuable land resources, the Government will therefore exercise discretion to allow the co-existence of industrial and non-industrial uses. Specifically, without prejudice to public safety and provided that the use concerned is one of the uses always permitted in respect of the site as specified in the Outline Zoning Plan, the units of an industrial building may be used for the five specified non-industrial uses, which include "Art Studio", "Office (Design and Media Production)" (Note 1) , without requiring the owners to apply for a short-term waiver from the Lands Department and pay waiver fees. However, as the industrial building itself is supposed to be used for industrial purposes, the risk of fire and other accidents involved is relatively higher. Therefore, in view of public safety considerations, the uses covered by the above relaxation measures do not include any uses or activities that directly provide services or goods to attract public visits, such as public performances, operation of interest classes, exhibitions and sales activities.

(3) Nowadays, it is popular to incorporate elements of immersive experience into arts and cultural activities through the use of technology such as digital technology and simulation of the environment, to allow participants to be immersed in a certain scene or scenes with different senses. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) also organises activities that incorporate immersive experiences from time to time. For example, the large-scale outdoor art project "Art@Harbour" has been organised since 2022. Multiple outdoor art installations and digital art façades featuring the integration of art, science, and technology are displayed on both sides of the Victoria Harbour, offering the public new interactive experiences in art appreciation. The outdoor exhibition "teamLab: Continuous" under "Art@Harbour 2024" made good use of outdoor space and the view of the Victoria Harbour. The artwork triggered a mesmerising display of kaleidoscopic colours and soothing soundscapes through participants' interaction, bringing an immersive sensory experience for the public through digital technology.



The Government has been promoting the application of technology in arts and cultural creations through different policies and resources, and supports the integration of arts and technology to provide audiences with immersive experiences. The Government allocated \$30 million in the 2022-23 Budget to launch an Arts Technology Funding Pilot Scheme to encourage the nine major performing arts groups to further explore the application of arts technology in their stage productions and presentations, bringing a richer experience to the audiences. In addition, the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme has introduced the arts technology category in 2021-22 to encourage the application of technology in various arts projects. An example is a project with veteran Cantonese opera artist Yuen Siu-fai singing nan-yin, with the integration of immersive projection techniques, computer special effects, animation, and AI technology, etc, to tell the stories of Hong Kong history from 1841 to 1997.

The Government also provides facilities for the development and application of arts technology at its venues and has earmarked \$70 million for upgrading the performance venue equipment of the LCSD, so that arts groups can better use technology to enhance audiences' experiences.

The East Kowloon Cultural Centre (EKCC) under the LCSD will become a major arts technology venue and incubator. It is equipped with the latest stage equipment and systems as well as a testbed studio called "The Lab", which provides a platform and a base for arts practitioners and technology professionals for experimentation to facilitate their research and development on the application of arts technology.

The Government has set up the EKCC Academy for Arts Technology to provide structured trainings for nurturing talent and produce a wide range of arts technology programmes, fostering exchange and collaboration between artists and technology professionals, at the same time expanding the audience base. The first batch of Arts Tech Trainees has reported duty in February this year and are expected to join the workforce in early 2026, so as to meet the great demand.

The Government will continue to welcome and support more immersive arts and cultural activities to be held in Hong Kong through first-class venues as well as hardware and software support facilities.

Note 1: The remaining uses are "Offices (Audio-visual Recording Studio)", "Office (used by "specific creative industries" including design and media production companies, printing and publishing, film companies and industry organisations related to the film industry), as well as "Research, Design and Development Centre".