

LCQ14: Non-local student quota for funded taught undergraduate programmes

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address has stated that the Government will build Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education, with measures including doubling the non-local student quota for the taught undergraduate (UG) programmes of various University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions to 40 per cent starting from the 2024/25 academic year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective average total costs (including the expenses involved in teaching facilities and equipment, teachers and student hostels, as well as other capital expenditure) and marginal costs per student of the UGC-funded taught UG programmes in each of the past three academic years;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective differences between the tuition fees charged by various UGC-funded institutions from non-local students enrolled in their taught UG programmes and the average total costs and the marginal costs mentioned in (1) in each of the past three academic years;

(3) whether it has assessed if the capacity of the UGC-funded institutions (including the manpower of teachers, teaching equipment and other supporting facilities) is sufficient to meet the demand of the additional students after the increase in the aforesaid non-local student quota, and whether it has estimated the amount of money required by the Government to raise such capacity in the future;

(4) whether it will consider adjusting the tuition fees for the aforesaid non-local students by adopting the recovery of the average total costs rather than the marginal costs as the basic principle, so as to relieve the financial burden on the Government; and

(5) as there are views that following the increase in the aforesaid non-local student quota, the supply of places of UGC-funded institutions' student hostels, which has already fallen short of the demand, will be even tighter and the opportunity for local students to reside in such hostels will be affected as a result, whether the authorities will consider setting a ratio of local students residing in such hostels, so as to safeguard local university students' university life experience?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive proposed in the 2023 Policy Address the development of Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub to attract more talents to study in Hong Kong. He announced various initiatives, including the doubling of the non-local student ceiling of taught programmes (i.e. undergraduate, sub-degree and taught postgraduate programmes) of University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities from the current 20 per cent of local student places to 40 per cent from the 2024/25 academic year onwards. The universities may, having regard to their own conditions, progressively admit more non-local students, in particular those from Belt and Road countries and the Mainland to study in Hong Kong. With high quality teaching and supporting facilities, they can expand their capacity and enhance their quality. At the same time, this will create a diversified and inclusive international learning environment on university campuses, thereby broadening students' horizons and enriching their learning experience even when they are staying on the local university campuses during their studies.

It should be noted that all non-local students of the UGC-funded taught programmes do not receive public funding support from the UGC. Under the existing policy, the UGC-funded universities should charge the non-local students of the UGC-funded undergraduate programmes tuition fees at a level which is at least sufficient to recover all additional direct costs, and such tuition fees should in no circumstances be lower than the fees applicable to local students (i.e. currently at \$42,100 per annum). Non-local students of taught programmes must also be admitted as over-enrolment and accounted for separately from local student places. The above arrangements ensure that the target beneficiaries of the Government's recurrent expenditure on higher education are local students, and the study opportunities for local students will not be affected.

The above principle is also reflected in the arrangement in respect of capital grants for campus development projects. Under the existing mechanism, the UGC assesses the academic space requirements of the universities in considering whether individual works projects are justified for capital grants from the Government. The academic space requirements of non-local students of taught programmes are not eligible for funding support and they shall be borne by the universities. The funding provided by the Government for university hostel developments is also capped at 75 per cent of the project costs, with the remainder borne by the universities. Moreover, student hostels are operated on a self-financing basis without additional recurrent grants from the Government.

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong is as follows:

(1) and (2) The average teaching expenditure per undergraduate student of the UGC-funded universities and the level of tuition fees charged by the universities on non-local students in the past three academic years are set out at Annex. The average teaching expenditure per student covers various

recurrent expenditure, such as academic staff remuneration, centralised services for teaching and learning (e.g. libraries, experiential learning activities outside classrooms and student support services) and expenses on the procurement of teaching equipment, etc. Taking the 2021/22 academic year as an example, the average teaching expenditure per undergraduate student was about \$154,000 while the tuition fee for non-local students ranged from \$140,000 to \$171,000 per annum during the same period.

