

LCQ5: Enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism industry

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

There are views that tourist-oriented regional competition has become exceptionally keen recently. Governments of various places employ all means to compete for tourist resources. Hong Kong is facing new challenges in the new competitive environment, and may experience the predicament of being lagging behind. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that to promote the development of the tourism industry, various local governments in the Mainland have worked in solidarity with the entire municipality and even the entire province to break barriers and remove obstacles among various industries and trades, whether the HKSAR Government can connect various industries and trades as well as mobilize and coordinate resources across the territory, so that various departments will be able to work together to facilitate the development of Hong Kong's tourism industry, thereby getting rid of the predicament of the industry being lagging behind;

(2) as there are views that the major current pursuits of Mainland tourists in travelling are high cost-effectiveness and cosy experience, how the Government can enhance the travel experiences of Mainland tourists with their limited time and budgets as well as encourage and motivate the whole society to foster a cordial and welcoming atmosphere; and

(3) as it is learnt that nowadays, tourists prefer to "check-in" at popular, unique and iconic landmarks and street scenes, and the public opinions and trends presented on the We Media can bring a huge influence, whether the Government has plans to, by tapping on Hong Kong's characteristics and advantages, adopt a more proactive approach to steer Hong Kong's tourism promotional efforts towards a more compassionate and attractive direction, such as opening a We Media account to actively exchange views and interact with netizens?

Reply:

President,

Tourism is one of the major pillars of our economy. Over the past year, business and leisure visitors from the Mainland and around the world have gradually returned to Hong Kong, injecting impetus into the tourism industry. With the concerted efforts of the Government and the travel trade, visitor arrivals reached 34 million last year and there was continuous increase in

the number of visitor arrivals quarter by quarter, revealing a strong recovery momentum of the tourism industry. According to the preliminary figures from the Immigration Department, the number of visitor arrivals in the first two months of this year was approximately 7.83 million, i.e. about 130 000 on average per day. The latter represents a 12 per cent increase compared to the average daily number of visitor arrivals in the fourth quarter of 2023, which was approximately 116 000. During the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland last month, the numbers of total visitor arrivals reached the level of the same period in 2018 while the number of Mainland visitor arrivals even exceeded the 2018 level. The Financial Secretary proposed in the 2024-25 Budget to set aside a total amount of \$1.095 billion to intensify efforts to promote a number of tourism-related initiatives and projects in the next three years. Besides, we will continue to organise and coordinate various mega events and large-scale activities with characteristics to attract more visitors to Hong Kong.

In respect of the questions raised by the Hon Chan Chun-ying, the reply is as follows:

(1) Joint efforts by different sectors through collaboration and coordination among one another is essential to promoting tourism development. We have established the high-level Tourism Strategy Committee (TSC), chaired by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, to develop strategies to further promote the long-term sustainable development of the tourism industry and enhance collaboration among different stakeholders in the industry. Members include prominent figures and key leaders from the tourism and other related sectors such as culture, sports, retail and catering, etc. The TSC aims at gathering strategic advice to enhance the speed and quality of the development of Hong Kong's tourism industry as well as fostering integrated development of tourism and other related sectors.

In promoting mega event economy, the Government has set up an inter-departmental Mega Events Coordination Group chaired by the Deputy Financial Secretary, with the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism as deputy. Members include representatives from relevant bureaux, departments, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and other statutory bodies. The coordination group is committed to strengthening the overall planning and coordination of mega events, ensuring sufficient inter-departmental support, taking the initiative to scout mega events to be held in Hong Kong and promoting the mega event economy through a multi-pronged approach, which will further promote tourism development.

In addition, we convene tourism-related high-level coordination meetings as necessary to coordinate tourism-related matters involving different departments, such as the preparation work for receiving visitors to Hong Kong during the Golden Weeks of the Mainland. All relevant government departments are also actively involved in providing necessary facilitation.

