

Advisory Committee on Water Supplies concludes visit to Dongjiang Water Supply System (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Water Supplies:

A delegation of the Advisory Committee on Water Supplies that departed for Guangdong Province to visit the Dongjiang (DJ) Water Supply System and learn about the latest situation of matters in relation to DJ water supplied to Hong Kong concluded its fruitful two-day visit today (November 27).

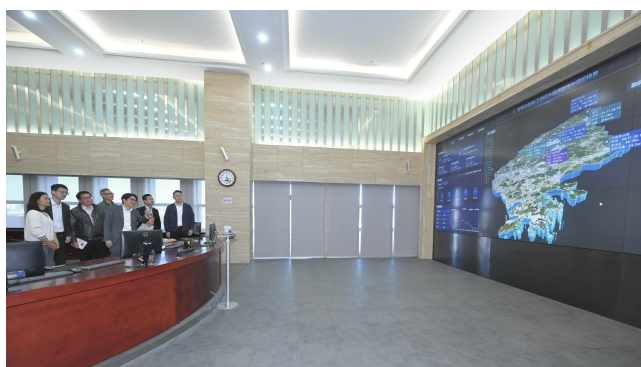
During the two-day visit, members of the Committee visited the main operation facilities of the DJ Water Supply System, including a section of DJ along the Greenway and the DJ River Basin Water Quantity and Quality Monitoring and Control Centre in Huizhou, the intake point of DJ water supplied to Hong Kong at the Taiyuan Pumping Station in Dongguan, as well as the Shawan River, the Bio-nitrification Plant and the Environmental Water Quality Monitoring Centre next to the Shenzhen Reservoir. Members were briefed by the officers concerned about the operation of these facilities and inspected the quality of DJ water supplied to Hong Kong.

The Committee also visited the operating Integrated Improvement Works for the Water Environment of Shawan River, which mainly included laying of sewers for sewage interception and expansion of the sewage treatment plant. The works have improved the water environment of the Shawan River and its surrounding area, and have greatly reduced pollutants from entering the Shenzhen Reservoir, thereby further safeguarding the quality of DJ water supplied to Hong Kong. The Committee also learned that the Pearl River Delta Water Resources Allocation project was commissioned in January this year. This project diverts water from the Xijiang River to the eastern part of the Pearl River Delta, providing new water sources for Nansha of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Dongguan to relieve their demand for Dongjiang water, and serving as an emergency backup source of water for Hong Kong. This enhances the water security of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as well as optimises the water resources allocation capabilities of the area.

The two-day visit, covering several major operation facilities of the DJ Water Supply System, concluded with fruitful results. It deepened members' understanding of the situation of the DJ water supplied to Hong Kong, and allowed members to observe the good quality of the DJ water at a close distance. Members deeply appreciated the country's determined efforts over the past six decades in safeguarding the quality and quantity of DJ water supplied to Hong Kong, supporting the sustained social and economic development of Hong Kong. Noting that next year marks the 60th anniversary of Dongjiang water supply to Hong Kong, members were pleased to know that the Water Supplies Department (WSD) has launched a series of celebration events

in phases from September this year to commemorate this remarkable milestone and help the public recognise the country's continuous support and care rendered to Hong Kong. The Committee is fully supportive of the WSD in taking forward the related events.

The terms of reference of the Committee are to advise the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region through the Director of Water Supplies on matters relating to water supplies, including water resources, network management, regulation and control of inside service, water conservation and other operational matters. It comprises members from the academics, green advocates, professionals, trades and officials from related government departments and the bureau.



FDC Chairman welcomes Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Development that promotes development of Hong Kong's arts, culture and creative industries

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Film Development Council:

The Chairman of the Hong Kong Film Development Council (FDC), Dr Wilfred Wong, welcomed the Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Development issued yesterday (November 26), which comprehensively supports the development of Hong Kong's arts, culture and creative industries and sets a clear direction for Hong Kong's cultural policy in the future.