(3) It is proposed in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address that the universities may progressively admit more non-local students, having regard to their own conditions. Unlike the concept of local student places, the non-local student ceiling is not meant to be a target. The purpose is to establish a maximum limit and provide room for the universities to admit additional non-local students at their own discretion. The Government maintains close communication with the UGC-funded universities on the increase in the non-local student ceiling. While welcoming the relaxation, the universities have indicated that they will, in line with the past practice, adopt a prudent and responsible approach in the progressive implementation of their internationalisation strategy. They will admit more non-local students in a gradual and orderly manner where conditions permit.

In the course of exploring the increase in the non-local student ceiling, the UGC has conducted assessments on the universities' teaching resources. It was observed that the universities have been increasing their numbers of academic staff members at a rate faster than the growth in overall student enrolment. During the 2018/19 to 2022/23 academic years, the number of students (including both local and non-local students) enrolled in the UGC-funded taught programmes of the eight universities increased by about 1 per cent from 92 955 to 93 660, while the number of academic staff members increased by 7 per cent from 4 786 to 5 120. In addition, the Financial Secretary set aside \$16 billion in the 2019-20 Budget for the UGC-funded universities to enhance or refurbish campus facilities. Taking into account all government-funded projects with approved funding and underway, it is estimated that upon completion, the additional academic space will increase by about 56 000 square metres in net operational floor area. Along with a number of their self-financed projects, the universities will provide better learning environments for all students.

As mentioned above, non-local students enrolled in the UGC-funded undergraduate programmes do not involve public funding. If the universities decide to increase the intake of non-local students, they will assume the responsibility for utilising non-UGC funding (such as tuition fees charged on non-local students and other incomes) to enhance relevant support facilities and ensure teaching quality.

(4) As mentioned above, the UGC-funded universities should charge non-local students enrolled in the UGC-funded undergraduate programmes at a level which is at least sufficient to recover all additional direct costs. On the premise that the above condition is met and with non-local students being non-UGC funded, the existing policy allows the universities to determine the appropriate level of tuition fees for non-local students, having regard to

their own circumstances.

We must stress that higher education environment is highly internationalised. While having five of our universities ranked among the top 100 universities in the world, our universities face increasing global competition in attracting outstanding overseas and Mainland students to study in Hong Kong, and the level of tuition fees should be set at an internationally competitive level. For example, the tuition fees charged by universities in Hong Kong and Singapore on overseas students are currently very similar. Moreover, under the existing mechanism for determining the funding for the UGC-funded universities, the Government does not reduce the amount of recurrent funding for the universities because of an increase in their income from non-UGC-funded activities, and vice versa. The Government has no intention to change the existing policy on tuition fees for non-local students.

(5) It is proposed in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address that the UGC-funded universities will continue to take forward various hostel projects, with the target of providing a total of about 13 500 additional hostel places by 2027, to cater for, among others, the needs of the additional students.

University hostel places are allocated by the universities in accordance with their respective mechanisms. They should optimise resources by continuously reviewing the priorities of different student groups for hostel allocation. At the same time, they should maintain flexibility while having due regard to practical needs and educational benefits in hostel allocation. For example, research postgraduate students are relatively independent and mature, while undergraduate students (including local, non-local and exchange students) can benefit from the active social and group activities in student hostels, fostering their whole-person development and broadening their horizons. In addition, similar to other cities with a cluster of top universities, the development of Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub will attract more students from different geographical regions to study in Hong Kong. The resultant demand for student accommodation often attracts the private sector's participation, providing a wide range of options, such as universities collaborating with the private sector to provide hostel places or in providing advisory services to non-local students who wish to seek accommodation from the private residential rental market. The Government and the UGC will reiterate to the universities that a multi-pronged approach should be adopted to broaden students' accommodation options by making reference to the development of other major education hubs and combining efficient market forces to widen students' accommodation choices. The universities should balance and support the accommodation needs of different student groups in a pragmatic and appropriate manner.

