

LCQ13: Real-name Registration Programme for Subscriber Identification Module Cards

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Man-kwong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

It has been reported that after the implementation of the Real-name Registration Programme for Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) Cards (Real-name Registration Programme), many SIM cards suspected to be registered with personal data of inbound tourists or stolen data of other people are available for sale in the market. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of SIM cards in the market with real-name registration and service activation completed and, among them, the number of those with real-name registration completed with the personal data of inbound tourists;
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number of individual users who have registered 10 SIM cards (i.e. the limit on the number of SIM cards to be registered by an individual user); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) of the change in the number of deception cases involving local mobile phone numbers since the implementation of the Real-name Registration Programme when compared with that in the same period last year;
- (4) of the number of persons prosecuted for breaching the law since the implementation of the Real-name Registration Programme, as well as the number of SIM cards involved; and
- (5) whether the Government has, since the implementation of the Real-name Registration Programme, taken the initiative to conduct random checks on pre-paid SIM card users for non-compliances; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has implemented the Real-name Registration Programme for SIM Cards (RNR Programme) since February 24 this year, requiring that all SIM cards issued and used locally (including SIM service plans (SSP) and pre-paid SIM (PPS) cards) must complete real-name registration before service activation. The Telecommunications (Registration of SIM Cards) Regulation

(Cap 106AI) (the Regulation) has stipulated various requirements of the RNR Programme. The Communications Authority has also issued guidelines to provide specific operational details and requirements of the RNR Programme for telecommunications service providers. The RNR Programme helps plug the loophole arising from the anonymous nature of PPS cards used in conducting illegal activities in the past, and is one of the ways to assist law enforcement agencies in the detection of crimes involving the use of PPS cards (including phone deception), which in turn safeguards the integrity of telecommunications services and safety of the communications networks, thereby maintaining social order and preventing crimes.

Having consulted the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA), the Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Police Force (Police), our reply to the question raised by the Member is as follows:

(1) As at end October this year, around 13.9 million SIM cards (including SSP and PPS cards) have completed real-name registration and service activation. The Government does not collect information on SIM cards registered by inbound visitors. However, according to the statistics provided by the telecommunications service providers, around 60 per cent of the PPS cards were registered under Hong Kong Identity Cards while the remaining 40 per cent were registered under other identity documents.

(3) and (4) Since the implementation of the RNR Programme, the OFCA has maintained close liaison with telecommunications service providers and the Police, including the establishment of a working group with them since September 2022 to provide assistance from the telecommunications perspectives to facilitate the Police in combating deception cases. According to information provided by the Police, in the first 10 months of the year, there were 2 717 telephone fraud cases, a monthly average of 272 cases, representing a drop of 29 per cent when compared with the monthly average of 381 cases in the fourth quarter of last year when telephone fraud was at its peak. The Police does not keep statistics on how many of these cases involved local mobile phone numbers.

(2) and (5) To prevent criminals from using false information to undergo real-name registration, the OFCA has requested telecommunications service providers to conduct regular sample checks on the registration information of registered PPS card users and manual checks on suspected cases, including cases where a single user is found to have registered a considerable number of PPS cards with the same telecommunications service provider. According to the information provided by telecommunications service providers, the number of users who have registered 10 PPS cards with the same telecommunications service provider is insignificant. If users subject to sample checks are unable to verify the registration information following the instructions of the respective telecommunications service providers, the relevant PPS cards will be deregistered and cannot be used afterwards. As of end October, telecommunications service providers have cancelled registration records of some one million non-compliant PPS cards in accordance with the registration requirements of the RNR Programme. Around 360 000 PPS cards were rejected since the clients failed to provide information in compliance with the registration requirements. The OFCA will continue to maintain close contact

with the telecommunications service providers and if any suspicious cases are identified, the telecommunications service providers will promptly refer them to the law enforcement agencies for follow-up actions. Recently, based on a suspected case reported by a telecommunications service provider, the Police successfully arrested individuals who were suspected of using fake identity card information to register a large number of PPS cards and around 60 000 PPS cards were involved.

Also, the telecommunications service providers are requested to adopt different measures to verify information of their users, including face-to-face registration, making use of optical character recognition to automatically extract information from identity documents, manual verification of information, so as to effectively verify identity documents of users and to ensure that the registration systems comply with the requirements of the Regulation and the guidelines. The OFCA has also requested telecommunications service providers to continue to enhance the registration platforms taking into account the operational experiences since the implementation of the RNR Programme, including the introduction of the Government's "iAM Smart" application to verify the registrants' identities so as to ensure the effective implementation of the RNR Programme.