(2) Enriching tourism resources in Hong Kong and providing visitors with more new tourism offerings and experiences are of utmost importance. Together with the HKTB, we will promote new thematic travel experiences anchoring seasonal,

festival and mega events as well as integrating Chinese and Western arts, pop culture, wine and dine experiences, outdoor explorations, active sports and more to cater for the interest of wide-ranging visitor segments while developing immersive in-depth tourism activities in the light of the new travel trends. We will also encourage the travel trade to launch a more diversified portfolio of tourism products.

On developing diversified tourism products, the Tourism Commission will continue to work at full steam to roll out tourism projects like "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival", "Design District Hong Kong" and "City in Time". We have organised the "Cultural and Heritage Sites Local Tour Incentive Scheme", the "Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme", and the "Deeper into Hong Kong: Creative Itinerary Design Competition" to encourage the travel trade to design more thematic tours.

Mega events help attract more visitors and enrich their experience. In the future, we will organise more mega events to foster a positive ambience in town and attract visitors to come to Hong Kong, thereby elevating the city's international image. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has launched "Art March" as a brand for the first time to promote mega arts and cultural events organised, funded, or supported by the Government, providing citizens and visitors with an enriched artistic journey and generating greater economic benefits through the mega arts and cultural events.

Being the world-famous tourism destination and gastronomic capital, Hong Kong's hotels and restaurants are internationally recognised. Two hotels in Hong Kong were selected as the best five hotels among "The World's 50 Best Hotels 2023", demonstrating Hong Kong's excellent accommodation experience to the world. Hong Kong is also one of the cities with the most Michelin restaurants. In the "Asia's 50 Best Bars" held last year, eight bars in Hong Kong were selected as the best 50. These would help attract visitors to travel to Hong Kong and further enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong's tourism industry.

Besides, following the "Professional Quality Tourism Services Pledge" launched last year, the HKTb will enhance the "Quality Tourism Services Scheme" and roll out a new round of promotion, including producing a reality show in partnership with a TV channel and awarding recognition to the excellent service of frontline practitioners to foster the hospitality culture in Hong Kong by engaging the public and all walks of life.

(3) We note that travellers' preference is changing. More visitors are expecting to enjoy in-depth experiences, and many of them follow the recommendations online to look for authentic local experiences and photo spots. As such, the HKTb invited more than 2 000 trade stakeholders, media, celebrities, key opinion leaders (KOL) from the Mainland, Southeast Asia and Europe in 2023, including the prestigious movie stars from the Hollywood and other regions as well as bloggers with large numbers of followers on social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Weibo and Bilibili targeting the Mainland source market to come to Hong Kong to experience the diverse tourism features and share their experience on social media to create positive word of mouth and tell the good story of Hong Kong. The HKTb has accumulated more

than 11 million followers on various social media platforms so far. In the past year, promotional contents on these platforms featured more than 2 billion reach. We will continue to promote Hong Kong on various media channels.

In addition, we would invite guests who come to Hong Kong to participate in mega events, conferences and competitions to experience Hong Kong's unique characteristics. For example, during the LIV Golf Professional Tour just held, the organiser invited many famous golf players to visit the Hong Kong Palace Museum, to taste poon choi and to watch a bian lian (face-changing) performance, to experience Hong Kong's unique traditional culture and the Chinese arts. The golf players shared their personal experience on social media platforms, together with the efforts of the HKTB in promoting the relevant events, to showcase Hong Kong's unique tourism experience to the world.

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau will continue to work with the HKTB and relevant stakeholders to actively promote the development of Hong Kong's tourism industry, develop Hong Kong's tourism brand, as well as reinforcing and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international tourism hub.

Thank you, President.

LCQ13: Candida auris

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

It has been reported that from 2019 when the first overseas imported *Candida auris* case appeared to the end of October 2023, a total of more than 600 *Candida auris* carrier cases were detected in Hong Kong, and the number of cases recorded in the first 10 months of 2023 alone was about 350, representing an increase of more than two times as compared to that in 2022, and among such cases, nearly half were nosocomial infection cases and were concentrated in hospitals in the Kowloon Central Cluster. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of *Candida auris* infection cases, the age of the patients and the number of deaths among them in each year since 2019 (set out in a table);
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of cases mentioned in (1) which were nosocomial infection cases in public hospitals and the number of patients involved, with a breakdown by the hospital involved;