LCQ22: Low-floor wheelchair accessible public light bus

Following is a question by the Hon Stanley Li and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

The Transport Department launched the Low-floor wheelchair accessible public light bus trial scheme (the Scheme) in January 2018. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the launch of the Scheme, of the total number of low-floor wheelchair accessible public light buses (low-floor PLBs) introduced and, among them, the number of those still in service, together with a breakdown by public light bus (PLB) route;

(2) as some green minibus (GMB) operators have pointed out that the operating costs of low-floor PLBs (e.g. the costs for buying new vehicles and repair) are high, whether the Government has put in place policies or measures to create a sustainable business environment, so as to promote the popularisation of low-floor PLBs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) since the launch of the Scheme, whether new PLB operators have joined the Scheme; whether existing participating PLB operators in the Scheme have reflected their operating difficulties; whether the Government has formulated a review proposal for the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it has studied the introduction of across-the-board requirements for GMBs to provide services with low-floor PLBs and for each route to provide services by at least one low-floor PLB, so as to improve the "Transport for All" policy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as it has been reported that while there are a number of social welfare organizations providing services primarily to the elderly, as well as underprivileged groups with impaired mobility and care service needs at A Kung Kok Shan Road in Shatin, no low-floor PLB has been put in service for the only GMB route operating in the road section, whether the Government will consider introducing low-floor PLBs for that route to ensure the effective implementation of the "Transport for All" policy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Stanley Li is as follows:

(1) and (3) To promote the concept of "Transport for All", the Government introduced the Low-floor Wheelchair Accessible Public Light Bus Trial Scheme (the Trial Scheme) in January 2018, and has since reviewed the effectiveness of the Trial Scheme and performance of the low-floor wheelchair accessible public light buses (PLBs). Under the Trial Scheme, two green minibus (GMB) hospital routes (i.e. Hong Kong Island Route No. 54M (Kennedy Town – Queen Mary Hospital) and New Territories Route No. 808 (Kam Ying Court – Prince of Wales Hospital)) have each put one low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB into service. The operators concerned also provided phone reservation service to allow easier access to such PLBs for those in need.

The result of the review showed that the participating GMB operators encountered various operational issues, including increase in operating expenditure, higher repair and maintenance cost, as well as longer waiting time for maintenance parts for the new PLB models. Also, the services of such GMB routes often became less stable due to longer and uncertain journey time spent on accommodating wheelchair-bound passengers compared with other GMBs operating along similar routes. Nonetheless, from August 2018, the Transport Department (TD) has required the operators of new hospital routes to deploy at least one low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB, including the followings:

| Route Number | Origin – Destination | Date of Service Commencement |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| New Territories Route No. 413 | Tsing Yi Ferry Terminus – Princess Margaret Hospital | February 2021 |
| Kowloon Route No. 90A | Yau Tong (Yau Lai Estate) – Hong Kong Children's Hospital | April 2023 |
| New Territories Route No. 503 | Queens Hill Estate – North District Hospital | May 2023 |

At present, except for the low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB deployed to New Territories Route No. 413, those deployed to the other four routes are under maintenance.

(2) and (4) The TD has been in discussion with GMB operators and vehicle manufacturers to explore other more suitable vehicle models to operate as low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB, and continue to encourage operators to adopt low-floor PLBs. To promote the adoption of low-floor PLBs, applications of operators who undertake to use low-floor PLB (Note 1) will be given higher marks in GMB Operators Selection Exercises for new GMB route packages.

In addition to the five hospital routes with low-floor wheelchair accessible PLBs in service, low-floor PLBs will also be deployed gradually to

the following ten GMB routes:

| Route Number | Origin – Destination |
|---|--|
| Kowloon Route No. CX1 (Note 2) | Austin Station – Hong Kong Palace Museum (Circular route) |
| New Territories Route No. 505 | Sheung Shui (San Fat Street) – Sha Tin (Yuen Chau Kok) |
| Kowloon Route No. 2/ 2A | Whampoa Garden – Festival Walk Public Transport Interchange |
| New Territories Route No. 116 | Pak Shing Kok – Tsueng Kwan O Station (Circular route) |
| New Territories Route No. 506/507 | Chi Fuk Circuit – Luen Wo Hui (Circular route) Ma Sik Road – Fanling Station (Circular route) |
| New Territories Route No. 117A/ 117B (Note 3) | Anderson Road Quarry Development Area – Sheung Tak Public Transport Interchange/ Anderson Road Quarry Road Development Area – Yau Tong (Circular route) |
| New Territories Route No. 24 (Note 3) | Tai Po (Fu Tip Estate) – Tai Po (Kwong Fuk Road) (Circular route) |

Note 1: In the GMB Operators Selection Exercise conducted between 2020 and 2022, operators generally undertook to provide low-floor PLB services (using either low-floor wheelchair accessible PLBs or low-floor PLBs) within one to three years of operating the new routes concerned.

