

LCQ3: Improving staff convenience facilities at public refuse collection points

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Chun-sing and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

It has been reported that many public refuse collection points (RCPs) lack staff convenience facilities, including the absence of individual rest rooms, changing rooms and toilets, and insufficient furniture such as lockers, tables and chairs. Some cleansing workers even have to scavenge for waste furniture and electrical appliances for use at RCPs. In addition, many village-type RCPs lack water and electricity facilities, as well as areas for short breaks and meals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will study the introduction of a scheme to improve various public RCPs and expedite the improvement, refurbishment or re-provisioning of some permanent off-street public RCPs with poor staff convenience facilities; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) in the light of the Occupational Safety and Health Council's conversion of medium-sized modular houses into "Solar Cooling Kiosks" for use by outdoor workers, whether the Government will consider using this as a model for setting up mobile rest kiosks in rural and remote areas, so as to provide frontline cleansing workers with a better resting environment; and

(3) whether it will study the formulation of a building design code for staff convenience facilities at public RCPs, such as classifying RCPs according to their gross floor area and type, and requiring the authorities to provide corresponding staff convenience facilities based on such classification; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the working and resting environment of frontline cleansing workers, including civil servants and outsourced service contractor workers, who provide essential public services. Since the inauguration of the incumbent Government, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) had conducted a comprehensive review on the accommodation arrangement of the basic needs of frontline cleansing

workers, including drinking water, places for a short break, water for cleansing tools and toilet facilities. Results of the review confirmed that the needs of the frontline cleansing workers have been accommodated. Due to geographical constraints, some facilities may be located outside the workplace. Although the relevant facilities are all located within 10-minute walk from the workplace, we have noticed that some frontline workers choose to rest or eat inside the refuse collection points (RCPs) or in open areas for convenience or other reasons. Subject to objective conditions, the FEHD will further improve the working condition of workers and provide more convenient staff facilities through refurbishment or facelifting of RCPs.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Lam Chun-sing is as follows:

(1) and (2) At present, the FEHD provides approximately 170 off-street RCPs in urban areas, in which refuse collection vehicles can enter for collecting refuse instead of having to handle it on the roadside. It also provides around 900 village-type RCPs in rural areas. While there are cleansing workers stationed at off-street RCPs, there are none stationed at village-type RCPs. Instead, mobile cleansing teams are responsible for cleaning up refuse at village-type RCPs regularly every day.

At present, most off-street RCPs are equipped with facilities that can enable workers to work, rest temporarily and take meals, subject to actual circumstances. These facilities include resting space, changing rooms, storage space, toilets, shower cubicles, cold and hot water dispensers, microwave ovens, electric steamers, refrigerators, electric fans, tables and chairs and power sockets. Among the 163 permanent off-street RCPs, various facilities have been provided in 147 RCPs, out of which 92 RCPs have changing facilities, 116 RCPs have storage facilities, 127 RCPs have refrigerators, 111 RCPs have food reheating equipment and 63 RCPs have resting space. Nevertheless, the aforementioned facilities cannot be provided in 16 RCPs due to geographic constraints. Apart from the aforementioned facilities, individual resting rooms and air conditioning systems, etc, will be provided in 11 newly built off-street RCPs expected to be completed from 2024 onwards.

The FEHD has, in collaboration with the Architectural Services Department, progressively conducted comprehensive refurbishment and facelifting works for older off-street RCPs. Resting rooms and relevant facilities will be provided as far as possible, subject to the actual circumstances of the venues. Since 2020, refurbishment or facelifting works for 38 off-street RCPs have commenced, out of which the works of 14 RCPs have been completed, and the remaining ones are in progress. The works of another 11 RCPs are expected to commence in 2024. While it may not be possible to provide all facilities at individual off-street RCPs owing to space constraints, the FEHD will resort to other means, including arranging cleansing workers to use the relevant facilities at nearby venues of the department, etc.