(3) as it has been reported that the number of *Candida auris* carrier cases in public hospitals increased substantially in the first 10 months of 2023, whether it knows if the Hospital Authority (HA) has gained an understanding of the reasons for that;

(4) of the new infection control measures against multidrug-resistant fungi currently put in place by public hospitals;

(5) as it has been reported that many patients have become carriers of multidrug-resistant fungi/bacteria as a result of their admission to public hospitals, whether the authorities have reviewed if the relevant infection control measures in public hospitals are adequate; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) regarding elderly singletons infected with multidrug-resistant fungi/bacteria or patients whose family members are incapable of taking care of them, whether it knows if HA has measures in place at present to provide support to and follow up on such patients after their discharge from hospitals; if HA has, whether it knows if HA will consider strengthening the relevant support; if HA will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan is as follows:

Candida auris (*C. auris*) is a multi-drug resistant fungus which was first discovered and isolated from the external ear canal of a patient in Japan in 2009. Since then, *C. auris* has rapidly spread and caused infections globally. At present, over 50 countries have discovered and isolated *C. auris*. The World Health Organization also considers *C. auris* a serious threat to global public health.

C. auris mainly transmits through contact with contaminated environmental surfaces or devices, and direct or indirect contact with carriers. *C. auris* is tenacious and exhibits thermotolerance and osmotolerance. It can adhere to the surface of objects and form a biofilm, survive for several months in the environment and is resistant to common disinfectants. It can therefore spread easily and cause outbreaks in healthcare institutions.

C. auris has been found in non-invasive body sites and can colonise a person without causing active infection. On the other hand, it can cause disease including intra-abdominal, wound, ear and bloodstream infections which can turn out to be severe. The HA has been actively taking measures to monitor *C. auris*, including strengthening admission screening and testing of clinical samples. Since the first imported *C. auris* case found in Hong Kong in 2019, the HA has, up to February 29 this year, recorded 800 *C. auris* cases, most of which had been diagnosed with other underlying diseases. The

cases were aged 20 to 99, among whom about 98 per cent were asymptomatic carriers while only 2 per cent had infection symptoms. The 30-day mortality rate (including all causes of death) of *C. auris* cases recorded in the HA is 16.5 per cent, with the majority of the cases passing away due to other underlying diseases.

The rise in the number of *C. auris* cases over the past few years may be associated with hospitals handling a vast number of patients during the epidemic and the wider use of antibiotics. To reduce the transmission risk of *C. auris* in hospitals, the HA has been adopting "early identification, early segregation, early decolonisation" and risk-based strategies. Hospitals identify potential carriers and isolate patients as early as possible through proactive surveillance and screening of high-risk patients during admission and hospitalisation. Contact precaution measures are also implemented and designated medical equipment are provided to prevent cross-infection. Meanwhile, hospitals also focus on enhancing hand hygiene for staff and environmental hygiene of the wards, including hand hygiene audits, strengthening the surface cleaning of air-conditioning outlets of all wards, enhancing cleaning and disinfection of the surrounding environment of carrier patients and increasing the frequency of changing bed curtains.

For patients who are carriers of *C. auris*, healthcare staff will offer timely follow-up according to their clinical conditions and provide infection control information and leaflets to the patients and their family members. If patients have infection symptoms, doctors will prescribe drugs for treatment. For the majority of asymptomatic carriers, healthcare staff will conduct individual assessment and prescribe a 3-month course of decolonisation regimen to shorten the duration of carriage and reduce the relevant infection risk.

When patients with multi-drug resistant organisms (MDROs) including *C. auris* are discharged from hospitals, in general, they only need to maintain good personal hygiene and avoid sharing of personal items with others while maintaining environmental hygiene and keeping personal items clean so as to prevent and control the spread of MDROs in the community. If patients and their families have specific needs, the HA will refer patients to the Community Nursing Service for support and follow-up, such as monitoring of infection symptoms, or ensuring patient compliance with doctor's prescriptions and proper use of antimicrobials.

