

Sick remand person in custody dies in public hospital

A sick 84-year-old male remand person in custody at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre died in a public hospital today (July 10).

The remand person in custody suffered from heart disease. He required continuous medical care and follow-up treatment at the institution hospital and a public hospital. On July 9, he was sent to a public hospital for treatment due to physical discomfort. During hospitalisation, his condition deteriorated and he was certified dead at 8.10am today.

The case has been reported to the Police. A death inquest will be held by the Coroner's Court.

The person in custody was remanded for the offence of wounding with intent in December 2023.

LCQ2: Work of Working Group on Environmental Hygiene and Cityscape

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang and a reply by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

The District Matters Co-ordination Task Force, which launched the territory-wide Hong Kong New Cityscape clean-up campaign in 2022, has subsequently been revamped as the Working Group on Environmental Hygiene and Cityscape to continue to follow up on environmental hygiene work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that cityscape enhancement involves many aspects, including environmental hygiene, public health and street management, how the Working Group plays a steering and co-ordinating role in liaising with relevant government departments in resolving problems; whether the Working Group has established a set of standard mode of operation for regularised execution in the districts;

(2) of the mechanism for referring complaints and suggestions received through various channels to the Working Group; how the Working Group handles

complaints and suggestions, and the average time taken to handle each case; and

(3) as it is observed that there is currently a considerable amount of rubbish and dirt on the ceilings of some lift shafts and lift wells in the districts, and many motorists have also relayed that the edges of many central reservations are overgrown with weeds, whether the Working Group has drawn up guidelines to proactively deal with such hygiene blind spots; if so, of the specific work plan; if not, how the Government deals with such hygiene blind spots?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the questions raised by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang is as follows:

The current-term Government attaches great importance to district environmental issues and is committed to improving environmental hygiene and street management, so as to build a liveable environment for the public and boost our city's image. Shortly after assuming office, the Chief Executive appointed the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration (DCS) to lead the District Matters Co-ordination Task Force (DMCTF) which launched the Government Programme on Tackling Hygiene Black Spots and cityscape beautification works.

Under the district governance structure established in July 2023, the Steering Committee on District Governance is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, and the Task Force on District Governance (Task Force) is chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration. Under the new structure, the DMCTF was renamed as the Working Group on Environmental Hygiene and Cityscape (the Working Group) and placed under the Task Force.

Cityscape and environmental hygiene are closely related. To improve environmental hygiene, as early as the days of the DMCTF, the DCS already formulated the standard mode of operation, i.e. departments concerned will conduct joint operations in accordance with the division of labour set by the DMCTF, to tackle district environmental hygiene problems that involve various departments with hitherto unclear delineation of responsibilities. A successful example is the handling of abandoned motorcycles in back alleys. By end of May 2024, various departments have carried out more than 130 inter-departmental joint operations across the 18 districts according to the standard mode of operation, resulting in the removal of over 630 abandoned vehicles, more than 90% of which were motorcycles. Besides, many environmental hygiene black spots that have plagued the districts for years, including the Flower Market in Mong Kok, Ngau Chi Wan Village in Wong Tai Sin, Yuen Long New Street, Lung Fung Garden in Sheung Shui, Bowrington Road in Wan Chai, etc. have all been tidied up through the joint operations conducted by the Hong Kong Police Force and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) under the standard mode of operation, and the

streets are now reinstated to their original conditions. Moreover, the DCS discusses with relevant departments on a need basis from time to time and gives instructions on thorny district environmental hygiene problems. After two years, the hygiene conditions of 90 per cent (638) of the 738 black spots identified have substantially improved.

To consolidate the achievements of the Programme, the Task Force has conducted a comprehensive review on the statutory powers and penalties of environmental hygiene-related legislation to enhance the Government's efficiency, effectiveness and deterrence in handling various environmental hygiene problems. The review is conducted in two stages. The first stage focuses on the offences related to littering and shopfront extension, with the penalty levels raised substantially from \$1,500 to \$3,000 and \$6,000 respectively with effect from October 22, 2023. Comparing the six months before and after the effective date of the new penalty levels, the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued by enforcement departments against environmental hygiene offences (such as littering) has decreased by over 30 per cent (from about 23 400 to about 15 000), whereas the number of FPNs issued against shopfront extension and illegal disposal of large amounts of waste has also dropped substantially by about 80 per cent (from about 4 100 to about 630). This reflects that the new penalty levels have quite substantial deterrent effect, and the improvement in cityscape can also be maintained. In the second stage of the review, the Government will introduce legislative amendments and implement new administrative measures to enhance the Government's efficiency and effectiveness in tackling various environmental hygiene problems. For example, the FEHD's enforcement power will be further strengthened to handle shopfront extension more effectively; and the requirements for concerned premises to co-operate with the Government's investigation and the relevant penalty on violating such requirements in cases of public health nuisances such as water seepage in buildings, water dripping from air-conditioners and "garbage apartments" will be stipulated in the law. The Environment and Ecology Bureau is drafting the relevant bill and expects to introduce the amendment bill into the Legislative Council by the fourth quarter of this year.

