

LCQ17: Publicity and education activities of National Ecology Day

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

It was decided at the third session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress that August 15 would be designated as the National Ecology Day, and the State would launch ecological civilisation publicity and education activities in various forms. Regarding efforts in support of the National Ecology Day, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will make full use of various media platforms (including television, newspapers and the Internet) to strengthen publicity for the National Ecology Day; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it will encourage and support various sectors to organize different forms of thematic activities, including the production of micro movies on environmental protection, street art exhibitions on ecology, eco-tourism using green travel, as well as experiential activities on ecology for parents and children, so as to promote community-wide participation in the National Ecology Day; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) whether it will organise learning activities with the theme of the National Ecology Day in primary and secondary schools (e.g. introducing relevant courses and holding seminars), so as to nurture environmental awareness among students; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) whether it will hold a high-level thematic forum on the day of the National Ecology Day and invite experts to give an in-depth interpretation of the concept of ecological civilisation as well as the contents of the relevant policies, laws and regulations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Our country has been emphasising that the nature provides the basic conditions for human survival and development, and that harmony between and co-existence of humanity and nature must be placed in a prominent position when planning development, thereby implementing the important concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". The Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) decided earlier this

year to designate August 15 as the National Ecology Day, so as to enhance the public's awareness towards pursuing ecological civilisation and environmental protection. In support of the establishment of the National Ecology Day, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) actively launched a series of publicity and education activities on ecological civilisation. Having consulted the Education Bureau (EDB), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), a consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Starry Lee is as follows:

The HKSAR Government has promoted the establishment of the National Ecology Day through different channels, including social media platforms, websites and mobile applications of the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB), the EPD, the AFCD and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as displayed relevant information and posters at their premises or facilities. The RTHK also produced a special interview programme on the National Ecology Day which was featured on "Hong Kong United", as well as broadcasted other television programmes relating to nature conservation, including the "Biodiversity in Hong Kong" series, "Biodiversity in Magazine" series, "Hong Kong Ecologists", and the upcoming natural ecology programme "Hong Kong's Greenery & Biodiversity".

To encourage our society to appreciate the beauty of natural environment and biodiversity of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Wetland Park was opened to the public free of charge on August 15 and October 1 this year, while the AFCD offered eco-guide services for the public at the popular scenic spots in country parks in August and Q4 this year. To enhance the public's awareness and consciousness of the need for action to protect our environment and ecology, the EPD offered special discount for gift redemption or extra points for recycling at GREEN@COMMUNITY's relevant facilities on the National Ecology Day, as well as on October 1 and 2 respectively. We also hosted the National Ecology Day Launching Ceremony on August 15, and invited government officials, representatives of NGOs, academics and professional groups to exchange views on the concepts behind the establishment of the National Ecology Day by the Standing Committee of the 14th NPC, and the HKSAR Government's work in collaboration with different sectors of our society to promote the pursuit of ecological civilisation.

We also encouraged different sectors of our society to organise activities related to the National Ecology Day. Eight NGOs, namely Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, Environmental Association, WWF-Hong Kong, Green Power, the Conservancy Association, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Hong Kong Wetlands Conservation Association, and Hong Kong Ocean Park provided a total of 20 free activities and offers on August 15, including free admission, free guided eco-tours, night safari, workshops, seminars and distribution of souvenirs, which received overwhelming response from the public. Various organisations in Hong Kong also continue to organise different activities related to nature conservation and environmental protection for public participation. Details are available on the Hong Kong Biodiversity Information Hub website of the AFCD (bih.gov.hk/en/education-programmes/programmes/index.html), and the website of the Countryside

Conservation Office under the EEB

(www.eeb.gov.hk/en/conservation/ccfs/project-events.html).