Dr Wong said, "The four strategic directions of the Blueprint are closely related to the development of the film industry. Each strategic direction has clear measures for film development, especially in promoting profound traditional Chinese culture and promoting international cultural exchanges. As an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, Hong Kong can make good use of films to display unique connotations and promote exchanges between different cultures." The Hong Kong-Europe-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme under the Film Development Fund (FDF) helps potential Hong Kong filmmakers broaden their cultural horizons and bring a new look to Hong Kong films. In addition, he also mentioned that through the funding support from the FDF, the film industry could produce films that creatively promote profound traditional Chinese culture and showcase its rich traditions to audiences.

Dr Wong said that the establishment of an international platform and enhancing the ecosystem for the arts, culture and creative industries mentioned in the Blueprint will provide more opportunities for Hong Kong filmmakers and encourage them to explore and realise more creative and diversified works. He said, "With the support and funding from the Government, we will be able to promote the development of the film industry and make Hong Kong films more influential on the international stage."

Last but not least, Dr Wong emphasised that the FDC will continue to support the creation of local films and encourage the industry to co-operate with international teams to increase the market savvy of Hong Kong films.

LCQ22: Improving children's healthcare services

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (November 27):

Question:

Regarding improving children's healthcare services, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that the authorities plan to transfer some of the services previously provided by the Department of Health (DH) to the Hospital Authority or the Primary Healthcare Commission, whereas DH is dedicated to properly fulfilling its roles in disease prevention, health promotion, drug regulation, etc., of the details concerning the repositioning of the three healthcare departments/organisations and the impact on children's healthcare services after the repositioning;

(2) as it is learnt that the seven Child Assessment Centres (CACs) under DH will be restructured in the light of the 2024 Policy Address's proposal to deepen reform of the healthcare system, of the relevant details (including which government department or organisation will be responsible for the operation of such CACs upon their restructuring); whether it has assessed if the waiting time for child assessment can be effectively shortened after the restructuring of such CACs;

(3) as the 2024 Policy Address proposes to launch the Primary Dental Co-Care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents to encourage the prevention of dental diseases and to provide oral check-ups and preventive dental services for pre-school children, of the details of the Scheme and the services (including the contents of the Scheme/services, co-ordination bodies, eligibility criteria, and target beneficiaries);

(4) as the 2024 Policy Address proposes to support Hong Kong Children's Hospital in further developing more advanced healthcare services, of the relevant details;

(5) as the 2024 Policy Address proposes to revamp maternal and child health and family-planning services to promote healthy fertility, of the relevant detailed plans; whether it has considered gradually diverting the demand of expectant mothers and newborn babies for healthcare services from Maternal and Child Health Centres to private healthcare facilities, and then redeploying resources to set up dedicated "Children's Clinics" in order to provide more convenient paediatric services;

(6) whether it has studied providing full subsidies for infants and young

children eligible for the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme to receive vaccinations at private healthcare facilities, thus allowing flexible vaccination arrangements to be made while ensuring, by means of the eHealth System, that children receive all necessary vaccinations, thereby maintaining the high vaccination coverage rate of Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether it has considered, by drawing reference from the model of the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme, setting up a "Children's Healthcare Co-Care Scheme" to monitor the health and growth of children through medical public-private partnership programmes for early detection and treatment of health problems, thereby improving the health of children in general; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to children's health, and is committed to providing children with quality medical and health services. The 28 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) under the Department of Health (DH) are set up in all 18 districts in Hong Kong, providing health promotion and disease prevention services for newborn babies and children up to five years old, including free vaccination services and continuous monitoring of children's growth and development. In addition, the 13 Student Health Service Centres of the DH have been providing a range of health services to all students and adolescents in Hong Kong to cater for their needs at different stages of development, including screenings for health problems related to growth, vision, hearing and scoliosis; physical examinations; health behaviours and psychosocial health. If students are found to have health problems, they will be referred to the Special Assessment Centres of the Student Health Service, specialist clinics under the Hospital Authority (HA) or other organisations as appropriate for further assessment and treatment. As for paediatric services, the HA operates its paediatric services under a hub-and-spoke model. The Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) serves as a tertiary referral centre for severe, complex and uncommon paediatric cases requiring multi-disciplinary management. As for the paediatric departments in public hospitals in different regions, they are mainly responsible for secondary, emergency and community care services. Under this hub-and-spoke model, HKCH and regional hospitals work together as a co-ordinated and coherent paediatric service network. The paediatrics departments under the HA also provide paediatric out-patient, in-patient services, acute care as well as rehabilitation services. In addition, the paediatrics, paediatric surgery and child psychiatric service departments provide clinical services. Meanwhile, there are multi-disciplinary teams in the HA providing children with appropriate supporting services.