Note 2: Kowloon Route No. CX1 began providing low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB services in October 2023.

Note 3: New Territories Routes No. 117A, 117B and 24 have yet to commence operation.

The TD will continue to monitor the operation of new low-floor PLBs, and maintain close communication with the PLB trade. If a GMB operator applies for fare adjustment due to increase in operating cost, the TD will consider such application taking into account the operational and financial conditions of the specific route.

Having regard to the current operating situation of GMBs, the TD has no plan to impose across-the-board requirement on GMBs to adopt low-floor PLBs or arrange at least one low-floor PLB for every route. Aside from GMB services, wheelchair-bound passengers who need to commute to hospitals and clinics could also consider using other modes of public transport equipped with barrier-free facilities or the Rehabus.

(5) At present, GMB operators purchase low-floor wheelchair accessible PLBs at their own cost. The operator of GMB Route No. 67K (A Kung Kok – Sha Tin Station) indicated that it did not have additional resources available for adopting low-floor wheelchair accessible PLB after considering its operational and financial conditions.

Passengers with mobility impairments who need to commute to and from the A Kung Kok Shan Road area in Sha Tin may use the Rehabus Scheduled Route Service or Dial-a-Ride Service provided by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, of which four scheduled routes pass through the said area. In addition, Rebus services (Sha Tin and Tai Wai routes) provided by Kwoon Chung Inclusive and Accessible Transport Services Company Limited also pass through A Kung Kok Shan Road. The said Rebus services are generally sufficient for meeting the needs of the passengers. The TD will continue to monitor the demand for the said Rebus services and review the arrangement as appropriate.

LCQ16: Measures to support persons with hearing impairment

Following is a question by the Hon Gary Zhang and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

Regarding measures to support persons with hearing impairment (HI), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as a non-profit-making organisation has estimated that there are about 100 audiologists in Hong Kong, and their ratio to the population is 1:73 330, which is far below the ratios in neighbouring regions and countries (e.g. the ratio in Singapore being 1:51 136), whether the Government has regularly reviewed Hong Kong's manpower requirement for audiologists, and whether it will consider including audiologists in the Talent List to attract overseas professionals to practise in Hong Kong;

(2) as it is learnt that public hospitals and clinics under the Hospital Authority (HA) may arrange sign language interpretation services for persons with HI seeking consultation, whether the Government knows the number of cases of scheduled sign language interpretation services in each of the past five years, and if HA has received complaints about such services; if HA has, of the specific contents of such complaints; whether the Government knows the average waiting time for cases of emergency sign language interpretation services (e.g. provision of services for patients with HI in cases of their emergency admission to hospitals) in the past five years;

(3) of the number of persons with HI employed by the Government and its percentage in the total number of persons employed by the Government in each of the past five years; and

(4) in order to encourage more people to enter the profession of sign language interpretation for taking forward support services for persons with HI, whether the Government will consider creating additional civil service or non-civil service contract staff posts of sign language interpreters?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Health Bureau and the Civil Service Bureau on the Member's question, I set out below a consolidated reply:

(1) According to the 2019 Health Manpower Survey, it is estimated that Hong Kong has a total of around 90 audiologists. The Hong Kong Institute of Audiologists (HKIA) is the recognised body for audiologists under the Department of Health's Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions. As at June 2023, a total of 60 audiologists was registered under the HKIA. The Hospital Authority (HA) currently employs around 40 audiologists. Their attrition rate and vacancy are both lower than other grades. The HA will keep the service level under regular review, and on a need basis, employ additional manpower for service provision. The Health Bureau will closely monitor the manpower situation of different healthcare professions, and review the need for including other healthcare professions (including audiologists) into the Talent List where appropriate.

(2) In order to cater for patients with special needs, the HA has been arranging free sign language interpretation services for patients in need at its public hospitals and clinics through a service contractor and freelance interpreters for the Judiciary Administration. The HA also has guidelines in place for its staff on the arrangement of sign language interpretation services.