In addition, to enhance the infection control of *C. auris* in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), hospitals will conduct pre-discharge screening for RCHE patients based on risk assessments. The HA and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health have also strengthened collaboration to provide infection control assessment and advice for RCHEs with carrier residents, and arrange re-tests for carrier residents in order to prevent transmission of *C. auris* in RCHEs.

The HA will continue to closely monitor the situation of MDROs and review the relevant infection control measures of its healthcare facilities in a timely manner.

LCQ22: Ancillary facilities of the Robin's Nest Country Park

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

The Country Parks (Designation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order 2023 (the Order) was made by the Chief Executive last year after consultation with the Executive Council to designate the relevant area delineated as a country park, to be known as the Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP). The Order came into operation on March 1 this year. However, some members of the public have relayed to me that when they visited RNCP for a site inspection earlier on, they found that there were still no relevant road signs and ancillary facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has formulated a specific implementation timetable for improving the ancillary facilities of RNCP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether it has plans to set up a visitors' centre for RNCP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as it is learnt that there are many military relics of historical value (such as lookouts, firing trenches and forts) in the areas around RNCP, whether the Government will conserve and revitalize such military relics, so as to turn them into military-themed tourism resources; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) as it is learnt that currently, a section of the hiking track involving Lin Ma Hang Road and leading to the MacIntosh Fort (Kong Shan) and the Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine Cave which is undergoing revitalization works is within the Frontier Closed Area (FCA), hikers are prone to trespass on the area inadvertently and need to backtrack and leave through another exit, whether the authorities have considered opening up the part of FCA in the vicinity of RNCP to make it convenient for tourists to go there for sightseeing and leave by going downhill along the trail; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Robin's Nest Country Park (RNCP), located at Sha Tau Kok in the

Northeastern New Territories, covers about 530 hectares of land, which is a hilly terrain with secondary woodland, shrubland and upland grassland, presenting a pleasant landscape of high aesthetic value. RNCP is rich in biodiversity, with over 500 species of plants and animals identified therein, many of which are with high conservation value, such as Red Azalea, Incense Tree, Chinese Grassbird and Chinese Pipistrelle. RNCP also features cultural heritage resources including MacIntosh Forts and Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine relics, and is geographically connected with the Wutong Mountain in Shenzhen, forming a cross-boundary ecological corridor between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The Government officially established RNCP on March 1, 2024 to preserve the natural environment, scenic landscape and cultural heritage resources of the area concerned, and enhance its biodiversity, thereby allowing the public to appreciate the unique scenery and enjoy hiking. However, the public should assess their physical strength and hiking experience in planning a hike at RNCP as it is remotely located with rugged terrain, and it is normally a four-to-five-hour's walk along the two hiking trails. In response to Hon Yiu's questions, a consolidated reply, in consultation with the Security Bureau for parts (3) and (4) of the question, is prepared as follows:

(1) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been improving the hiking trail network, picnic sites and viewing points and other recreational facilities in RNCP. Currently, two hiking trails, namely Robin's Nest Country Trail and Lin Ma Hang Country Trail, are open for use, and their entrances are located at Shan Tsui of Sha Tau Kok and Lin Ma Hang Village respectively. Information boards, directional signs and distance posts, as well as viewing points and interpretation panels, have been installed along the hiking trails to facilitate hiking and appreciation of the nature and cultural heritage. The AFCD has also planned to construct a rain shelter and install various thematic interpretation panels within this year, and will build other hiking trails and facilities to enrich the visitors' experience. In addition, the AFCD is working with relevant departments to revitalise the Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine relics located within RNCP into an open museum to showcase its mining history and bat ecology to the public. The mine relic is currently closed for the revitalisation works, and is expected to be open to the public upon completion of works by end-2024.

(2) As RNCP is located in the mountainous area with rugged terrain, there are practical difficulties in setting up a new visitor centre. The AFCD has been disseminating relevant information of RNCP to the visitors through diverse channels, including website, social media, information boards and waymarks, covering hiking routes and attractions, hiking etiquette and safety. On weekends and public holidays during hiking peak season, interpreters are deployed at major entrances of RNCP to provide visitors' information and introduce the attractions in the area to enhance visitors' understanding of Robin's Nest and enrich their recreational experiences. Besides, the AFCD has been closely communicating with the relevant departments and villagers to explore the feasibility of providing visitors' supporting facilities.