In consultation with the DH, the HA and the Primary Healthcare Commission (PHC Commission), the consolidated reply to the relevant questions, which are mainly on "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address", as raised by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu is as follows:

(1) and (2) It is announced in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" that the Health Bureau (HHB) will conduct a comprehensive review on the positioning and objectives of the healthcare system, reform the functions and division of work among the HA, the DH and the PHC Commission, strengthen health promotion and disease prevention in primary healthcare, and improve public healthcare services. In parallel, the HHB will push forward reform in private healthcare services in terms of their quality, cost-effectiveness and price transparency, providing the public with high-quality, cost-effective and affordable healthcare service options.

The PHC Commission has been actively expanding its work since its official establishment in July this year to strengthen the primary healthcare service network in the community. The DH will gradually transfer its specialist and primary clinical services to the HA and the PHC Commission respectively, so as to concentrate its resources on improving public health, disease prevention and health education, as well as its functions in respect of medical professions, regulation of healthcare organisations and approval for drugs and medical devices.

According to the abovementioned direction of consolidation, the Government is planning to transfer the Child Assessment Service of the DH to the HA for management, with a view to consolidating public paediatrics services to facilitate collaboration among various specialties and streamline service delivery. This will ensure that children suspected of having developmental or behavioural problems can receive the necessary integrated and multi-disciplinary assessment, treatment and rehabilitation services in a timely manner, while the referral arrangements and services for patients can be optimised. Relevant details will be announced at an appropriate juncture.

(3) The Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care (Working Group) was established by the HHB in 2022 and released its interim report at the end of 2023. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Working Group, the Government will launch the Primary Dental Co-Care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents (Pilot Scheme) and introduce preventive dental care service for pre-school children.

The Pilot Scheme will be launched in 2025 to interface with the School Dental Care Service. The Scheme will provide a partial subsidy for adolescents aged 13 to 17 for private dental check-up services, and foster the establishment of long-term partnership between adolescents and dentists in the private sector or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), so as to promote their life-long habit of regular oral check-ups to prevent oral diseases. The oral check-up items to be provided under Government subsidies should include oral health risk assessments, scaling, personalised oral hygiene instructions and fluoride applications based on the assessed risk level.

Moreover, since June 2023, the DH has piloted the Bright Smiles Baby Programme 2023-24 – Pilot Outreaching Oral Health Care and Promotion Programme for Prekindergarten Children for children aged from birth to three who attend in Child Care Centres (CCCs). It provides children with free oral

check-ups for assessing condition of tooth decay and application of topical fluoride for preventing tooth decay depending on the child's age and need. The DH will, by making use of the existing primary healthcare system (MCHCs, CCCs and kindergartens), gradually expand the programme in phases to cover children aged from birth to three using MCHC services, as well as those aged from three to six attending kindergartens so as to provide oral disease prevention-oriented primary oral health care services to the children and educational promotion to the parents.

Details of the above two programmes will be announced at an appropriate juncture.

