

LCQ17: Operation situation of public markets

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

I have received requests for assistance from tenants of public markets and they have pointed out that the continuous reduction in people flow in markets has led to difficulties in their operation. Regarding the operation situation of tenants of markets, and tenants of venues providing cooked food (cooked food venues), under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of stalls in, the numbers of tenants who started their businesses and wound up their businesses in, the occupancy rates of, as well as the volume of people flow in the various markets and cooked food venues under the HA and the FEHD in each of the past five years;

(2) of the respective numbers of tenants of markets and tenants of cooked food venues to whom the HA provided a rent concession during the epidemic, as well as the number of months for which each of those tenants was provided with the rent concession and its amount;

(3) of the markets and cooked food venues under the HA and the FEHD which were refurbished in the past five years, and the details of the refurbishment projects;

(4) of the measures put in place by the HA and the FEHD to increase people flow in the markets and cooked food venues under them;

(5) whether it has plans to update the leasing mode and requirements for the markets and cooked food venues under the HA and the FEHD, or introduce a business operation mode, so as to assist the tenants of such markets and the tenants of such cooked food venues in adapting to market demands and changes, as well as attract more tenants to run their businesses in such markets, thereby stimulating people flow; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) whether it has plans to set indicators for people flow in the markets and cooked food venues under the HA and the FEHD, and introduce rent concessions for the tenants of those markets and cooked food venues with people flow not attaining their respective indicators as well as extend the rent concession period when necessary, so as to support such tenants in their operation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Housing Bureau, my reply to the Hon Yung Hoi-yan's question is as follows:

(1) As at end-2023, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) manages a total of 74 public markets (38 of which with cooked food centres (CFCs)) and 22 cooked food markets (CFMs), providing 12 655 market stalls and 927 cooked food stalls. The overall occupancy rate stands at around 84 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. Over the past five years, the FEHD has resumed 1611 stalls for various reasons (including 1 236 stalls of which tenancies were surrendered before their expiry) and put up the vacant stalls for letting to public at times with 1107 stalls successfully leased out.

Under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), there are a total of 33 markets (15 of which are directly managed by the HA and 18 of which are let under the single operator arrangement) and five cooked food kiosks, providing about 1 900 market stalls and 40 cooked food stalls respectively. The overall occupancy rate currently stands at about 83 per cent and 97 per cent respectively. Over the past five years, the HA has resumed about 200 stalls in markets and cooked food kiosks which it directly manages (including about 70 stalls of which tenancies were surrendered before their expiry). The HA has arranged re-tendering exercises for the vacant stalls and granted about 150 tenancies. The tendering arrangement for the remaining stalls is now in progress.

In regard to patronage, the FEHD and the HA do not keep relevant statistics on all markets and cooked food facilities under their respective management.

(2) In line with the Government's measures to support enterprises and to relieve the financial burden of the people, the HA introduced multiple rounds of rent concessions for its eligible tenants (including tenants of market stalls and cooked food stalls). A 50 per cent rent concession was granted to eligible tenants for six months from October 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. The rent concession offered to these tenants was later extended for another 39 months from April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023, with the concession amount increased to 75 per cent. From July 1 to December 31, 2023, the rent concession was extended further for six months, with the concession amount adjusted to 50 per cent. Taken together, the total rent concession period covered 51 months, with the concession amount reaching 75 per cent for most of the time during the period. A total of about 1 400 stall operators (some operators leasing more than one stall) have benefitted from the measure. The HA believes that the rent concessions have provided adequate relief to the tenants.

(3) With a view to improving the operating environment of public markets, the FEHD has been carrying out regular repair and maintenance as well as

improvement works, and replacing aged escalators and lifts in phases in the markets.

Besides, the FEHD has been implementing the Market Modernisation Programme (MMP) since 2018, including overhaul or redevelopment projects, the pilot scheme on stall enhancement, as well as minor refurbishment or improvement works. The MMP aims to improve the operating environment of public markets, thereby facilitating tenants' business operation, and providing market patrons with a more pleasant shopping environment.