To ensure the proper implementation of the RNR Programme, the OFCA will also continue to conduct ad hoc market surveillance from time to time and step up publicity efforts to enhance public understanding of the requirements of the RNR Programme. Members of the public are reminded to complete the real-name registration with their own identity documents and not to purchase or sell PPS cards from unknown sources in the market or cards that have allegedly completed registration in order to protect their own interests and avoid any loss or criminal liability in association with those cards.

Hong Kong Flower Show 2024 commercial stalls auctioned

The auction of Hong Kong Flower Show 2024 commercial stalls was conducted smoothly today (December 13) at Cheung Sha Wan Sports Centre. Fifty-three stalls were successfully let at the auction, bringing in total revenue of \$1,501,610.

Organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the 10-day flower show will be held from March 15 to 24, 2024, at Victoria Park.

The 55 commercial stalls in the showground include one photographic equipment stall, one book stall, two beverage stalls, six fast food stalls, one fast food stall – Floral cafe, two handicraft stalls and 42 flower and gardening stalls.

The results of today's auction are as follows:

Photographic equipment stall (5 metres x 5m): 1

Upset price: \$17,060

Bid price: \$17,060

Book stall (5m x 10m): 1

Upset price: \$11,630

Bid price: \$11,630

Beverage stall (5m x 5m): 2

Upset price: \$22,740

Bid prices: \$45,000 and \$52,500

Average price: \$48,750

Fast food stall (5m x 10m): 4

Upset price: \$22,740

Bid prices: Ranging from \$22,740 to \$50,000

Average price: \$31,870

Fast food stall – Floral cafe (5m x 10m): 1

Upset price: \$22,740

Bid price: \$22,740

Handicraft stall (5m x 5m): 2

Upset price: 17,060

Bid prices: \$25,500 and \$30,000

Average price: \$27,750

Flower and gardening stall (5m x 5m): 42

Upset price: \$17,060

Bid prices: Ranging from \$17,060 to \$47,200

Average price: \$27,850

The two remaining fast food stalls will be leased at its upset price of \$22,740 on a first-come, first-served basis. Details will be announced on the flower show webpage later. For enquiries, please call 2601 8260 or visit www.hkflowershow.hk/en/hkfs/2024/commercial.html.

[Speech by SJ at Law Society of Hong Kong's Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony 2023](#)

(English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at Law Society of Hong Kong's Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony 2023 today (December 13):

Chief Justice (Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-nung), President CM Chan (President of the Law Society of Hong Kong, Mr Chan Chak-ming), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to join you on this very meaningful occasion. May I first express my congratulations and gratitude to all the awardees and the Law Society for your contributions to pro bono services and community work.

As I have said in this year's Ceremonial Opening of the Legal Year back in January, the maintenance of the common law system in Hong Kong is one of the most important features of the principle of "one country, two systems". To maintain and promote the general public's understanding, trust and confidence in our common law system is of utmost importance. To achieve this objective, we must strive to ensure that the rights guaranteed by Article 35 of the Basic Law, namely, that Hong Kong residents shall have right to access to the courts, and choice of lawyers for timely protection of their lawful rights and interests, can and will be effectively exercised.

In this regard, the legal profession, as a major component of our legal system, has a vital and distinctive role to play. In addition to discharging your professional duties diligently and competently, your commitment to give back to society by performing pro bono legal services will certainly enhance access to justice. When some less privileged groups in the community need legal assistance but cannot afford to engage lawyers on their own, pro bono services can fill the gap of these needs.

The provision of pro bono services and community work in Hong Kong not only counts on the support of lawyers and law firms but also the support of our aspiring law students. The continuing vibrancy of our legal profession definitely hinges on our future generations. In this connection, I am very pleased to see that the Law Society has added a Student Award this year, acknowledging the contribution of the younger members of our legal profession to pro bono services and community work. Exposure to pro bono and community work is beyond doubt a valuable experience to law students. Through participation in these services, students have a chance of meeting clients in real, providing legal assistance and witnessing its impact before they formally join the profession. Further, as students are not bound by billable targets, they may be in a better position to, for example, assist in legal research which could take quite some time. Students' contributions are surely worthy of recognition and I am very glad that today their efforts are being acknowledged.

