

Transport Department's response to the Office of The Ombudsman's direct investigation report on "Problem of Abandoned Vehicles on Government Land"

Regarding a report released by the Office of The Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) today (September 1) on its direct investigation into "Problem of Abandoned Vehicles on Government Land", the Transport Department (TD) response is as follows:

The TD expresses appreciation for the work of the Ombudsman in the direct investigation, and agrees with the recommendations in the report. The TD has all along been proactively facilitating inter-departmental joint operations to clear abandoned vehicles on public roads and is conducting a legislative amendment exercise with a view to improving the vehicle registration and licensing system. In respect of the recommendations put forward by the Office of The Ombudsman, the TD has embarked on a series of initiatives.

The Government will amend the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374E) such that, for vehicles unlicensed for two years, the registered owner will commit an offence if he/she takes no action to renew the vehicle licence; cancel the registration; or obtain an exemption from the Commissioner for Transport. The legislative amendment exercise aims to compel vehicle owners to fulfil their responsibilities and properly dispose of their vehicles. We propose to set the penalty of the offence at a level that is sufficiently high, in order to achieve a strong deterrent effect with due consideration of the highly precious land resources in Hong Kong, which can also reflect the cost that the Government may incur in clearing abandoned vehicles. The TD is consulting the Department of Justice on the legislative amendment exercise (including the penalty level).

We expect that the legislative amendment proposal can be submitted to the Legislative Council within the year. Subject to the passage of the relevant legislative amendment and the completion of system enhancements, the new arrangement can be implemented in the first half of 2024. The TD will step up publicity to convey to the vehicle owners their obligations as well as the requirements and penalties under the new legislation. Meanwhile, the TD will explore sending reminders through e-contact means to notify vehicle owners that their vehicle licences have expired and that they should properly handle their vehicles in a timely manner in accordance with the legal requirements.

The TD will assist in the investigation work of the Lands Department (LandsD) and provide the particulars of vehicle owners kept in the register of vehicles to facilitate the LandsD to track down the identity of vehicle owners who are suspected of abandoning their vehicles.

To strengthen departmental collaboration and jointly formulate procedures for handling abandoned motorcycles in public rear lanes, the Government decided in recent meetings of the District Matters Co-ordination Task Force on tackling hygiene black spots in the territory to extend the scope of the inter-departmental joint operations on abandoned vehicles from public roads to public rear lanes.

The TD will continue to proactively participate in the inter-departmental joint operations to handle abandoned vehicles on public roads and press ahead with the legislative amendment, so as to address the problem of abandoned vehicles on government land.