

# Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on May 21 to noon today (May 22), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 240 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

([www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme\\_rafs/programme\\_rafs\\_fc\\_01\\_30\\_Nuclear\\_Event\\_and\\_Food\\_Safety.html](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html)).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website ([www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological\\_testing/Radiological\\_Test.html](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html)).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website ([www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 53 153 samples of food imported from Japan (including 34 415 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 13 486 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## LCQ21: Costs of various projects of Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

It is learnt that the Northern Metropolis is the Government's key planning project, and a number of construction projects relating to the Northern Metropolis will commence successively this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the expenditures of various development projects of the Northern Metropolis (including studies, land resumption, land formation and construction works) (set out in a table); and

(2) whether it will formulate measures to streamline the administration workflows and reduce market risks, so as to bring down the costs of developing the Northern Metropolis and increase the market's incentive to submit tenders, thereby accelerating the development of the Northern Metropolis; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Government is taking forward the development of the Northern Metropolis in full steam, which includes various New Development Areas (NDAs) at different planning and development stages.

In consultation with the relevant government departments, the reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lam is as follows:

(1) The expenditure or estimates known so far for studies, land resumption and works involved in NDAs in the Northern Metropolis are listed at Annex. Since some projects are still under different stages of study, the land uses, engineering schemes, detailed design and implementation phasing would be subject to study. We would only be able to provide more accurate estimates on the expenditure of those projects when the relevant studies/design proceed to a more mature stage. Besides, the Government's expenditure and relevant estimates on land resumption and works for NDAs will be affected by different land development or disposal arrangements, such as whether in-situ land exchange applications within NDAs are successful, or whether the Government would invite market enterprises to undertake large-scale land development according to requirements set out by the Government.

(2) It has always been an objective of the current-term Government to enhance speed in development. Laws were amended in 2023 to streamline the development-related statutory procedures, enabling us to shorten the lead time required before commencing works in NDAs. After the legislative amendment, the development time required from commencement of studies to delivery of the first parcels of formed land for NDAs could be reduced from around 13 years in the past to about seven years.

For administrative procedures, we have implemented a number of streamlining measures in the past, among such which are more relevant to the development of the Northern Metropolis include the simplification and standardisation of the title-checking procedure, extension of the arrangement for standardisation of land premium for agricultural land outside NDAs, etc. Besides, dedicated units have been set up under the Lands Department and the Buildings Department to handle large-scale residential developments more speedily. The Development Projects Facilitation Office under the Development Bureau (DEVB) will co-ordinate with relevant departments and provide one-stop facilitation services for development projects. The streamlining of administrative procedures is an on-going task. We will continue exploring further scope in streamlining the development process and reducing the lead time required. We plan to brief the Panel on Development in around mid-2024 on our efforts on this front.

The Government will also expedite the development of the Northern Metropolis by actively leveraging market forces and adopting diverse development modes. Amongst others, under the Enhanced Conventional New Town Approach, the Government allows landowners to participate in the development of NDAs by in-situ land exchange. Following the enhanced in-situ land exchange arrangement announced by the Government in end 2023 which includes facilitation to landowners owning 90 per cent or above of private land within a development site to carry out consolidated development, we concluded the first land exchange agreement under the enhanced arrangement last month, which is also the third successful land exchange case in NDAs of the Northern Metropolis. In fact, the first private housing development in the Northern Metropolis implemented by in-situ land exchange has already been completed with population intake commenced in 2022, earlier than the population intake of the first public housing development in 2026. The option to adopt standard rates in premium assessment as mentioned above has already been introduced in NDAs with a view to shortening the time required for premium assessment. In addition, we will explore introducing the large-scale land development approach whereby sizable land parcels (including parcels with value for commercial development and investment returns, as well as community facilities and other infrastructures that would bring about longer-term economic and social benefits) in some NDAs in the Northern Metropolis would be selected for the enterprise, the successful bidder, to develop and construct the project collectively. This mode of development can alleviate the upfront financial burden of the Government, facilitate a more co-ordinated design for the development of an area, and expedite the provision of public facilities by leveraging market forces. At the same time, we will take into account factors like the economic and property market situation and dispose land in an orderly manner.