Apart from handling the environmental hygiene problems, under the leadership of the Working Group, relevant departments have also been implementing various beautification works to improve cityscape. These works include the Leisure and Culture Services Department (LCSD)'s "Shining City Project" which beautifies the central dividers and roundabouts of major roads; the Highways Department (HyD)'s efforts to beautify footbridges and subways and expand the scale of repaving footpaths; the Drainage Services Department's incorporation of greening, ecological conservation and water landscape elements into its flood prevention projects; and the Housing Department's phased implementation of minor improvement works in its public housing estates, covering façade beautification, enhancement of recreational facilities and public spaces, etc.

As regards the handling of day-to-day complaints or suggestions, various departments handle them in accordance with their own mechanisms. Should the department find that a certain situation warrants high-level consideration

and co-ordination of follow-up actions, it may also report the issue to the Task Force and seek its steer. The aforementioned shopfront extensions plaguing the districts in the Flower Market and Ngau Chi Wan Village are successful examples of problems resolved through such a high-level steering approach.

Concerning the rubbish and dirt on the ceilings of some lift shafts and lift wells, for lifts of footbridges, the HyD is responsible for the regular cleansing of the structure (including the lift shaft) every quarter to keep the lift structure in good condition. On the other hand, as regards the overgrowing of weeds at the edges of central reservations along expressways, contractors engaged by the HyD will carry out regular inspections and follow up upon spotting overgrown weeds or receiving a public complaint. Besides, the LCSD is responsible for the horticultural maintenance of flower beds located at the road sides and central reservations along non-expressways. The department regularly arranges plantation and pruning of plants; clears weeds and rubbish in flower beds; and increases the frequency of pruning plants and clearing weeds in plant fast-growing season, so as to keep the city clean and tidy.

Thank you, President.

International experts and delegations from Belt and Road Initiative and ASEAN member states attend Fire Asia 2024 (with photos)

About 600 experts and delegates in emergency response, paramedic services, medical professions and fire engineering from various countries and regions are taking part in the Fire Asia 2024 international conference being held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre from today (July 10) to July 12.

Delegations of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations from 19 countries, including the Director General of the General Administration of Civil Protection, Ministry of Interior, Egypt; and heads or senior officials of emergency or fire departments in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia and Singapore were invited to attend.

The three-day conference is one of the mega events being held in Hong Kong in July. Themed "Collaboration and Technology – Better Prepare the Community for Emergency" this year, the conference has brought together

global fire and emergency professionals to gain invaluable insights into fire safety and groundbreaking research from eminent speakers worldwide, striving to promote the development of the industry. The conference also exemplified the international co-operation and exchanges that could make a difference, regionally and globally, and to tell the China story and the Hong Kong story well.

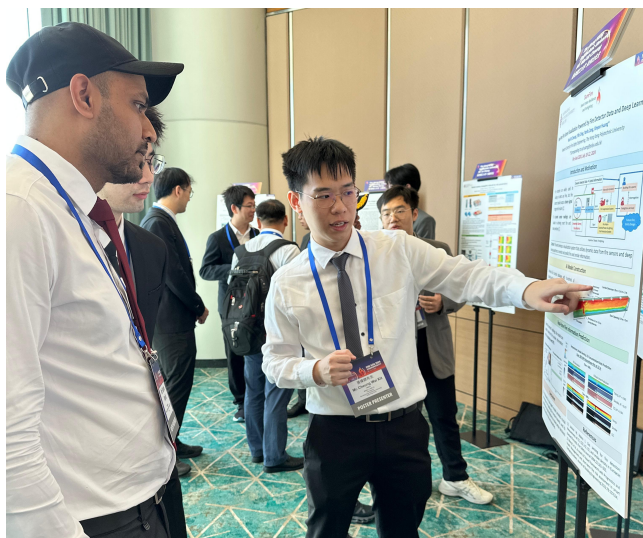
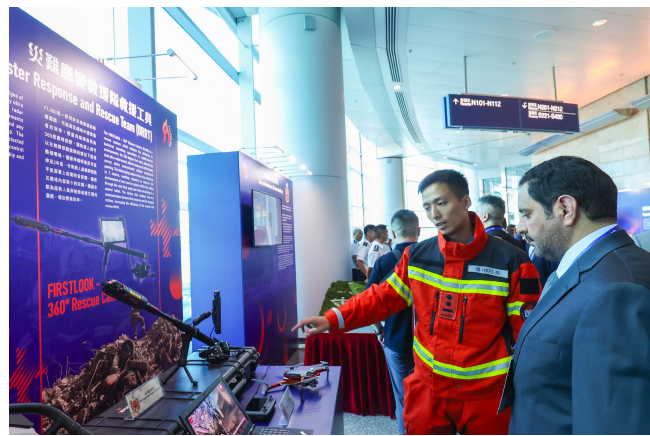
The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung; and the Director of Fire Services, Mr Andy Yeung, officiated at the opening ceremony this morning.