Patients in need may request the hospital and clinic concerned to arrange interpretation services in advance. For scheduled services, interpreters generally could arrive on time to provide the services. As for non-scheduled circumstances (such as hospital admission during emergency), the HA staff will, according to the need, immediately arrange interpreters to provide video-call or on-site interpretation services as soon as possible. In the past five years, for non-scheduled services, sign language interpreters have arrived at the relevant premises to provide interpretation services within one hour on average.

The case numbers of sign language interpretation services provided by the HA in the past five years are as follows:

| Year | Sign language interpretation services (number of cases) |
|---------|---|
| 2018-19 | 1 049 |

| | |
|---------|-------|
| 2019-20 | 991 |
| 2020-21 | 1 351 |
| 2021-22 | 1 582 |
| 2022-23 | 1 563 |

In the past five years, the HA has received two complaints regarding sign language interpretation services for individuals with hearing impairments. Both cases were related to inpatients alleging that the hospital failed to actively arrange for sign language interpretation services. With a view to enhancing support to hearing-impaired patients, posters have been printed and displayed at hospitals and clinics to enable patients to learn more about the interpretation services. Apart from provision of sign language interpretation services, the HA has also produced standard response cue cards, disease information leaflets and patient consent forms, which include information on common diseases, treatment procedures and the HA services to assist individuals with hearing impairments, as well as enhanced training for frontline healthcare staff on relevant services.

(3) and (4) Currently, persons with disabilities can choose whether to declare their disabilities when they apply for government jobs. The same applies to serving civil servants. The Government does not and has no plan to require serving civil servants and job applicants to declare their disabilities. The Civil Service Bureau collects statistical information from bureaux/departments (B/Ds) on employment of persons with disabilities in the Government each year. B/Ds collect relevant information through different channels, such as when job applicants declare their disabilities on a voluntary basis and request for special arrangements in attending the selection test/interview having regard to their disabilities, or when serving employees apply for financial assistance to purchase technical aids to assist in their performance of duties. Given that declaration of disabilities is on a voluntary basis, the actual figure may be greater than the statistical figure.

The number of newly recruited civil servants known to have hearing impairment and its respective percentage in the newly recruited civil servants from 2018-19 to 2022-23 are set out in the table below :

| Year | Number of newly recruited civil servants known to have hearing impairment | Percentage in newly recruited civil servants of the year |
|---------|---|--|
| 2018-19 | 17 | 0.15 |
| 2019-20 | 24 | 0.22 |
| 2020-21 | 9 | 0.10 |
| 2021-22 | 19 | 0.21 |
| 2022-23 | 11 | 0.15 |

At present, the Government does not have civil service posts providing sign language interpretation services. B/Ds can consider the most appropriate way to provide/use sign language interpretation services after taking into consideration their operational needs and resources.

LCQ15: Attracting travellers to visit Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Benson Luk and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

It is learnt that Hong Kong's neighbouring tourism competitors have proactively rolled out measures to revitalize the tourism industry after the epidemic, including stepping up publicity, facilitating visa issuance, and constructing or developing new tourist attractions and facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government has indicated in the 2023 Policy Address that it will publish the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 next year, whether the Government will formulate specific strategies in the Blueprint for integrating major cultural and sports events into tourism projects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has formulated new short, medium and long-term strategies to attract travellers to visit Hong Kong in the light of the campaigns launched by competitors in the region to boost the development of their tourism industries; if so, of the details and the implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that, apart from M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum which opened in recent years, other local tourism facilities have already been in operation for quite some time since their commissioning, whether the Government has plans to construct new tourism facilities in the coming five years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the mega events to be held in Hong Kong for the first time in the coming five years, and the details of such events?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Benson Luk, the reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) Since the complete lifting of inbound travel restrictions in February this year, Hong Kong's tourism industry has been recovering steadily and is largely the same with that of other regions. However, there are many challenges, including the global economic conditions, competition from other neighbouring regions, changes in travel patterns of visitors, air capacity limitation, etc. Under these challenges, we have launched the "Hello Hong Kong" large-scale global promotional campaign to send a welcoming message to the world and entice visitors to come and experience Hong Kong's diverse appeals in person. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), other than organising various large-scale events, has also distributed around two million "Hong Kong Goodies" visitor consumption vouchers, each with a value of \$100, to warmly welcome visitors.