(3) War relics in Robin's Nest area are mainly concentrated at Shan Tsui at the eastern part of the country park. The AFCD has engaged expert to collect relevant historical information and will install interpretation panels at

suitable locations along the hiking trail so that visitors could appreciate the cultural heritage and understand the history while hiking.

(4) Currently, the section of Lin Ma Hang Road between Wang Lek and the entrance of Lin Ma Hang Village is still within Frontier Closed Area (FCA). To facilitate visitors going to RNCP via Lin Ma Hang Village, the AFCD has constructed a connecting path on the hillside outside the FCA, allowing visitors to reach the Lin Ma Hang Country Trail and Lin Ma Hang Lead Mine Cave without trespassing into the Lin Ma Hang Road FCA section. At certain spots along the connection path, stairs and stepping stones were built, railings were added, with overgrown grasses removed and slope-edges stabilized. Hence, visitors need not worry of inadvertently trespassing on the FCA, nor a backtrack to leave through another exit.

Tender results of re-opening of 20-year Government Bonds under Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority, as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), announced that a tender of 20-year Government Bonds through the re-opening of existing 20-year Government Bond (issue number 20GB4205) under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme was held today (March 13).

A total of HK\$0.5 billion 20-year Government Bonds were offered today. A total of HK\$1.872 billion tender applications were received. The bid-to-cover ratio, i.e. the ratio of the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued, is 3.74. The average price accepted is 86.95, implying an annualised yield of 4.392 per cent.

HKSAR Government Institutional Bond Issuance Programme Government Bond tender results

Tender results of the re-opening of 20-year Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme:

Tender Date	: March 13, 2024
Issue Number	: 20GB4205 (Re-open)
Stock Code	: 4255 (HKGB 3.30 4205)
Issue and Settlement Date	: March 14, 2024

Tenor	: 20-year
Maturity Date	: May 26, 2042
Coupon Rate	: 3.30 per cent
Amount Applied	: HK\$1.872 billion
Amount Allotted	: HK\$0.5 billion
Bid-to-Cover Ratio*	: 3.74
Average Price Accepted (Yield)	: 86.95 (4.392 per cent)
Lowest Price Accepted (Yield)	: 86.21 (4.458 per cent)
Pro-rata Ratio	: About 35 per cent
Average Tender Price (Yield)	: 85.43 (4.529 per cent)

* Ratio of the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued.

[LCQ2: Increasing the supply of subsidised sale housing](#)

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Wendy Hong and a reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

In 2018, the Government indicated that it would maintain the supply ratio of 70:30 between public rental housing (PRH) and the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) and other subsidised sale flats (SSFs) under the Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS). There are views pointing out that as the supply of SSFs is still significantly lower than that of PRH even with their production resumed after a 10-year moratorium, some sandwich class people who are ineligible for PRH and unable to afford private housing can only live in sub-divided units, and PRH tenants aspiring for home ownership can hardly gain upward mobility along the housing ladder. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider adjusting the supply ratio of PRH and GSH to other SSFs to 50:50, so as to ease the Government's financial burden and address the public's keen demand for home ownership;

(2) as there are views that given the "inter-changeability" between PRH and subsidized sale housing, the quality of these two types of housing is almost the same, whether the Government will review the principle of "inter-

changeability" with a view to enhancing the quality of subsidised sale housing; and

(3) as there are views that building more PRH may not always be advantageous because some members of the public will deliberately control their income in order to be eligible for and live in PRH, and that PRH, with a substantial amount of land and financial resources required for its construction and operation, is a heavy burden for the Government in the long run, whether the Government will study formulating an optimal proportion of PRH in the overall housing supply and setting a ceiling on its supply in LTHS?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr Hon Wendy Hong is as follows:

It is the vision of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) to provide affordable rental housing to low-income families with housing needs. At the same time, HA also helps low- to middle-income families achieve home ownership through the provision of subsidised sale flats (SSFs). In view of the limited public housing supply, we have been striving to strike a balance between the supply of public rental housing (PRH) and SSFs in order to meet different needs of the public.