Moreover, the Government has always been concerned about construction costs. In terms of project governance initiatives, the DEVB established the Project Strategy and Governance Office (PSGO) in 2019 to further enhance the performance of infrastructure works projects by implementing various strategic initiatives to enhance capabilities in cost surveillance and project governance. The PSGO also uplifts productivity and efficiency in order to reduce project costs through the implementation of "Construction 2.0", promotion for wider adoption of high productivity construction methods such as Modular Integrated Construction and Multi-trade Integrated Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing, as well as digital technology and new construction materials. The PSGO is also undertaking a review on measures to control costs of public works projects with a view to taking forward land supply and infrastructural development in an effective manner. The review will be completed within this year.

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## LCQ7: Supply of places in aided primary schools

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

Some members of the education sector have pointed out that the existing mechanism for operation of Primary One (P1) classes in aided primary schools has not given sufficient consideration to the demand for school places from (i) minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under various talent admission schemes such as the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), (ii) minors arriving in Hong Kong with their newly issued Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao, and (iii) local students (including non-Chinese speaking students) applying for late admission (including but not limited to P1) in the middle of a school term, leading to the continuous "class reduction and school closure" by the Government under the mechanism despite the shortage of places in aided primary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will compile statistics on/estimate the total number of minor dependants of talents admitted to Hong Kong under TTPS who attended aided primary schools in the 2022-2023 school year and this school year; if so, of the details, together with a breakdown by level; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) if it will review the existing mechanism, for instance, whether it will include the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at

various levels of aided primary schools in the past school year as the basis for deciding the actual number of P1 classes to be operated by the relevant primary schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that with the gradual completion of various new development areas (NDAs), the medium and long-term demand for primary school places in such NDAs will increase, how the Government plans for the supply of the relevant school places to avoid reinstating the previous arrangement of temporarily allocating more students per P1 class?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) makes reference to the latest population projections released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) when planning the provision of public sector primary school places. The latest population projections released by C&SD in August 2023 have taken into account the impact of various talent admission schemes (including Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS)) and initiatives on the future population. According to the information available, the provision of public sector Primary One (P1) places in the current school year is sufficient to meet the demand of eligible children in Hong Kong.

According to the information from the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Immigration Department, as at end December last year, nearly 21 000 unmarried dependent children under the age of 18 arrived in Hong Kong under TTPS. Talent coming to Hong Kong can choose to arrange their school-age children to study in private schools or publicly-funded schools. They are not required to obtain prior permission from Director of Immigration for receiving education in Hong Kong. On the part of primary and secondary schools, they do not need to report to the EDB upon admitting such dependants. Hence, the Government does not have statistics on the number of the relevant dependants studying in Hong Kong.

(2) The actual number of P1 classes that a school may operate depends on a number of factors, including parental choices and the number of classrooms available. Based on the number of children already admitted by a school during the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the result of computer analysis of the actual choices made by parents during the Central Allocation stage, the EDB would work out the total number of children to be allocated to each primary school. This will form the basis for deciding the number of P1 classes that a school may operate.

The current Primary One Admission (POA) mechanism has been working effectively. On the whole, the current mechanism has strived to strike a balance between the expectations of various stakeholders and has been generally accepted by the public over the years. The EDB has no plan to

conduct a comprehensive review on POA mechanism. We shall continue to closely monitor the implementation of POA System.

At present, schools have to comply with the requirement of enrolment cap when admitting students in the middle of a school term. Normally, schools admit students in the middle of a school term only by using the vacancies at different class levels. In most cases, meeting such demand for school places by means of operating additional classes is not necessary. Even if there are students admitted in the middle of a school term at other class levels, it bears no relation to the demand for P1 places. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the number of students admitted in the middle of a school term at various class levels in the previous school year as a basis for determining the actual number of P1 classes to be operated in the following school year.

(3) The provision of public sector primary school places is planned on a district basis. For new development areas, under the established mechanism, the Government would reserve sites for school development when formulating town plans and planning large-scale residential developments, having regard to the planned population intake and the needs for community services in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Before launching a school building project, the Government would take into account various factors including the development plan of the area concerned, the school-age population projections which are compiled and updated based on the latest information provided by C&SD and the Planning Department, the actual number of existing students and the number of school places available at different grade levels, the prevailing education policies, other factors which may affect the demand and supply of school places, etc.