Regarding overhaul or redevelopment projects, Aberdeen Market and Lai Wan Market reopened in May 2023 and March 2024 respectively after overhaul works. The FEHD is carrying out preparatory and consultation work, including technical feasibility studies upon confirmation of the scope of works, for the proposed projects in Ngau Tau Kok Market, Kowloon City Market, Yeung Uk Road Market and North Kwai Chung Market. The works timetable and project cost could only be confirmed upon completion of the technical feasibility studies and assessment as well as the detailed design. Depending on the circumstances, the scope of overhaul works generally includes re-configuring the overall layout of the market, re-planning the stalls, widening the passageways, installing air-conditioning system, upgrading building services installations, relaying drainage pipes, refurbishing the external walls of the market, refurbishing waste room and other improvement works (e.g. providing more public space and seating, increasing the number of toilets and improving the toilet facilities, upgrading barrier-free facilities and the rodent-proof installations). As for the preliminary suggestion of carrying out overhaul for Causeway Bay Market, the FEHD is maintaining close communication with relevant stakeholders to gauge their views to formulate a suitable proposal.

The FEHD is implementing a pilot scheme to enhance market stalls and carry out relevant renovation works. This would involve works such as widening of passageways, beautification of walls and ceilings, as well as replacement or repair of simple equipment according to actual circumstances and needs. The first venue being included in the pilot scheme is Queen Street Cooked Food Market. The works commenced in February 2024 and are expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2024. The FEHD will confirm the other venues to be included in the pilot scheme as soon as possible.

As for minor refurbishment or improvement works, the FEHD has carried out relevant works in 16 markets. Among which, the works in 14 markets (including Ngau Tau Kok Market, Yeung Uk Road Market, Fa Yuen Street Market, Quarry Bay Market, Shui Wo Street Market, Tsuen Wan Market, Mong Kok Cooked Food Market, Ngau Chi Wan Market, Shek Tong Tsui Market, Yan Oi Market, Sai Kung Market, Po On Road Market, Wong Nai Chung Market and Smithfield Market) have been completed. The works of the other two markets (Luen Wo Hui Market and Nam Long Shan Road Cooked Food Market) are underway, with completion expected in 2024. Depending on the circumstances, the scope of minor refurbishment or improvement works generally includes renovation of internal facilities, beautification of external walls, replacement of floor tiles, repainting, repairing facilities, refurbishing the toilets, maintenance of

drainage systems and piping, as well as installation of rodent-proof devices.

For the markets and cooked food kiosks under the HA, in the past five years, the Housing Department (HD) completed a series of improvement works in Shek Kip Mei Market and Pok Hong Market. The improvement works in Shek Kip Mei Market included refurbishment of the façade of external walls, upgrading of directory and entrance signage, improvement of lighting facilities, replacement of existing ventilation facilities, refurbishment of toilet facilities. As for Pok Hong Market, the refurbishment works covered revamp of layout, installation of air-conditioning system, enhancement of building services installations, refurbishment of the façade of external walls, addition of covered walkway, refurbishment of toilet facilities, and improvement of lighting and drainage systems. The HD will continue to take opportunities to upgrade its markets so as to create a more comfortable and convenient shopping environment for the residents.

(4) To enhance the patronage of public markets and CFCs and to promote their business vibrancy, the FEHD has been continuously implementing promotional campaigns in public markets, including festive celebrations and thematic events. Various promotional activities not only create a festive atmosphere in public markets, they also help to increase patronage and stimulate spending in markets. The FEHD also utilises social media platforms, such as the social media account of Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak, to introduce market development projects and to raise public awareness about the public markets, so as to attract patronage. Besides, for overhauled/redeveloped markets and new markets, service contractors engaged by the FEHD will devise strategies to promote and develop the markets, as well as carrying out publicity and promotion work, such as organising promotional activities during festivals and thematic events, producing publicity materials and publicizing shopping discounts offered by stalls. The FEHD will closely monitor the changes in patronage and occupancy rates of various public markets to evaluate the effectiveness of improvement works and promotional campaigns, and conduct timely reviews.

The HD will, with regard to the circumstance (such as the location, distribution of customer sources, customer habits), organise promotional activities such as lucky draws, stage performances, magic performances, clown performances, snack stalls and gift redemption, and will put up festive decorations in its shopping centres and markets during major festivals and special days to attract patronage and to enhance the shopping ambience to the markets. In addition, the HD will also monitor the Single Operator Market (SOM) tenants to ensure that they meet the tenancy requirements by organising regularly various promotional activities to enhance the shopping ambience and competitiveness of the markets.