(4) It was announced in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" that HKCH will fully integrate the paediatric services of various clusters and develop more advanced healthcare services to make the best use of HKCH. In this connection, the HA is exploring the expansion of paediatric services at HKCH, including increasing the scope of newborn screening; collaborating with foetal medicine teams to perform magnetic resonance imaging of the brain and the central nervous system of fetuses and newborns; developing advanced and complex neurosurgical procedures; establishing an evidence-based therapeutic centre targeted for patients with rare neurological diseases, including introducing advanced gene therapy and maintaining case directories of neuromuscular disorders. In addition, the HA is exploring more service models including private services with a view to meeting public expectation, while providing support to other healthcare organisations in the region on the management of complex cases that they find difficult to handle.

The HA and the Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI) have now established a partnering centre at HKCH to conduct whole genome sequencing for suitable patients and family members with their informed consent. By analysing the sequencing results, especially on rare, hereditary and undiagnosed diseases, clinicians can more easily make precise diagnosis to provide personalised and appropriate treatment and preventive options. Both parties will enhance collaboration through formulating a directory for inherited and rare diseases by using the HKGI's genomic data, thereby facilitating early diagnosis and treatment by clinical teams while supporting relevant research and clinical trials to promote precision medicine.

Details of the above measures will be announced at an appropriate juncture.

(5) and (7) It is announced in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" that the DH will revamp maternal and child health and family planning services to strengthen pre-pregnancy counselling and parental education and promote healthy fertility. The DH will provide the new pre-pregnancy health services to reproductive age group women at the MCHCs in phases, support women in preparing for pregnancy through early health assessments, arrangement of blood tests and other investigations, and provide nutritional dietary and lifestyle health advice with a view to aligning with the Government's policy of encouraging and promoting healthy fertility as well as protecting and advancing maternal and child health. In addition, the DH will

review and adjust the scope of the subsidised family planning service currently provided by the NGOs, so as to dovetail with the Government's policy of encouraging and promoting healthy fertility.

The Government will gradually re-position the general out-patient clinics and actively plan to introduce prevention-oriented concepts and programmes into the treatment-oriented public primary healthcare system, with a view to providing comprehensive primary healthcare services for the underprivileged, including children and adolescents from low-income families.

The current public healthcare system (including services provided by the DH and the HA) already caters for children's health needs at different stages. Considering that the Government has already devoted a significant amount of resources to the promotion of children's health, the further establishment of the "Children's Healthcare Co-Care Scheme" may render the whole funding model too fragmented and complicated. The Government understands that people of different age groups have needs for primary healthcare. However, compared with the existing public healthcare services of various types for children, the "Children's Healthcare Co-Care Scheme" does not provide targeted support to the health and developmental needs of children, and hence its effectiveness is relatively limited. It may not be able to best meet the needs of the community in terms of the allocation of public and healthcare resources. Therefore, the Government has no plan to set up a "Children's Healthcare Co-Care Scheme" at present.

The Government will take into account a number of factors when planning for public healthcare services, including the population forecast parameters of each district in Hong Kong, the development plans of the Government, the utilisation patterns of healthcare services as well as the corresponding healthcare needs, technological development and manpower supply. The Government will continue to closely monitor the above factors and adjust the public healthcare services for children in a timely manner.

(6) The Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme (HKCIP) of the DH provides free vaccination services to eligible children for the prevention of 11 types of infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, hepatitis B, poliomyelitis, tetanus, pertussis, measles, diphtheria, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and pneumococcal disease. Over 90 per cent of locally born babies visit MCHCs for services including immunisation every year. Data also shows that the overall coverage rate for relevant vaccines among locally born pre-school children has all along been maintained at a very high level of above 98 per cent. In the long run, the Government will progressively consolidate certain existing primary healthcare services under the DH (including maternal and child health service and student health service) in the primary healthcare system in order to enhance children's healthcare services in Hong Kong and create a better environment for receiving healthcare services and healthy growth. In respect of vaccination, the Government will ensure the very high coverage rate be maintained and the provision of convenient services.