Village-type RCPs are generally smaller in size and have no attendants deployed to station there. Besides, due to geographic constraints, staff facilities cannot be provided in those RCPs. The FEHD will arrange workers to

use facilities at nearby off-street RCPs or other venues of the department as far as possible.

To further enhance the resting environment of cleansing workers in rural areas, the FEHD has put on trial the solar cooling kiosks in three districts in summer this year. These kiosks are equipped with facilities powered by solar energy, including air-coolers, electric fans and exhaust fans, and the preliminary assessment has shown satisfactory results. The FEHD plans to install 54 kiosks in 12 districts and provide similar solar-powered facilities in 15 resting and storage places in rural areas for cleansing workers to use before April 2024. The FEHD will review the actual operational effectiveness of these solar cooling kiosks and collect views from frontline workers in order to optimise the design and operation of the relevant facilities to better meet frontline workers' needs. Subject to the review's results, the FEHD will identify more suitable locations for providing facilities for workers to rest and take meals.

(3) The Accommodation Regulations stipulate the standards for the design of all government buildings, including the provision of adequate staff facilities according to the number of workers. For example, the building design standards stipulate that each worker is entitled to certain changing and storage spaces. All newly built off-street RCPs are required to provide facilities based on the number of workers in compliance with the standards.

Apart from the building design standards, the FEHD, together with the relevant department, has reviewed the size of the resting room in off-street RCPs, in order to improve the resting environment and facilities for cleansing workers. Under the new standard, each newly built and reprovisioned off-street RCP will be fitted with a staff resting room of at least 20 square meters, equipped with tables and chairs and relevant facilities, for accommodating 10 to 15 workers to use. Such standard has been incorporated in the FEHD's Handbook On Standard Features for RCPs for implementation.

As for village-type RCPs, the FEHD will continue to provide resting facilities for workers at appropriate locations nearby, and will put up notices at all roll-call points which clearly indicate the locations of facilities, such as drinking water dispensers, toilets and areas for short breaks, available in the vicinity of each workplace, so that frontline cleansing workers will be aware of and can use such facilities.

2023 District Council Ordinary Election-registration arrangements for

voting at Near Boundary Polling Stations end next Tuesday

The 2023 District Council Ordinary Election will be held on December 10 (Sunday). To enable electors living on the Mainland or those who need to travel to and from the Mainland on the polling day to cast their votes, the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) will set up four Near Boundary Polling Stations (NBPSs) at two schools near Sheung Shui MTR Station (namely Hong Kong Taoist Association Tang Hin Memorial Secondary School and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Kap Yan Directors' College). Electors of the 44 District Council geographical constituencies (DCGCs) who wish to vote at the NBPSs can register through the online registration system (www.reo-form.gov.hk/nbps.htm). The deadline for registration is 6pm next Tuesday (December 5). Late registrations will not be processed.

A spokesman for the REO said today (November 29), "The arrangements are only applicable to DCGC electors. District Committees constituency (DCC) electors must cast their votes at the 18 DCC polling stations across the territory. DCC electors on the Mainland should plan their return trips to Hong Kong as early as possible so that they can cast their votes on the polling day."

When registering, electors are required to provide their names in both Chinese and English, Hong Kong identity card (HKID) number and contact telephone number which can receive SMS messages in Hong Kong or on the Mainland. Electors are also required to choose to vote at a specified timeslot to complete the registration. If electors wish to receive the notification of registration result through email, they can provide an email address during the registration.

After submitting the registration application, the REO will send a notification of registration result to the electors concerned via SMS and email (if applicable) instantly to confirm whether they have successfully registered to vote at NBPSs. Only upon receipt of the notification of registration result confirming their successful registration can electors cast their votes at the relevant polling stations. In case the email address or/and phone number provided by the electors during registration is/are different from the electors' particulars maintained by the REO, the REO will also inform them of their successful registration to vote at the NBPSs via the email address or/and phone number kept in the REO's records to prevent fraudulent registration.