(5) To boost the occupancy rates of public markets and cooked food facilities, the FEHD has, between June 2021 and December 2023, put up vacant stalls for letting through open auctions or allocation through other means at times, through which a total of 1 107 stalls were successfully leased out. The FEHD will continue to lease out vacant stalls of markets and cooked food facilities as appropriate to utilise public resources as far as possible.

On the other hand, to strengthen market management with a view to enhancing the business vibrancy of markets and better meeting the needs of the public, the FEHD has, on pilot basis, adopted a new management mode at its two new temporary markets, Skylight Market in Tin Shui Wai and Sunlight Market in Tung Chung, as well as the overhauled Aberdeen Market and Lai Wan Market under the MMP. In addition to undertaking daily management, cleansing, security and minor repairs for the markets, the service contractors engaged by the FEHD are also responsible for formulating promotion and development strategies for the markets, liaising and communicating with stakeholders, and advising on the trade mix in the markets etc. The FEHD will continue to closely monitor and assess the performance of the service contractor and effectiveness of the promotional activities of the markets.

For the HA's markets, all new markets have been let under the single operator arrangement since 1997. The SOMs are operated under a highly flexible management and operation mode that keeps abreast of market changes. SOM tenants identify and liaise with individual stall operators on suitable letting arrangements based on commercial principles. To ensure effective and smooth operation of SOMs, the HD conducts frequent inspections of markets and assess the performance of the SOM tenants every two months. If the performance of the SOM tenants do not meet the required standard, the HD will request the SOM tenants to make improvements so as to ensure their compliance with the tenancy requirements and maintain quality management services.

(6) Currently, the upset auction prices for newly leased stalls in public markets (including CFCs) and CFMs under the FEHD are based on the reference rental recommended by the Rating and Valuation Department. The reference rental has taken into account the business environment of a stall (such as the latest bid price for a similar stall in the same market, stall features, and customer flow). Given that various factors can affect the patronage of venues, and the actual operation situation of individual stalls can vary significantly, the FEHD has no plan to set indicators on the patronage of its markets and CFCs, or to make rental adjustments on such basis.

The HD will continue to take proactive measures to let market stalls and cooked food stalls by open rental tender and encourage SOM tenants to adopt flexible and practical letting measures.

The Government will continue to take proactive measures and implement promotional activities, etc, to increase the occupancy rates of public markets and cooked food facilities and attract patronage, so as to enhance the shopping ambience in markets.

LCQ3: Using China-made new energy vehicles in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

It is learnt that different brands of China-made new energy vehicles have shown an interest in entering the Hong Kong market one after another. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that at present, Hong Kong mainly adopts the European standards for conducting examinations of imported vehicles and has not formally adopted China's standards, which has resulted in the examination process of China-made vehicles running into difficulties of varying degrees time and again and has deterred members of the public who intend to buy such vehicles from doing so, whether the authorities will consider adopting China's standards for vehicle examination in the future; if so, of the specific timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that many members of the public wish to purchase left-hand drive vehicles imported from the Mainland, and regions where right-hand drive vehicles are predominately used such as Japan and Europe also accept the use of left-hand drive vehicles, whether the authorities will, in the light of the increasing digitisation and intelligentisation of road traffic in Hong Kong, consider relaxing the vehicle registration of left-hand drive vehicles; if so, of the specific timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) with technological advancement, whether the authorities have plans to rearrange manpower for the work of the examination of imported vehicles, so as to tie in with the use of China-made new energy vehicles in Hong Kong; if so, of the specific timetable and plan; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Transport Department (TD), my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows:

(1) The TD approves vehicle construction in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation. The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulates requirements for vehicle construction and various parts of a vehicle, including the maximum dimensions, maximum weight, overhang, motive power, axle loading, of the vehicle. The legal provisions do not stipulate standards of certain regions but the objective vehicle construction standards. The TD has been accepting submissions of Guobiao (GB) from the

trade to substantiate that vehicles or their components comply with the objective vehicle construction standards stipulated in the legislation. In addition to GB, the TD also accepts other international standards, including those of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Regarding individual vehicle components, such as public light bus seats and their anchorages, head restraints (headrests), speedometers, speed limiters, etc, the TD will list the standards of different regions in the legislation for the trade's reference.