As regards education of the National Ecology Day in primary and secondary schools, the EDB has been attaching great importance to environmental education, and all along adopting a multipronged approach within and beyond the classroom to develop students' knowledge, skills, and awareness on environmental protection. The concepts and values related to environmental and sustainable development education have been incorporated into the relevant subjects' curriculum for primary and secondary schools. In end-2021, the EDB released the Values Education Curriculum Framework (Pilot Version), and set "adopting a lifestyle that actively practises environmental protection" and "showing concern for global environmental issues and the challenge to sustainable development" as learning goals for primary and secondary school students respectively, with a view to cultivating the students' care about the nature, as well as awareness and sense of responsibility on conserving resources, protecting ecological environment and the common welfare of mankind. The EDB will also encourage schools to introduce the National Ecology Day to students, and make good use of the relevant resources to educate students to develop a habit of environmental protection in daily life. On the other hand, the AFCD regularly organises school visit programmes for kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, and nurtures students' awareness on caring for nature and environmental protection through interpretation, exhibitions and interactive games. Moreover, the AFCD collaborated with the Education University of Hong Kong to produce a series of Curriculum-based Outdoor Learning Programmes in Country Parks learning and teaching packages, so as to facilitate students' learning in a natural setting. The AFCD will suitably incorporate the theme of the National Ecology Day into these activities, with a view to further enhancing students' and public's understanding on the concepts of ecological civilisation.

In future, the HKSAR Government will continue to co-operate with NGOs to promote the National Ecology Day and ecological civilisation through different forms of public education, publicity and ecological experience activities. In particular, further to holding the National Ecology Day Launching Ceremony this year, the HKSAR Government will consider how to further enrich the activities related to the National Ecology Day in the coming year, and one of the directions is to invite relevant experts to provide in-depth interpretations on the concept of ecological civilisation as well as relevant policies, laws and regulations. We also encourage all sectors of our society to organise activities related to the National Ecology Day in different forms, fostering public participation, and enhancing awareness towards ecological civilisation. Non-profit organisations such as schools, community groups, and environmental protection organisations may also apply for funding from the "Environmental Education and Community Action Projects" under the Environment and Conservation Fund to organise the relevant activities, so as to enhance public awareness and knowledge on environmental protection, encourage the public to take action to improve and protect Hong Kong's environment, and adopt a green and low-carbon lifestyle.

LCQ19: Installation of electronic payment systems in taxis

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

There are views pointing out that payment of taxi fares through electronic platforms is the development trend in various countries and is in line with Hong Kong's objectives of building a smart city and enhancing the experience of tourists. However, although there are a number of electronic payment platforms in Hong Kong, the progress of installing electronic payment systems in taxis has been slow over the years, and payment by cash is still the mainstream. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of taxis in Hong Kong which have been installed with electronic payment systems, with a tabulated breakdown by the electronic payment systems installed (e.g. Octopus, WeChat Pay HK and AlipayHK);

(2) whether it has plans to enact legislation to make it mandatory for all taxis to provide electronic payment services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that the major obstacles to the provision of electronic payment services in taxis are the installation costs and the service fees or handling fees of electronic payment platforms, whether the Government will consider subsidizing the taxi trade to install electronic payment systems or discussing with operators of electronic payment platforms the reduction or waiver of the relevant service fees or handling fees, with a view to achieving the objectives of building a smart city and enhancing the experience of tourists?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to Hon Michael Tien's question is as follows:

(1) We understand from the taxi trade that, to facilitate payment of fares by passengers, some taxi drivers currently accept electronic payment (e-payment) (including Octopus and AlipayHK) from passengers for settling fares. Besides, a number of taxi hailing mobile applications in the market accept payment of fares by passengers using various e-payment methods (e.g. credit card, WeChat Pay HK and AlipayHK). The Government does not maintain figures of taxis

installed with e-payment systems.

(2) and (3) The Government has been encouraging the taxi trade to introduce different e-payment methods to facilitate payment of fares by passengers. The Government has earlier reviewed the overall taxi operation and management, and proposed a series of measures to enhance personalised point-to-point transport services. These measures include introducing a taxi fleet regime, under which existing taxi owner may assemble taxis to form a fleet and apply to the Transport Department for a Taxi Fleet Licence to provide quality taxi services through professional fleet management under a regulated platform. Under the proposed taxi fleet regime, all fleet taxis must provide e-payment methods. This will set a leading and exemplary role in the trade, and will help further encourage more taxi drivers to introduce e-payment methods so that passengers will have more choices in fare payment.