In the coming year, the HKTB will make every effort to attract visitors to Hong Kong:

1. promoting tourism through mega events and reinforcing Hong Kong's position as the Events Capital of Asia by leveraging Chinese and Western festivals and year-round mega events, as well as integrating the development of culture, sports and tourism;
2. continuing to develop Hong Kong into an international tourism hub and core demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism by leveraging the city's role as a "super-connector" and "super value-adder" connecting the Mainland with the rest of the world;
3. developing more special tourism products and experiences in collaboration with the travel trade focusing on potential markets and visitor segments, to attract visitors from different source markets to come to Hong Kong; and
4. attracting high value-added visitors and stepping up the development of cruise tourism to elevate Hong Kong's competitiveness as Asia's cruise hub by tapping into Hong Kong's advantage as the "World's Meeting Place".

Apart from the above strategies, the Government and the travel trade will continue to implement measures to enrich tourism resources in Hong Kong, with a view to attracting more visitors.

In recent years, we have launched a number of projects enriched with art, heritage, creative and green tourism characteristics, such as "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival", "Design District Hong Kong", "City in Time" and "Enhancement of Hiking Trails", and we are working at full steam to roll out another phase of these projects. In addition, we continue to work with relevant government departments to diversify and promote green tourism in Hong Kong through upgrading the facilities in the Hong Kong Wetland Park, and exploring the development of a hiking hub at Pak Tam Chung.

For promoting the development of tourism, the Government has announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the Cultural and Heritage Sites Local Tour Incentive Scheme will be transformed into the Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme (CTIS) to provide more in-depth itinerary design, training, etc., with a view to encouraging the trade to develop more thematic tours. The CTIS will be rolled out in the first quarter of 2024.

Besides, the Tourism Commission (TC) and the HKTB have been reviewing the light and sound show, "A Symphony of Lights". We target to devise a plan next year with a view to bringing a fresh experience to visitors. In addition, we will promote cultural and eco-tourism in Sha Tau Kok so that more locals and visitors can learn about the history, culture, and natural geological features of Sha Tau Kok and nearby outlying islands. In the long run, we will also explore with the Shenzhen Municipal Government the feasibility of establishing a Hong Kong Sha Tau Kok and Shenzhen Shatoujiao cultural tourism zone.

National planning documents promulgated in recent years provided guiding directions for tourism development of Hong Kong. The Culture and Tourism Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Plan) sets out the guiding directions for the overall cultural and tourism development of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and guides the development of GBA into an exchange hub for culture of the East and the West and a world-class tourism destination. The Development Blueprint for Hong Kong Tourism Industry (Blueprint) promulgated in 2017 well echoed with the guiding directions laid down in the national planning documents.

The current-term Government has set up the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) to promote the in-depth integration of culture, sports and tourism and collaboration among the three parties. Some examples are set out at Part 4 of this reply.

The Government announced in the 2023 Policy Address the formulation of the Blueprint 2.0 for making enhancements in various aspects to complement tourism development. The Blueprint 2.0 will be published next year after trade consultation. In the process of updating Blueprint 2.0, the Government will consult the trade and strive to reflect their concerns with a view to implementing more measures to foster collaboration among culture, sports and tourism for promoting the development of the tourism industry.

(3) The Government and the travel trade have been considering adding culture, sports and tourism facilities, including the Kai Tak Sports Park to be completed by 2024, East Kowloon Cultural Centre to be opened by phases in 2024, Heritage Conservation and Resource Centre targeted to be opened in 2028, New Territories East Cultural Centre targeted to be opened in 2030, etc. We have also been striving to enhance the attractiveness of existing tourism attractions and facilities. Peak Tram has completed its upgrading plan and reopened in August last year. Ngong Ping 360 launched its "Crystal+" cabin last December, offering 360-degree panoramic view to visitors. Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (HKDL) has been actively taking forward its multi-year expansion plan under which the Castle of Magical Dreams as well as brand new

daytime and nighttime shows have been rolled out progressively from 2020 to 2022. In addition, the world's first ever and largest World of Frozen was officially opened on November 20 this year. HKDL will continue to take forward the remaining "Marvel" super heroes themed area project under the Plan in an orderly manner, in tandem with the pace of tourism recovery.