The provision of legal aid and pro bono legal work may not serve their intended purposes unless people are aware of these services and how our legal system works in general. The Department of Justice is well aware of the importance of rule of law education, which has always been one of our top priorities.

For sure, it is not always easy to explain the concepts of rule of law or our common law system to lay persons, in particular, young people in a way that they find interesting and easy to understand but at the same time fair, objective and accurate. In this aspect, we set up the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education earlier this year, which is chaired by me, to explore means by which we may equip the right persons as competent tellers of true Hong Kong stories on the rule of law.

Last month, we rolled out the first phase of the Rule of Law Education Train-the-Leaders Programme. The Programme aims to train leaders in various sectors of the community so that they can effectively promote consistent and correct messages relating to the rule of law to youths and the general public; and inspire others to develop better understanding and respect for the rule of law. With a focus on fundamental rule of law principles, the programme covers various topics such as the main characteristics and basic framework of our common law system, introduction to civil and criminal procedures, etc. It is worth mentioning that one of the topics is about the legal aid system in general in Hong Kong. And I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr C M Chan, President of the Law Society, for being one of our guest speakers on this very important issue.

In closing, I would like to thank all the awardees again for offering your precious time and professional knowledge to the less privileged in our society. You have set a very good example for the legal profession and indeed our community at large. Lastly, noting that this marks the 14th anniversary of the Law Society Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony, I would like to express my gratitude to the Law Society for their continuous effort in promoting the pro bono culture.

As CJ has just mentioned, Christmas and New Year are approaching, may I also take this opportunity to wish you all a very joyful Christmas and a happy and healthy new year. Thank you very much.

HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects issuing so-called “Prize for Human Rights and the

Rule of Law” to Chow Hang-tung

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (December 13) expressed its strong disapproval of and firm opposition to the ministries of foreign affairs of France and Germany for issuing the so-called "Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law" to Chow Hang-tung, who was charged for suspicion of committing offences under the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL).

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "Chow Hang-tung is facing a criminal prosecution of 'incitement to subversion' and the case has been committed to the Court of First Instance of the High Court awaiting trial. The judicial proceedings of the case are still ongoing, but the ministries of foreign affairs of France and Germany have issued the so-called prize to Chow Hang-tung in the name of 'human rights' and the 'rule of law', which is obviously contrary to the spirit of respecting the rule of law. The HKSAR Government strongly urges these foreign countries to respect the spirit of the rule of law, abide by the international law and basic norms that govern international relations, and immediately stop interfering in the affairs of Hong Kong."

"Hong Kong is a society underpinned by the rule of law and has always adhered to the principle that laws must be obeyed and lawbreakers held accountable, and is well recognised by international communities. The HKSAR law enforcement agencies take law enforcement actions based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law against those who endanger national security. The Department of Justice of the HKSAR is in charge of criminal prosecutions under Article 63 of the Basic Law, with all prosecution decisions made based on an objective analysis of all admissible evidence and applicable laws. The Judiciary of the HKSAR exercises judicial power independently in accordance with the law, and everyone charged with a criminal offence has the right to a fair hearing," the spokesman emphasised.

"Hong Kong residents have been enjoying the rights and freedoms under the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other relevant laws. The NSL also clearly stipulates that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, and the rights and freedoms that Hong Kong residents enjoy under the Basic Law, and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong, shall be protected in accordance with the law.

"The HKSAR will continue to resolutely discharge the responsibility of safeguarding national security, effectively prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities that endanger national security in accordance with the law, and safeguard the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people in accordance with the law at the same time," the spokesman reiterated.

Statement by LCSD

There are recent online accusations by suspected overseas organisations and individuals that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has decided to abandon the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM), which will erase a large quantity of invaluable archives and artworks and threaten the preservation of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) today (December 13) severely condemned the ill-intentioned parties for spreading false information online and sternly made the following statement to set the record straight.

The LCSD stressed that it has all along spared no effort in promoting the preservation and development of Hong Kong culture and arts, valued each and every piece of collection of its museum and tried its best to provide the space for their display. It is also why the Government launched the 10-year development blueprint for arts and cultural facilities which proposed to significantly increase the number of museums and display spaces. In any case, the existing collections of the HKHM will be properly preserved and will not be lost due to the integration of museums. They will continue to be displayed at the HKHM or other appropriate museum space for public appreciation.