Currently, there are 18 163 taxi licences in Hong Kong whose ownership are scattered. Among the about 9 000 licence holders, nearly 75 per cent of the licence holders only hold one taxi licence, and most of the taxi drivers are self-employed persons who hire taxis from taxi owners or companies to provide services. While some taxi drivers currently provide e-payment means for passengers to settle taxi fares, some drivers, particularly the older ones, still consider cash to be the most convenient and direct means of fare collection, and also more convenient for them to pay taxi rental and fuel charges. Taking into account the above, we consider it more appropriate to continue to actively encourage the taxi trade to introduce e-payment methods through different ways at this stage.

As regards the costs and service or handling fees for installing e-payment systems, we understand that some e-payment platforms have now waived the relevant fees for taxi drivers. We will continue to communicate with the operators of different e-payment systems with a view to promoting the adoption of e-payment methods among the taxi trade, so as to facilitate payment of fares by passengers.

LCQ18: Provision of additional electric vehicle chargers on campus

Following is a question by Prof the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

There are views that with the popularisation of electric vehicles (EVs), the switch to EVs for school buses and teachers' cars will become a trend,

and the demand for EV chargers on campus is bound to grow day by day. In addition, the education sector has attached more and more importance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and providing additional EV chargers on campus can achieve the effect of cultivating correct SDG values among the next generation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures in place to encourage the education sector to switch to using more EVs, for instance, whether there are policies and measures to encourage the switch to EVs for school buses and the provision of additional EV chargers on campus; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will consider formulating relevant policies;

(2) of the current number of EV chargers on campus, with a breakdown by school type (i.e. university, post-secondary college, secondary school and primary school), charging speed (i.e. standard, medium and quick) and District Council district;

(3) of the procedures and formalities for providing EV chargers on campus; whether there is a dedicated government department to centrally handle the relevant matters; if not, whether it will consider designating a government department to take charge of the relevant matters;

(4) as it is learnt that the Lotteries Fund has donated electric school buses to special schools, but their applications for providing EV charging piles have not been approved, of the policies and measures put in place by the authorities to assist those schools to which electric school buses have been donated in installing EV chargers; and

(5) given that the Government has launched the EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme to subsidise the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure in private housing courts, whether the Government will launch a similar subsidy scheme to subsidise the installation of EV chargers in schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To work towards the goal of achieving carbon neutrality before 2050 in Hong Kong, developing green transport is of paramount importance. The Government has implemented various measures in recent years to encourage citizens to switch to electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce air pollution and carbon emission. In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Prof the Hon William Wong is as follows:

(1) and (5) The Government has been actively promoting the use of new energy transport tools to the transport trade and charitable/non-profit making organisations, and subsidising the trials of various new energy transport technologies through the \$1.1 billion New Energy Transport Fund (NET Fund). Schools, education institutions or eligible non-franchised bus operators which have their own school buses are welcome to apply for the NET Fund to

trial electric buses (e-buses) or electric light buses (e-LBs) as school buses. The subsidy level is the price difference between an EV and its conventional vehicle, or half of the price of an EV whichever is higher. In addition, the NET Fund also subsidises 75 per cent of the cost of the charging facility (including the charger and its installation). To encourage the switch of school buses to electric ones, the Government has organised briefings and workshops for schools, education institutions and school bus operators to share the benefits of using new energy transport and encourage the sector to apply for the NET Fund to trial electric school buses. Since 2011, the NET Fund has approved over 300 trials, including more than 40 e-buses and e-LBs, of which at least four were used as school buses.

The Government launched the EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme (EHSS) in October 2020. The Scheme aims to facilitate parking space owners of existing private residential buildings and housing estates with numerous owners and dispersed ownership to participate in the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure for their car parks by resolving their co-ordination and technical difficulties encountered, making it easier for them to install the required chargers in future for the charging of their EVs. The target recipient of the EHSS does not cover the parking spaces at schools. The application period of the EHSS is going to end soon. The Government has no plan to expand the coverage of the EHSS to include parking spaces at schools and other facilities at this stage.