In case registrants have to change their itineraries on the polling day, they can simply cancel the registration and change back to their originally allocated polling stations for casting their votes through the online registration system before the deadline of 6pm next Tuesday. However, if the registration period has already expired when the change of itinerary is made, the electors concerned may contact the REO at 2891 1001 to make appropriate arrangements.

On the polling day, registered electors are required to bring the original copy of their HKID cards to vote at the allocated NBPSs at the specified timeslot. DCGC electors of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon need to vote at Hong Kong Taoist Association Tang Hin Memorial Secondary School, while DCGC electors of the New Territories need to vote at Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Kap Yan Directors' College. Electors may choose to walk for five to six minutes from Sheung Shui MTR Station to the NBPSs. The REO will also arrange shuttle bus to carry electors to and from Sheung Shui MTR Station and the NBPSs. Please refer to the election website (www.elections.gov.hk/dc2023/pdf/Annex1_Shuttle_Eng.pdf) for the location of pick-up and drop-off points.

The spokesman said, "To ensure the smooth and orderly implementation of the arrangements, a pre-registration system is adopted with a quota limit. The maximum number of the registration quota for the NBPSs is set at 38 000 which will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis."

If a registrant would like to ascertain whether he/she is a registered elector, he/she may log in to the Online Voter Information Enquiry System (vr.gov.hk) or call the election hotline (2891 1001) for checking. For details of the NBPS arrangements, members of the public can visit the dedicated election website (www.elections.gov.hk/dc2023/eng/nbps.html). They can also email to reoenq@reo.gov.hk or call the election hotline (2891 1001) for enquiries. The hotline operates from 8.45am to 6pm from Monday to Friday. The service hours of the hotline from December 4 to 10 are as follows: 8.45am to 8pm from December 4 to 7; 8.45am to 9pm from December 8 to 9; and 7.30am to 11pm on December 10 (polling day).

Missing woman in Sham Shui Po located

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

Yin Lifan, a Mainland woman aged 39, went missing after she left her residence on Fuk Wing Street on November 26 afternoon. Her family made a report to Police yesterday (November 28).

The woman was located on Tai Hang Tung Road in Sham Shui Po yesterday night. She sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

LCQ12: Child-minding services

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

The 2023 Policy Address has mentioned that the Government will strengthen support for working families in childbearing by, among others, setting up 10 more aided standalone child care centres (CCCs) in phases over the next three years starting from next year, providing about 900 additional places for day child care services. Regarding child-minding services, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on (i) the aforesaid aided standalone CCCs and (ii) the newly-built standalone CCCs which will commence operation in each of the next three years: their numbers, service places and geographical distribution;

(2) as the Government indicated in December 2020 that it would purchase premises in batches for accommodating 28 CCCs in the 18 districts across the territory, whether the authorities will expedite the relevant work or convert other suitable government sites into CCCs in order to achieve such a target, thereby increasing the service places of aided CCCs to meet the relevant requirements under the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines;

(3) as it has been reported that quite a number of kindergartens are facing the problem of under-enrolment, whether the authorities will consider providing resources to assist aided CCCs attached to kindergartens in setting up baby care services;

(4) as some operators of standalone CCCs have relayed a high wastage rate of child care workers (CCWs) in recent years and their difficulties in recruiting sufficient CCWs, whether the authorities will consider enhancing the remuneration package of CCWs and reviewing the manning ratio of CCWs for children aged zero to two, so as to alleviate their workload; and

(5) as it is learnt that the Mainland has proactively promoted "smart child care" in recent years, enabling parents and staff members of the centres concerned to better grasp the daily lives and health conditions of infants and children, and to conduct the relevant statistical and monitoring work via the information management system for infant and child care services, whether the authorities will draw reference from the relevant work and technologies, so as to step up the use of technology in the provision of child care services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The consolidated reply to the Member's question, in consultation with the Education Bureau (EDB), is as follows:

(1) Over the next three years starting from 2024, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will set up 10 more aided standalone Child Care Centers (CCCs) in phases to provide about 900 additional service places. Among them, the CCCs in Queens Hill Estate (100 places) and Wah Ming Estate (56 places) in Fanling would commence service in 2023-24 whereas the CCCs at the Treasury Building in Sham Shui Po (100 places) and Shun Lee Estate in Kwun Tong (88 places) are scheduled to operate by 2024-25. The remaining six planned aided standalone CCCs (totally 560 places) in Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing, Kwun Tong and Kowloon City, etc, are targeted to be completed and launched within 2027.