The Government has already made it clear that school allocation in the future would mainly focus on reprovisioning schools. Since the number of school-age children in a district would change with population movement, the demand and supply of school places would change accordingly. If construction of new school premises is necessary to meet the demand for school places arising from large-scale new housing developments in the districts, the EDB would give priority to cross-district reprovisioning, viz. reprovisioning schools in districts with a surplus of school places to districts with a greater demand for school places, so as to rationalise the demand and supply of school places among districts.

The demand for P1 places in a school net in each school year may vary due to different unforeseen factors. In view of this, the EDB has been adopting flexible measures to cope with the transient changes in demand for school places in individual school nets. These measures include borrowing school places from other school nets, making good use of vacant classrooms to operate additional P1 classes, and temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class for the schools in the school nets concerned in individual school years when necessary. Given that the school-age population of P1 students has been declining in recent years, arrangements for temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class are not required for any school in

the 2023/24 school year.

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## LCQ3: New energy vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

The 2023 Policy Address has proposed to promote the new energy transport industry, continue to test out more new energy vehicles including hydrogen double-deck buses and hydrogen street washing vehicles, formulate the Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong in the first half of this year, and commence the preparatory work for the legislative amendments pertaining to the production, storage, transportation and application of hydrogen fuel. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of registered new energy vehicles and its percentage in the total number of vehicles in Hong Kong, as well as the number of new energy vehicles owned by the Government and its percentage in the total number of vehicles owned by the Government as at the end of last month;

(2) of the operating performance of hydrogen double-deck buses and hydrogen street washing vehicles as tested by the Government, and whether it has studied if such hydrogen-powered vehicles can be included as one of the options for new energy transport; whether the Government has drawn up a timetable for releasing the Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong; and

(3) as there are views that the technology of electric private cars (PCs) is rather mature, whether the authorities will, for the purpose of promoting electrification of PCs, take a more aggressive approach in setting a date for the complete phasing out of fuel-propelled and hybrid PCs, and roll out more measures to encourage the use of electric PCs, so as to achieve as early as possible zero emissions from PCs?

Reply:

President,

To align with the national "dual carbon" targets, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) strives to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and reduce the total carbon emissions of Hong Kong from the 2005 level by half before 2035. It is a global trend to promote development of new energy transport to reduce carbon emissions from the

transport sector. The HKSARG announced the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles, Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035, and Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 successively in March, June and October 2021. These blueprints and roadmap cover policy directions and future targets in various areas to promote the adoption of new energy transport technologies, so as to guide Hong Kong towards zero vehicular emissions before 2050.

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau, Transport Department, and the Government Logistics Department (GLD), I would like to reply to the question raised by the Hon Lee as follows:

(1) As of the end of April 2024, there were 93 173 registered new energy vehicles in Hong Kong, accounting for 10.3 per cent of the total number of registered vehicles.

According to the information provided by the GLD, there were a total of 7 158 vehicles in the establishment of the government fleet as at December 2023, among which 179 were electric vehicles (EVs), accounting for 2.5 per cent of the total number of vehicles in government fleet. There were a total of 1 853 saloon cars in the establishment of the government fleet, among which 159 were EVs, accounting for 8.6 per cent of the total number of government saloon cars.

(2) Apart from EVs, hydrogen vehicles are also a kind of new energy transportation of which the HKSARG is promoting. The Government set up the Inter-departmental Working Group on Using Hydrogen as Fuel (the Working Group) in 2022 to co-ordinate preparatory work of bureaux and departments for the use of hydrogen fuel locally, as well as to promote the local adoption of hydrogen energy through trial projects so as to explore its future development potential and opportunities in Hong Kong.

As at April 2024, the Working Group has successively reviewed and given agreement-in-principle to 14 applications of hydrogen energy trial projects, of which three have already commenced the trial, including the Citybus Limited's first hydrogen bus and its hydrogen refuelling facility. This hydrogen bus started the passenger service officially in February 2024 for trial operation in three Kowloon urban routes in phases, namely 20, 22M and 20A. The Working Group is collecting the operational data of the hydrogen bus for assessing its operational performance.