According to the Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS), the Government updates the long term housing demand projection annually and presents a rolling 10-year housing supply target to capture social, economic and market changes over time, and makes timely adjustments where necessary. Given the persistent shortfall in the supply of public housing in the past, with a view to strengthening the policy effort to meet the housing needs of the public, the Government revised the public/private split of new housing supply from 60:40 to 70:30 in 2018 and maintained the ratio between PRH/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) and other SSFs (e.g. Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)) at 70:30.

The current-term Government has been pressing ahead to expedite land and housing supply on all fronts through streamlining procedures and enhancing co-ordination of inter-departmental work. Through various measures to enhance speed, efficiency and quantity, the Government has been expediting land creation for housing. In the coming five years (i.e. 2024-25 to 2028-29), it is estimated that the traditional public housing production will be about 142 000 units. Coupled with some 30 000 additional Light Public Housing (LPH) units, the overall public housing supply will reach about 172 000 units, with an increase of about 9 per cent as compared with about 158 000 units in the preceding five-year period. In addition, we have also stepped up efforts in combating tenancy abuse in order to ensure that the precious PRH resources are allocated to those most in need.

As for SSFs, we understand there is strong demand from relevant groups.

The Government has all along been assisting the low- to middle-income families to achieve home ownership through overall planning, supply and financial arrangements, etc.

Firstly, HA has been striving to enhance the housing ladder through the provision of SSFs and launching various schemes, including HOS, GSH, the Private Subsidised Sale Flat – Pilot Scheme, the White Form Secondary Market Scheme and the Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents, etc. with a view to providing an overall framework that bridges the public housing and private housing markets. Amongst them, the discount offered under GSH, which has been regularised since 2018, would be 10 per cent more than that in the preceding HOS sale exercise. Under the "one-for-one" arrangement, PRH tenants with improved financial capabilities can move up the housing ladder and return their PRH units, so that PRH applicants can be housed to public housing as soon as possible.

In terms of supply, HA's SSFs production has increased significantly from about 3 000 units in 2016-17 to about 9 700 units in 2022-23. For HOS 2023 launched recently, about 9 200 units were put up for sale, which was the highest in recent years. As for financial arrangements, according to the "Deed of Guarantee" which HA has entered into with the participating banks and financial institutions, the maximum loan amount for SSFs Green Form purchasers in the primary market is 95 per cent of the selling price, while that for White Form purchasers is 90 per cent of the selling price. Recently, HA has also relaxed the mortgage arrangements for SSFs by extending the maximum mortgage default guarantee period and mortgage repayment period under the "Deeds of Guarantee" provided by HA to 50 years and 30 years respectively so as to enable purchasers of SSFs to obtain more affordable mortgage and facilitate the circulation of SSFs.

We understand that there is an expectation to increase the supply of SSFs. However, as the average waiting time for PRH is still relatively long, it is considered that at this stage, our primary target is to step up our efforts in increasing the PRH supply for housing those applicants in need as soon as possible, thus improving their livelihood. Looking ahead, there will be a significant increase in public housing supply in the second five-year period (i.e. 2029-30 to 2033-34) which will provide more room to adjust the ratio between PRH/SSFs. As it takes time for public housing construction, we will make timely review on the ratio.

As public demand for different types of public housing changes over time and the overall environment, HA needs to maintain flexibility in housing types so as to enhance interchangeability amongst PRH, GSH and other SSFs during project development, and makes timely adjustments of the respective supply in order to respond to the needs of the community in a timely manner. The oversubscription of SSFs sale exercises has showed that the attractiveness of SSFs is maintained under the interchangeability arrangement. Apart from the above, we have also been actively improving the quality of SSFs. In response to public aspirations for larger living space, the Government has stipulated in the 2022 Policy Address that the saleable area of all SSFs completed from 2026-27 onwards will be no less than 26

square metres.

We will continue to take into account the prevailing socio-economic circumstances in the LTHS annual review exercise and review the public/private split, and makes timely adjustments where necessary.