(2) With the assistance of the Government Property Agency (GPA), the SWD has been striving to identify suitable premises for purchase through different channels for the provision of welfare facilities, including aided CCCs. The progress of the purchase of premises will be subject to the availability of suitable properties in the market and various external factors, including whether suitable fire safety and barrier-free access facilities are available in the premises, whether their size and location meet the operational requirements, whether the surrounding land uses are compatible with welfare uses, and whether the prices offered by owners are within the acceptable price ranges determined by GPA with reference to market value. The SWD and GPA are continuing to identify suitable premises for purchase. In addition, the SWD will make the best use of vacant government premises, vacant non-domestic premises in public housing estates, etc, and explore suitable premises among them for the use of welfare facilities, including aided CCCs.

(3) Under the prevailing arrangement, the Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (JOKC) of the EDB manages operators setting up service units of CCC and kindergarten (KG) in the same place. The JOKC is staffed with officers of the EDB and the SWD, jointly regulating the care and education services of these service units in accordance with the requirements on premises design, staffing, and safety measures, etc, under the Child Care Services Ordinance (Cap. 243), the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) and the Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions, providing one-stop services to applicants for CCC registration. If operators of existing aided CCC attached to KG intend to increase CCC service places for children under the age of three in the premises, the operators may apply to the JOKC. If the application complies with the aforementioned requirements, the Government will provide relevant subsidies for the aided CCC attached to KG.

(4) In order to retain and attract qualified child care workers, the SWD has provided Subsidy for Manpower Enhancement to service units of day and residential child care services and pre-school rehabilitation services since September 2017 to ease the pressure of serving staff. Besides, the SWD has enhanced the manning ratio for qualified child care workers taking care of children aged zero to below two from 1:8 to 1:6, and enhanced the manning ratio for taking care of children aged two to below three from 1:14 to 1:11 starting from the 2019/20 school year.

(5) Currently, all CCC services must comply with the relevant requirements

under the Child Care Services Ordinance, the Child Care Services Regulations (Cap. 243A) and the Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions to ensure that the service quality are maintained at a reasonable standard, for the balanced development of the infant and young children's physical, social and emotional aspects, etc. Subject to their compliance with the requirements of the Funding and Service Agreement and the relevant statutory staffing requirements, non-governmental organisations operating aided CCC service may determine their staffing establishment in accordance with their human resources policies, flexibly deploy resources and employ staff, and adopt different measures in meeting their centre operations such as streamlining the work procedures, making good use of smart value-added services and information technology support, as well as developing information technology system, etc, so as to strengthen the technology application in child care services and to achieve the service output and effectiveness required.

LCQ7: Crackdown on illegal workers

Following is a question by the Hon Stanley Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

Earlier on, the Immigration Department (ImmD) neutralised an illegal worker syndicate which had arranged for illegal workers to take up employment at more than 50 restaurants. In addition, it has been reported that some "snake-heads" have used guerrilla tactics to arrange for illegal workers to work on a casual basis in different work premises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of illegal workers and employers of illegal workers prosecuted in each of the past five years and this year to date, as well as the penalties imposed by the court on the convicted persons;
- (2) of the number of crackdown operations conducted by the Government against illegal workers in each of the past five years and this year to date, as well as the average manpower from the Police and the ImmD deployed in each of such operations; whether it has reviewed the adequacy of the manpower deployed in such operations;
- (3) whether it has assessed the changes in the employment of illegal workers since the introduction of the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme; and
- (4) whether it has studied how to step up the crackdown on illegal workers?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to combatting illegal employment, with a view to protecting job opportunities for local workers. The Government's reply to the question raised by the Hon Stanley Ng is as follows:

(1) According to the record of the Immigration Department (ImmD), the number of illegal workers prosecuted and the number of employers of illegal workers prosecuted are tabulated below:

Year	Number of illegal workers prosecuted	Number of employers of illegal workers prosecuted
2018	1 341	283
2019	1 157	246
2020	615	164
2021	815	185
2022	539	138
2023 (January – October)	747	95

From 2018 to end-October this year, illegal workers and employers of illegal workers who were convicted had been sentenced to imprisonment or fine. In terms of imprisonment period, illegal workers were sentenced to imprisonment ranging from 10 days to 40 months, whereas employers of illegal workers were sentenced to imprisonment ranging from seven days to nine months. In terms of fines, illegal workers were fined ranging from \$1,000 to \$30,000, whereas employers of illegal workers were fined ranging from \$1,000 to \$400,000.

(2) According to the ImmD's record, the number of anti-illegal worker operations (including joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force (Police)) is tabulated below:

Table 1

Year	Number of operations
2018	16 108
2019	14 147
2020	13 612
2021	16 132
2022	15 759
2023 (January to October)	14 628
Total	90 386

According to the Police's record, the number of anti-illegal worker operations by the Police is tabulated below:

Table 2

Year	Number of operations [Note]
2018	171
2019	89
2020	36
2021	163
2022	130
2023 (January to October)	124
Total	713

Note: the above operation figures include the joint operations with the ImmD, which may have been reflected in Table 1. The Police do not maintain the breakdown of the relevant joint operations.

The ImmD and the Police will, depending on operational needs, risk assessment and other considerations, flexibly arrange sufficient manpower to continuously conduct intelligence-led enforcement operations against illegal employment related activities. Law enforcement agencies will continue to monitor illegal employment activities in Hong Kong, conduct joint operations when necessary to vigorously combat relevant crimes, and regularly review and adjust manpower strategies.

The number of staff deployed in each operation of the ImmD and the Police involves details of operations which should not be disclosed.

(3) and (4) To alleviate the manpower shortage in various sectors, the Labour Department (LD) on September 4, 2023 launched the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) to enhance the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), including suspending the general exclusion of the 26 job categories as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from the SLS for two years.

If an employer has violated relevant labour/immigration laws, terms of the Standard Employment Contract or the ESLS requirements, administrative sanction in the form of withdrawal of approval granted to import workers and debarment from participation in the ESLS for up to two years will be imposed. According to the information provided by the LD, since the launch of ESLS on September 4, 2023 till end-October, there was no administrative sanction case involving employers having breached immigration laws.

The ImmD will continue to spare no effort in mounting territory-wide operations against illegal employment in full swing and conduct joint enforcement operations with the Police where necessary. The ImmD continues to step up enforcement actions against illegal workers, and conducted a monthly average of nearly 1 500 operations against illegal employment from January to

October 2023, representing around 10 per cent increase compared with the monthly average of such operations in 2021 and 2022.

The Police has all along been closely monitoring the trend of illegal workers related offences, and make assessment and appropriate deployment, including strengthening intelligence collection, conducting inspections on black spots where illegal workers work and gather (such as construction sites and restaurants, etc), as well as maintaining close liaison with relevant Government departments, exchanging intelligence timely and conducting joint enforcement operations, for example, the interdepartmental anti-crime and anti-illegal worker joint operations codenamed "Champion" and "Powerplayer" with the ImmD and the LD, in order to combat illegal workers and relevant illegal activities in Hong Kong.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the situation of illegal employment, and timely conduct necessary enforcement operations, with a view to safeguarding the stability of local employment market and protecting workers' rights.