In addition, the TD will also provide the trade with the latest technical guidelines in response to the development of automotive technology, in which applicable GB standards and standards of other regions will be suitably listed. The TD has been regularly reviewing and revising existing legislation and guidelines in response to relevant vehicle standards in different countries and regions to cope with the latest development of the automotive market. Since 2010, the TD has accepted GB standards as one of the approved specifications for approving electric vehicles (EVs).

(2) Hong Kong currently follows the traffic rule of driving on the left side of the road (left-hand traffic), and transport infrastructure and traffic management measures are designed and developed based on this traffic rule. On left-hand traffic roads, the steering wheel of a vehicle is positioned on the right side, which corresponds to a right-hand drive vehicle. The design of left-hand drive vehicles generally does not align with the transportation and road systems of left-hand traffic.

In fact, different regions around the world have their own considerations when formulating traffic rules and vehicle standards. Many regions impose restrictions on the use of vehicles that are incompatible with their road systems.

Under the prevailing left-hand traffic rule, when right-hand drive vehicles are driven on Hong Kong's roads, motorists enjoy a relatively wider field of vision. This is particularly important when overtaking a vehicle in front. On the contrary, when left-hand drive vehicles are driven on Hong Kong's roads, the field of vision of motorists will be narrowed and limited, which may pose a higher risk on the motorists, especially when overtaking, turning right at priority junctions, using roundabouts, or merging onto expressways from slip roads. Besides, most of the payment facilities at car park entrances or exits in Hong Kong are positioned on the right side of the vehicle for the convenience of the motorists, whereas the doors for picking up and dropping off passengers and the facilities for passenger queuing are mainly positioned on the left side of the vehicle.

However, according to the provisions of Cap. 374A, the TD may also, subject to certain terms and conditions as considered appropriate, issue permits to authorise the use of individual left-hand drive vehicles on Hong Kong's roads under particular circumstances, such as cross-border Mainland official vehicles or corporate vehicles with quotas, special purpose vehicles, etc. In view of the above-mentioned road safety and traffic management considerations, the established practice in Hong Kong is to adopt

right-hand drive vehicles on left-hand traffic roads and restrict the use and registration of left-hand drive vehicles.

(3) All vehicles, regardless of new energy vehicles or fossil fuel vehicles, must comply with the requirements of the Road Traffic Ordinance before they can be registered and licensed. All vehicle examinations are conducted in accordance with these requirements.

With a view to supporting the introduction of different new energy vehicles, the TD issued guidelines on Vehicle Construction Approval Requirements for Electric Vehicles in 2010. The latest version had been released in May 2023, facilitating different vehicle trades in providing relevant technical information on EVs to simplify applications for EV approval.

The TD has also issued new guidelines on the batch processing mechanism to the trade in 2022 to allow the trade to introduce EVs in batches and simplify the application process for EV approval of the same model. As of the end of February 2024, more than 400 EV models have been approved by the TD, including about 70 models of China-made EVs.

The TD will review the vehicle examination process and manpower arrangement while revising the vehicle standards to achieve better cost-effectiveness. The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the trade and update guidelines, vehicle examination process and manpower arrangement in a timely manner.

â€‹Thank you, President.

[Inter-departmental help desks set up \(2\)](#)

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

â€‹â€‹Further to two interdepartmental help desks set up earlier today (April 10) in response to the fire incident at a building on Jordan Road in Yau Ma Tei, the Yau Tsim Mong District Office and the Kwai Tsing District Office have also set up one more interdepartmental help desk at the Princess Margaret Hospital. Together with other government departments, the help desks will render appropriate assistance to the public.

â€‹â€‹The help desks and enquiry hotlines are as follows:

	Location	Enquiry hotlines
1.	Accident and Emergency Department, Kwong Wah Hospital	2384 8151
2.	Accident and Emergency Department, Queen Elizabeth Hospital	2782 7907
3.	Accident and Emergency Department, Princess Margaret Hospital	2990 3133

[CE expresses deep sadness over multiple deaths and injuries at No. 3 alarm fire in Jordan](#)

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (April 10) was deeply saddened that the No. 3 alarm fire at New Lucky House in Jordan caused multiple deaths and injuries. He extended his deepest condolences to the injured and the families of the deceased.