Insofar as electronic health record is concerned, the Government will continue to encourage and facilitate parents to register their children with

eHealth through various measures, enabling them to build a lifelong personal electronic health record from an early age and ensure that they receive continuous care as they grow up. Currently, under the HKCIP, the record of all vaccines administered to children at the MCHCs (since 2007) and at primary schools across Hong Kong (since 2013) are deposited in the eHealth system. The Government is exploring to impose a mandatory requirement for students participating in the HKCIP in the future to register with eHealth, with a view to facilitating the establishment of more comprehensive vaccination records and ensuring that infants and children receive all immunisation recommended by the DH at different stages of development.

LCQ4: Relaxing restrictions on using outdoor or public spaces

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (November 27):

Question:

Some organisations and business operators have pointed out that at present, they encounter many restrictions when applying for using outdoor or public spaces. On the contrary, there are many successful cases of making good use of outdoor spaces to attract customers in Mainland shopping malls which can serve as valuable reference. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will plan to relax the restrictions on the land use, such as allowing business operators to set up small stalls or leisure benches outside their shops or in outdoor spaces to create a vibrant atmosphere, thereby attracting more people to stay for consumption; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as there are views that at present, many activities require the application for a Temporary Places of Public Entertainment Licence which must be made 42 days prior to the commencement of the activity, and the procedures are lengthy, whether the Government will consider streamlining the application process and improving the co-ordination mechanism among various departments, as well as introducing new measures, such as allowing an application in respect of the same venue to remain valid for similar activities for three months up to one year, so as to motivate businessmen to organise more activities to create business opportunities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as the Government has introduced in recent years the management mode of

Public Open Space in Private Development under which private organisations are required to construct and manage waterfront promenades for public use on their private harbourfront lots, whether the Government will allow greater flexibility in the consumption activities taking place on such lots to make management more flexible for the private organisations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government agrees with the Hon Mr Cheng's suggestion that utilising outdoor or public spaces will help creating an amiable atmosphere, attract people, promote spending and meet the Government's objective to promote economic development. Whether it is the space at storefront, outdoor area of other places, or public open space within private developments, as long as the proposed commercial or other activities will not cause issues relating to passage, safety or hygiene, and will not obstruct the enjoyment of the public space by other users, relevant government departments will seek to facilitate as much as possible. We will also consider further streamlining the approval procedures, taking into account suggestions from the trade and Members.

Regarding various parts of the question, having consulted the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau, the Lands Department (LandsD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Development Bureau (DEVB)'s reply is as follows –

(1) We understand that some lot owners wish to utilise space at storefront, outdoor or other places for activities, or to place furniture or installations, so as to enhance dining and shopping experience and attract visitors. If such uses are not allowed under the lease conditions or involve the use of unleased Government land, lot owners have to apply for relevant approvals for the land use from the LandsD.

To simplify approval procedures, the LandsD will adopt a streamlined approach when handling straightforward cases, such as activities of a non-commercial nature (including activities hosted by non-government organisations or community activities relating to festive celebrations). The LandsD has recently adopted such streamlined procedures to approve two non-commercial activities at the harbourfront in Cheung Sha Wan since September this year. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, one event arranged for photo spots installations and booths set up, while the other placed installations of pandas to showcase the element of our intangible cultural heritage. For both, the applicant provided the main activities and nature of the event via a simple email, and the LandsD gave a no-objection within a short time (around 10 days).

To facilitate shopping malls in holding events at public spaces specified under lease within the mall, the DEVB and the LandsD are exploring a pilot scheme applicable to such situation that puts in place a simplified procedure for waiver approval and Government internal consultation, and

allows similar activities to be held more than once within a specified period through a single waiver application, obviating the need for applicants to make applications each and every time.