On the other hand, three hydrogen fuel cell street washing vehicles of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department are coming to Hong Kong successively. The statutory vehicle examination processes are underway. It is expected that their trial would be launched later this year in tandem with the trial of a public hydrogen refuelling station in Au Tau, Yuen Long set up by Sinopec (Hong Kong) Limited, so as to use the station for hydrogen fuel replenishment during the trial period. The potential applications of hydrogen energy in future can be very wide. In new energy transportation, hydrogen energy especially suits the needs of green transformation of medium to large-sized, and medium to long-haul, vehicles. This is also the reason we chose



these pilot projects.

The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the HKSARG will formulate the Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong (the Development Strategy) in the first half of this year. We have canvassed views from the industry and experts, and plan to publish the Development Strategy next month to make early preparation for the wider application of hydrogen energy in the future, so that Hong Kong can seize the various opportunities brought by the development of hydrogen energy.

(3) The Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles sets out in a concrete manner the long-term policy objectives and plans to promote the adoption of EVs and their associated supporting facilities. Major initiatives include setting a target to cease new registration of fuel-propelled private cars (PCs) in 2035 or earlier, promoting the use of electric private cars (e-PCs), expanding the EV charging network, and creating an environment with support facilities that is conducive for the popularisation of EVs. Sufficient time will be provided for stakeholders to prepare for the transition to EVs. In particular, on the provision of a comprehensive public and private charging network to support the popularisation of e-PCs, the Chief Executive set a target in the 2023 Policy Address to increase the total number of public and private parking spaces with charging infrastructure in Hong Kong to about 200 000 by mid-2027.

The HKSARG has made notable progress in promoting the popularisation of EVs. In terms of e-PCs, the percentage of EVs among newly registered PCs in Hong Kong has soared significantly in recent years, increasing from 6.3 per cent in 2019 to 64.6 per cent in 2023. The HKSARG will continue to expand the charging network and supporting facilities on multiple fronts to provide a good environment and conducive conditions to encourage car owners to switch to EVs.

Although the technology of e-PCs is increasingly mature, there are still hundreds of thousands of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars on the road in Hong Kong. Time is required for car owners to switch to e-PCs. On the other hand, EV manufacturers also need time to build up the types and models of their products. The choice of e-PC types and models in the current market is not as wide as those of conventional petrol PCs. Even though e-PCs have a huge fuel cost advantage over conventional petrol private cars, there is still a considerable number of users who choose conventional petrol PCs for various reasons. Therefore, it is not yet the time now to decide on a more aggressive date for complete phasing-out of fuel-propelled and hybrid PCs. The HKSARG will closely monitor the supply of e-PCs in the market and the progress of the popularisation of e-PCs, and review from time to time whether the target to cease new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid PCs in 2035 can be further advanced.

Thank you, President.

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## WSD's registered consumer convicted of overcharging subdivided unit tenant for water

A Water Supplies Department (WSD)'s registered consumer of a subdivided flat in Nathan Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, was convicted today (May 22) of overcharging her subdivided unit (SDU) tenant for water, in contravention of regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations. The registered consumer pleaded guilty to four counts of offences at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts.

â€‹This is the 18th similar conviction case since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$6,500. This is also the second case convicted in the same month.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) came into operation on April 19, 2024, which strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords and their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement and receipt or payment record for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of maximum \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 so as to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The water fee deposit and the charge for providing a meter for each separate water meter installed under the Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Subdivided Units will be waived. Individual water bills will be provided for each water meter account. The first 12 cubic metres of water are free at four-month intervals. SDU tenants can contact the WSD to raise their request for separate water meters. Upon receiving such requests, the WSD will contact their landlords for installation of the separate meters. If the landlords refuse, the WSD may require landlords to provide information on the recovery of water charges from their tenants for suspected overcharging cases. Details of the scheme can be obtained from the WSD website ([www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html](http://www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html)).

The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow-up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.