Mr Lee attaches great importance to the incident. He has instructed the Hospital Authority to make every effort to save and care for the injured and the relevant departments including the Hong Kong Police Force and the Fire Services Department to investigate the cause of the fire and heavy casualties. Mr Lee has also instructed the Home Affairs Department, Social Welfare Department and other departments to deal with the aftermath properly and provide all necessary assistance to the families of the deceased and residents affected by the fire.

[LCQ6: Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

The Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS), which has accepted

applications since September 4 last year, covers 26 job categories normally excluded from the Supplementary Labour Scheme, and such coverage arrangement will last for two years. Under the ESLS, if imported workers are Mainland residents, employers may opt to provide them with accommodation in Hong Kong or on the Mainland, or arrange them to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the ESLS to date: the number of applications received and the number of workers involved, the number of applications approved and the number of workers involved, as well as the respective numbers of Mainland workers who are provided with accommodation on the Mainland by their employers and are arranged to return to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland on the same day after work, with a tabulated breakdown by the aforesaid 26 job categories;

(2) in respect of jobs other than the aforesaid 26 job categories, how the numbers of applications made and approved for importation of workers as well as the number of workers involved compare before and after the launch of the ESLS; and

(3) whether it has considered further improving the mechanisms and procedures involved in making applications under the ESLS as well as vetting and approving the ESLS applications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To cope with the challenges brought by manpower shortage, the Government has enhanced the mechanism for importation of workers on the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers. Apart from launching sector-specific labour importation schemes for the construction sector, transport sector, and residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities, the Labour Department (LD) has also enhanced the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) in the past, including suspending the general exclusion of the 26 job categories (set out at Annex 1) as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from labour importation for two years.

The reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) Since the launch of the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) on September 4, 2023 and as at March 31, 2024, 3 701 applications seeking to import 37 377 workers were received under the ESLS. Of these applications, 29 190 imported workers intended to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation before.

During the same period, 964 applications seeking to import 5 134 workers were approved under the ESLS, including 2 318 were approved to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation in the past. A

breakdown of the numbers of imported workers applied for and approved, by the above 26 job categories, is at Annex 2. In addition, apart from the approved applications, as at March 31, 2024, 993 applications in respect of those received after the launch of the ESLS had started or completed the local recruitment exercise, seeking to import 11 886 workers. The LD expects that the vetting of most of these applications will be completed in the second quarter of this year, where the exact number approved will depend on the results of local recruitment and the application details of the cases.

If the imported workers are Mainland residents, employers may opt to provide accommodation in Hong Kong or on the Mainland for the imported workers, or allow the imported workers to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland. The LD does not maintain a breakdown of the accommodation arrangement for imported workers.

(2) From January 1, 2023 to September 3, 2023, the numbers of imported workers applied for and approved under the SLS were 8 072 and 2 139 respectively. Since the launch of the ESLS on September 4, 2023 and as at March 31, 2024, applications for importing 8 187 workers taking up posts covered by the SLS in the past were received under the ESLS and 2 816 imported workers were approved. As the ESLS does not accept applications for importation of workers from employers covered by sector-specific labour importation schemes, the above-mentioned figures are not directly comparable with those of the SLS.

(3) The LD has been closely monitoring the operation of the ESLS and striving for continuous improvements on the execution. The LD has launched a dedicated website to introduce the features of the ESLS, and uploaded the "List of Common Posts" covering the median monthly wage, working hours, entry requirements and duties of 156 common posts in different industries for employers' reference. As at March 31, 2024, the LD had organised 44 briefings for employers on the ESLS and the points-to-note about submission of applications.

To further improve the workflow of processing applications, the LD will shortly introduce the following new measures:

(i) an application form for common posts will be introduced next month. If an employer uses the new application form and fills in the information specified in the "List of Common Posts", the processing time will be shortened;

(ii) apart from briefings for employers, the LD will also organise briefings for employment agencies involved in labour importation matters and explain the application arrangements of the ESLS to facilitate employment agencies to assist employers on the handling of applications;

(iii) the LD will exercise flexibility in the handling of recruitment advertisements placed by employers during local recruitment, and will also remind employers to report to the LD the interview results as soon as possible; and

(iv) through internal deployment of staff, the LD will vet applications

submitted by employers as soon as possible and provide advice on information of relevant applications.

The LD will continue to closely monitor the ESLS, safeguard the employment priority for local workers and improve the processing of applications.