As for Ocean Park, the all-weather indoor-and-outdoor Water World and the Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong were officially open in 2021 and 2022 respectively, creating synergy to enhance Ocean Park's appeal as a resort destination. The Government and Ocean Park Corporation are actively implementing various initiatives under the future strategy for Ocean Park, including those relating to the development of new tourism facilities, like taking forward outsourcing arrangement for the Adventure Zone in the upper park of Ocean Park, conducting investigation and design studies for the pier projects at Tai Shue Wan and Deep Water Bay, etc.

The TC is also taking forward the Lei Yue Mun (LYM) Waterfront Enhancement Project which will improve the facilities along LYM waterfront and enhance its connectivity with a view to further enhancing the attractiveness of LYM as a popular tourist attraction. Works under the project include the construction of a public landing facility, and the development of a waterfront promenade and related improvement works. The first phase of the works have been open to the public since early 2023 and the remaining works are expected to be completed in phases by end 2024.

(4) In 2023, the CSTB organised and supported many large-scale events, many of which were held for the first time or re-organised in physical form after being suspended for many years. In addition, there were many commercial concerts, exhibitions and performances. To consolidate Hong Kong's position as the "Events Capital of Asia", we will continue to organise these events and explore different types of large-scale events in coming years, to draw more high value-added overnight visitors to Hong Kong, offer them new experiences, and present Hong Kong's charm to the world again.

The CSTB and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council will organise the first-ever "Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo" (HKPAX) in Hong Kong from October 14 to 18, 2024. The HKPAX includes international showcases, pitching sessions, talks, exhibitions and networking activities. It will promote collaboration and trading of the performing arts industry, while at the same time, gather world-class performing arts programmes in Hong Kong and attract visitors to Hong Kong. We estimate that around 800 to 1 000 artists from overseas and 500 local artists will participate in the HKPAX and the programmes will attract around 30 000 audiences (including visitors).

The CSTB and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will organise "Chinese Culture Festival" on a regular basis from 2024 onwards, with a view to providing audiences with more opportunities to enjoy special programmes on Chinese culture, which include Chinese Opera, selected performing arts programmes, outstanding local works recognised by the China National Arts Fund, and activities such as film screenings. In addition, the "World Cultures Festival" will be organised regularly to showcase the essence

of culture and arts from different countries and regions. Programmes include stage performances, film screenings, exhibitions, etc., allowing participants to experience the unique style of each country or region.

In addition, Hong Kong will host the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival" for the first time in 2024. The LCSD will co-ordinate high-quality productions and selected programmes of local arts groups and artists of the 9+2 Greater Bay Area cities, ranging from music, dance, Cantonese Opera, theatre, arts exhibition, literature and film screenings, to promote the integration of arts and culture. The "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival" will be held immediately after the "Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo" to achieve better synergy.

The Mega Arts and Cultural Events (ACE) Fund, officially launched by the CSTB in April 2023, aims to attract and support international and large-scale arts and cultural events to be held in Hong Kong, with a view to developing Hong Kong into an arts and cultural metropolis. As of now, six events have been successfully organised (including Art Basel Hong Kong 2023, Art Central 2023, etc.), and the remaining four approved events will be held in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the CSTB is committed to developing Hong Kong into a centre for major international sports events and supporting local national sports associations (NSAs) in hosting major international sports events through the provision of matching fund and direct grant under the "M" Mark System. Since April 2023, there are 13 major international sports events being awarded "M" Mark status, of which 11 events have been held, including the Aramco Team Series Hong Kong, the FIA World Rallycross Championship and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Section) Half Marathon staged in Hong Kong for the first time. The WDSF Breaking for Gold World Series will be held in Hong Kong for the first time in mid-December 2023, whereas the Women's U20 World Lacrosse Championship and WBSC Baseball5 World Cup are being planned to be staged in Hong Kong for the very first time in 2024. We will continue to assist NSAs and other private or non-governmental organisations in launching more new major sports events.