Addressing the ceremony, Mr Chan said, "Emergency preparedness is essential to protecting an economy and its people from the impact of wide-ranging disasters, crises and other emergencies. An effective emergency management system helps mitigate disruptions to essential services, economic stability and social order. In today's interconnected world, the threats of emergencies and disasters could be cross-border by nature. Regional and international teamwork play an important role in reducing risks and enhancing resilience."

Also speaking at the ceremony, Mr Yeung said that it is crucial for fire and emergency professionals to adopt an innovative approach to addressing emergency situations. The Hong Kong Fire Services Department (HKFSD) has been actively using modern technology to boost the department's emergency response capabilities. Innovative solutions, such as robots, drones and self-developed artificial intelligence-powered systems to cope with emergencies, have significantly enhanced the effectiveness and safety of the department's work.

Fire Asia 2024 is jointly organised by the Institution of Fire Engineers (Hong Kong Branch), the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (Building Services Division and Fire Division), the China Hong Kong Ambulance Service Institute and the China Hong Kong Fire Protection Association, supported by the HKFSD and the Hong Kong Tourism Board, and funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. The conference covers various topics, including new approaches to disaster management and fire safety measures, collaboration in the Greater Bay Area and emergency preparedness in the Belt and Road region, as well as the latest research in fire engineering and emergency medical services.





EMSD announces test results of LPG quality in June 2024

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (July 10) announced that the department collected eight liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) samples from auto-LPG filling stations and LPG terminals on a random basis in June 2024 for laboratory tests. The results show that the LPG quality of all these samples complied with auto-LPG specifications.

The detailed test results are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/gas_safety/lpg_vehicle_scheme/publications/general/results_of_lpg_sample_analysis/index.html). Enquiries can also be made to the EMSD's hotline on 2333 3762.

In addition, the EMSD has been vetting independent third-party test reports submitted by LPG supply companies for each shipment to ensure that the quality of imported LPG complies with the specified requirements.

LCQ1: Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

According to the Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046 published by the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of elderly population in the total population will increase from 20.5 per cent in 2021 to 36 per cent in 2046, meaning more than one in every three Hong Kong people will be an elderly. On the other hand, it is learnt that ageing in the Mainland has become a common phenomenon in recent years. Regarding the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong (the GD Scheme), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Social Welfare Department relaxed the eligibility criteria for operators under the GD Scheme in July last year by allowing non-governmental and private organisations alike to register their residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) located in the Mainland cities within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) as Recognised Service Providers, of the respective numbers of applications from such organisations received and approved by the Government since the relaxation of the GD Scheme;

(2) as the Government indicated in May this year that it was exploring the expansion of the GD Scheme to include RCHEs solely operated by Mainland entities this year, and that it was liaising with relevant departments in the GBA cities to conduct on-site inspections and jointly select suitable RCHEs, of the progress of the relevant work; and

(3) of the average monthly expenditure incurred by the Government on each subsidised RCHE place purchased under the GD Scheme?

Reply:

President,

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

(1) Since July 28, 2023, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has relaxed the eligibility criteria for service operators to join the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong (GDRCS Scheme). Hong Kong organisations, including non-governmental and private ones, which have experience and a good

track record in providing subsidised residential care services for the elderly, may apply for inclusion of their residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) located in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in the GDRCS Scheme. The SWD has received seven applications so far, among which two applications have been approved and have joined the GDRCS Scheme since May 2024, while one application has been rejected. The SWD is vetting the remaining four applications.

(2) The 2023 Policy Address announced that the Government would explore expanding the GDRCS Scheme to include specific RCHEs operated by Mainland organisations in 2024, i.e. RCHEs which do not have experience in operating residential care homes in Hong Kong, so that elderly persons will have more retirement choices in the Mainland cities of the GBA. In November 2023, the Labour and Welfare Bureau signed a letter of intent on collaboration with the Department of Civil Affairs of Guangdong Province. Both sides would kick-start exploring the selection of RCHEs operated by Mainland organisations in designated Mainland cities of the GBA to join the GDRCS Scheme. The RCHEs concerned must be rated four stars or above on the "List of Star-rated Senior Care Organisations" by the Department of Civil Affairs of Guangdong Province based on the standards of the national "Classification and Accreditation for Senior Care Organisation", and have at least a two-year record of operation. With the assistance of the Mainland government departments, the SWD has been visiting RCHEs for selecting more suitable RCHEs to join the GDRCS Scheme, with a view to providing more choices for Hong Kong elderly persons retiring in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

(3) The estimated expenditure for the GDRCS Scheme in 2024-25 is about \$32.5 million. As at end-March 2024, there were about 170 Hong Kong elderly persons joining the GDRCS Scheme. The number of places to be purchased by the SWD each year depends on the number of participating elderly persons. The expenditure on purchasing the places is affected by various factors, e.g. the city and location where the RCHEs are situated, and the facilities and service level of the RCHEs. To avoid affecting the ongoing negotiations on the purchase of places between the SWD and the RCHEs concerned, the Government should not disclose the average monthly expenditure for subsidising the places for the elderly.