In addition, the Government updated the Joint Circular on Green Government Buildings in March 2023. The new requirement stipulates that all parking spaces for private cars, motorcycles and light goods vehicles (whether indoor or outdoor) within the boundaries of newly built government buildings with tender documents issued on or after April 1, 2023, must be fully equipped with EV medium chargers.

(2) to (4) The Government's standing policy on electric private car is that owners should primarily charge their private cars at home, work place or places they travel to regularly to meet the general daily operational needs. It is noted that some car parks of post-secondary institutions have been installed with charging facilities.

As for primary and secondary schools, they usually engage school bus operators to provide service for their students and some of the school buses serving students of several schools at the same time might not be parked at schools. Some schools premises are provided with a few parking spaces and the schools, based on actual operational needs and having fully consulted key stakeholders and obtained approval from the School Management Committee/ Incorporated Management Committee, may install EV charging facilities within school premises in compliance with relevant legislation and regulations. When installing EV charging facilities, schools are required to strictly observe relevant legislation and regulations, and guidelines issued by relevant government departments from time to time to ensure the facilities are in compliance with the safety standards and the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations (e.g. the facilities must be installed at designated parking spaces within the registered school premises, electrical

wiring works must be carried out by a registered electrical contractor and registered electrical workers of the appropriate grade, and the electrical installation must be inspected and tested before it is energised). Furthermore, schools should draw up school-based mechanism and guidelines to clearly set out the arrangements on the usage, expenditure, repair and maintenance of the EV charging facilities.

The Education Bureau (EDB) has not received any special schools' application for installation of EV charging facilities for donated EV school buses. Considering the fact that charging facilities are relatively new equipment to schools, the EDB is consulting relevant government departments and examining the formulation of guidelines applicable to schools so that schools can know more clearly about the legislation and regulations related to the installation of EV charging facilities and other factors requiring attention. The Government does not maintain information on the number of EV chargers installed at schools.

Hong Kong Customs steps up enforcement to combat illicit cigarette telephone-ordering activities and seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \$10 million (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs mounted a territory-wide enforcement operation codenamed "Thunder" in the past three weeks to combat illicit cigarette telephone-ordering activities in public rental housing (PRH). A total of about 2.8 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$10 million and a duty potential of about \$7 million were seized.

During the operation, Customs officers detected 44 illicit cigarette cases in different districts, including Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Sau Mau Ping, Kowloon Bay, Sham Shui Po, Yau Tong, Kowloon City, Tai Kok Tsui, Lam Tin, Choi Hung, To Kwa Wan, Tseung Kwan O, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai, Yuen Long, Sheung Shui, Ma On Shan, Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi and Tung Chung, resulting in the above-mentioned seizures of suspected illicit cigarettes. In those cases, Customs officers raided three suspected illicit cigarette storage centres, detained two vehicles suspected to be used for illicit cigarette distribution, and seized a batch of illicit cigarette leaflets.

In the above-mentioned cases, Customs arrested 39 men and six women, aged between 16 and 75. They include both illicit cigarette sellers and buyers. All the cases have been duly followed up.

Customs will continue to step up enforcement to vigorously combat illicit cigarette activities through risk assessment, intelligence analysis and interception at source. If PRH units are found to be involved in illicit cigarette activities, Customs will notify the Housing Department for follow-up action after the conclusion of court proceedings.

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Customs reminds young people, especially students, to never become involved in illicit cigarette activities or distribute illicit cigarette flyers, to avoid creating a criminal record that affects their future.

Customs stresses that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

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



[LCQ20: Enhancing the harbourfront environment](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

It is learnt that in recent years, the Government has been actively promoting harbourfront enhancement work and committed to providing members of the public with harbourfront sites that are diversified, vibrant and

accessible. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Development Bureau has earlier on proposed making use of a small amount of land along the boundary of the New Yaumatei Public Cargo Working Area (Working Area) to build a comfortable, convenient, safe and barrier-free pedestrian walkway, of the latest progress and the details of the proposal;