For MICE events (i.e. Meetings, Incentive travels, Conventions and Exhibitions), the HKTB recently won IBTM, the world's leading MICE event brand, to organise its inaugural MICE trade show IBTM Asia Pacific 2025, in Spring 2025 in Hong Kong. The event is expected to attract more than 1 500 travel trade and MICE professionals to come to Hong Kong for attending it. Between April and October this year, the HKTB had successfully bid or subsidised the staging of over 430 international MICE events in Hong Kong, involving over 300 000 MICE visitors and showcasing Hong Kong's strengths and appeal as an international MICE capital. These events include high-end international conferences hosted by internationally renowned business media and attended by A-list speakers from around the world, namely Tatler Gen. T Asia Summit (Note 1), Technology for Change Asia (Note 2), and Fortune Innovation Forum (Note 3), as well as 42 large-scale international MICE events such as the Jewellery & Gem WORLD Hong Kong held in September, the

upcoming Insurtech Insights Asia 2023 to be held in December and the 63rd Orient & Southeast Asian Lions Forum to be held in 2026.

We will continue to attract more international and large-scale cultural, arts and sports events, tourism happenings and MICE activities to be held in Hong Kong through the Mega ACE Fund, "M" Mark and other resources. We will announce once the events are confirmed.

Note 1: Tatler Asia will stage three editions of the Tatler Gen. T Asia Summit in Hong Kong between 2023 and 2025. The first edition took place in November 2023.

Note 2: The Economist will stage three editions of the Technology for Change Asia in Hong Kong between 2024 and 2026 with the first edition taking place in February 2024.

Note 3: Fortune will stage the Fortune Innovation Forum in Hong Kong in March 2024.

LC: Speech by CS in presenting Government Minute in response to Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2023

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 2023 in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Mr President,

The Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2023 was submitted to the Legislative Council on July 12 this year. Today, the Government submits the Government Minute responding to the recommendations as set out in the Annual Report.

In 2022-23, the Office of The Ombudsman received a total of more than 5 000 complaint cases, on par with the number of last year. Due to the outbreak of the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic in early 2022, there were more complaints relating to handling of the epidemic during the year.

In the Annual Report, The Ombudsman summed up nine direct investigation and 141 full investigation cases, making 211 recommendations in total. The Government Minute has responded in detail to all the 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. As for the one case where the relevant government department and The Ombudsman have different views, the authority concerned has already explained the reasons to The Ombudsman and provided a detailed account in the Government Minute.

As reflected in the Annual Report, more than half of the 141 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. We will actively follow up on The Ombudsman's valuable advice in order to make continuous improvements to the quality of public services.

On access to information, over 10 900 requests for information made under the Code on Access to Information (the Code) from members of the public were received by government departments in 2022-23, representing an increase of about 4 per cent as compared to the previous year. Since the promulgation of the Code, 94 per cent of the cases were provided with all the information requested and 3 per cent were provided with part of the information requested. The number of complaints concerning the Code received during the year was 67, representing a decrease of over 20 per cent as compared to the figure of last year. The Ombudsman also pointed out in the Annual Report that government departments have become more conversant with the application of the Code. I am glad to hear a decrease in the number of complaints concerning the Code, as well as The Ombudsman's positive comment about the relevant work of the Government.

In 2022-23, the Office successfully mediated 305 complaints, which is a record high. Various government departments and public bodies will continue to work with the Office to promote mediation so as to resolve disputes between both parties to a complaint efficiently, thereby achieving a win-win situation.

In addition, the Office continued to organise the Presentation Ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards in November 2022 and presented awards to four government departments and 61 public officers to commend their exemplary performance in serving the community. The Ombudsman pointed out in the Annual Report that the current-term Government's endeavours are starting to bear fruit in some areas such as street obstruction and shopfront extension. I am pleased to learn that the hard work and efforts of public officers have received recognition and credit from the public. We will continue to strive for the best in enhancing the quality of public services.

Since the current-term Government took office more than one year ago, we have made concerted effort with members of the public and led Hong Kong out of the epidemic with society returning to full normalcy. We have also enhanced governance on various fronts by strengthening co-ordination and improving the civil service management system. We will continue to embrace a result-oriented governance culture and enhance the standard of public administration of government departments and public bodies with a view to building a better Hong Kong.

Thank you, Mr President.