(2) The aforementioned was about the application relating to land use. Having regard to the type and nature of the activity, activity organisers shall also apply for a licence separately in accordance with the relevant legislation. For example, if an activity involves holding a concert or playing of movies in an area that may accommodate members of the public, an application for a Temporary Places of Public Entertainment Licence (TPPEL) from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) under the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance (Cap. 172) and its subsidiary legislation will be required. According to the current requirements, if such application does not involve the erection of temporary structure, the application shall generally be submitted 18 days before the activity commences, and the licence can be valid for up to a year; if the proposed activity requires the erection of temporary structure, the application shall be submitted 42 days before the activity commences, and the licence will be valid for no longer than a month. To simplify the application procedures, the FEHD offers one-stop services for the handling of TPPEL applications. The FEHD will, having regard to the nature and venue of the activity, pass the information to the relevant departments for processing in parallel so as to shorten the processing time.

Moreover, to enhance efficiency and make it more convenient for the trade, the FEHD has put in place a facilitation arrangement for the renewal of TPPEL. Under the arrangement, if an event lasts for a period not exceeding three months, and the venue layout, temporary structure and other details involved all remain unchanged throughout the event, the applicant is no longer required to submit a Fire Services Certificate and a certification by an authorised person/registered structural engineer upon the monthly renewal of the licence. Such arrangement provides more convenience for the licence applicants. The Government will continue to monitor and review the operation of the TPPEL regime.

(3) The DEVB promulgated in 2011 a set of guidelines relating to public open space in private developments, which provides relevant design and management arrangements, and specifically raised that commercial or non-commercial activities should be reasonably and flexibly allowed in public open space of private developments. To implement this policy, the streamlined arrangements mentioned in part (1) of the reply will also be applicable to non-commercial activities held in the public open space of private developments. For lot owners who wish to hold commercial activities, if the activity is acceptable from considerations like passage, safety and hygiene, etc; will not obstruct the enjoyment of public space by other users; and that the area occupied by the commercial activity within the public space is reasonable, we will positively consider the application received. The DEVB will work with the LandsD to explore ways to streamline applications for activities of a commercial nature, such as suitably relaxing the limit of area to be occupied and putting forward standard rates for waiver applications.

Two giant pandas gifted by Central Government to meet and greet public on December 8

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) and Ocean Park will hold on December 7 a greeting ceremony for the two giant pandas gifted by the Central Government to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The two giant pandas will meet and greet the public on the following day (December 8) at Hong Kong Jockey Club Sichuan Treasures in Ocean Park.

Since the arrival of the two giant pandas on September 26, a craze for giant pandas has sparked across the city, and the public is eagerly looking forward to meeting them. Having completed quarantine on October 25, the two pandas are currently acclimatising to their new living environment and are in good condition. Ocean Park is co-ordinating small-scale visits to the two pandas for different parties, including sponsors and sponsoring organisations, other partnering organisations, representatives from the education sector, students, and underprivileged families. These visits will also help the giant pandas adjust to the presence of visitors in their new home.

The Giant Panda Greeting Ceremony will be held on the afternoon of December 7 at Ocean Park. The results of the Giant Panda Naming Competition and the Giant Panda Painting Competition organised by the CSTB and co-organised by Ocean Park earlier on will be announced during the ceremony.

To create a joyful atmosphere for welcoming the giant pandas, the CSTB, jointly with the Hong Kong Tourism Board and Ocean Park, collaborates with various sectors to organise a series of promotional activities themed "Come and Enjoy a Pandastic Hong Kong". The new Hong Kong giant panda family will serve as Hong Kong's tourism ambassadors in promoting local tourism experiences in Hong Kong, attracting visitors from all over the world to Hong Kong and driving tourism development. The Government will continue to seize the opportunity brought by the arrival of the giant pandas and connect different sectors of society to actively plan and launch more promotional activities related to the giant pandas, thereby generating business opportunities for different sectors and boosting the economy.