(2) apart from enhancing pedestrian walkway facilities, whether the authorities will consider enhancing the facilities in other harbourfront areas nearby without affecting the operation of the Working Area, such as adding pedestrian walkways and sightseeing bridges as well as beautifying breakwaters, so as to develop harbourfront areas in Yau Tsim Mong into new landmarks, and improving the accessibility of such harbourfront areas; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as some members of the local community have relayed that the ancillary facilities of the Cheung Sha Wan Promenade are inadequate (such as a lack of water dispensers, seats and toilets), whether the authorities will consider providing more such facilities to bring a better harbourfront experience to members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the authorities will consider further enhancing the facilities of the Cheung Sha Wan Promenade, including adding installation art "check-in" spots, or beautifying the harbourfront area with a theme, in order to increase the attractiveness of the promenade; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Following the development along the waterfront areas of Kowloon West, the Government strives to provide more diversified harbourfront facilities for public enjoyment. After consulting the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), the Drainage Services Department (DSD) and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the reply to the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) At present, the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) and the harbourfront of Tai Kok Tsui are mainly separated by the New Yau Ma Tei Public Cargo Working Area (NYPCWA). In order to improve the accessibility between the harbourfront of that area and to provide a more pleasant walking environment without affecting the operation of the NYPCWA, after discussions with departments including the CEDD, the Marine Department (MD), etc, and the NYPCWA operators, the Development Bureau (DEVB) has proposed the construction of a pedestrian walkway of about 950 metres in length along the inland boundary of the NYPCWA. The walkway will connect the existing public footpath at the entrance of the NYPCWA at Hoi Fai Road to the north, and the existing public footpath near the bus-bus-interchange at Western Harbour Crossing to the south, leading to the entrance of the WKCD. While the walkway will mainly

occupy government land outside the NYPCWA, it will require a limited inland area of the NYPCWA in order to widen certain sections of the walkway to a more reasonable width. The DEVB and the CEDD briefed the Harbourfront Commission on the above proposal in April this year, and consulted the Public Cargo Working Area Committee and the Yau Tsim Mong District Council in May; and received support from these bodies.

The CEDD will prepare for gazettal for the construction of the walkway; and the MD will co-ordinate with the industry for slightly adjusting the boundary of the NYPCWA. The Government expects that the construction works will commence within 2024, and targets to open the concerned pedestrian walkway to the public in 2026.

Apart from the aforementioned construction of the walkway, other construction works for enhancing the harbourfront of the area include:

- to the east of Hoi Fai Road Promenade, the DSD will, along with the construction of its project, develop a public open space under the theme of "fun city" so as to provide various types of play equipment for children. This public open space is expected to be opened within this year;
- to the west of Hoi Fai Road Promenade, the Hoi Fai Road open space under the LCSD's purview is currently under construction and is expected to be opened in 2024.

(3) and (4) The Cheung Sha Wan Promenade, which was raised in the question, was fully opened in July this year under the management of the LCSD. With about 1.04 hectares, it consists of a waterfront promenade and public open space including landscaped areas and lawns, and also serves as an Inclusive Park for Pets. The venue provides a water dispenser, multiple sets of arbours and seating decks, making it a pleasant and relaxing leisure space for public enjoyment. Although toilet facilities cannot be provided at the venue because of space constraints, there are toilet facilities nearby (e.g. at Hoi Ying Estate) for use by the public.

The LCSD will carry out beautification of the Cheung Sha Wan Promenade, including placing decorations and planting special plants, and the process is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. Besides, the LCSD will also consider providing decorations and art installations at the venue during festive periods to attract more visitors. The LCSD will continue to take into account public opinions. Where feasible in the actual environment, appropriate additional facilities will be provided with a view to providing a better harbourfront experience to the public.

On the other hand, the harbourfront promenade of the hotel development project in Lai Ying Street will be opened in 2024. It is located adjacent to the Cheung Sha Wan Promenade and is constructed by a private developer. The feature of this development project includes the conversion of a disused pier into a multi-purpose open space, forming part of the harbourfront promenade.

Facilities such as tables and chairs, a viewing deck and specially designed shading shelters will be provided. Besides, there will be two sets of landing steps to not only increase the vibrancy of the harbourfront, but also make it easier for the public to get closer to water. Lawns, benches, retail shops, food and beverage facilities, etc, will be provided under the development project to enhance visitors' harbourfront experience.