

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EEB(F)124**

**(Question Serial No. 1233)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Set against the background of the beautiful public toilets with distinctive features and dedicated cleansing workers in Tokyo, the movie "Perfect Days" leaves a good impression on the audiences regarding the public hygiene of the city.

Public toilets in Hong Kong, on the contrary, give people an impression of strong stench and poor hygiene despite a number of beautification works performed in recent years and the dedicated efforts of outsourced cleansing workers, most of whom are with meagre income.

1. Please provide the public funds and manpower to be allocated for the management, operation, refurbishment and beautification of public toilets in the new financial year.
2. Has any survey been conducted to see if the remuneration of outsourced public toilet cleansing workers under the outsourcing arrangement is reasonable or not?
3. What are the policies to enhance the management of public toilets, in particular to improve the remuneration of outsourced cleansing workers, who have been working hard and living within their means (to prevent them from being exploited and underpaid under the outsourcing arrangement which involves too many managers but not enough frontline workers, as well as to raise the hygiene awareness among members of the public and tourists in using public toilets)?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chun, Paul (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

1. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is planning for the 2024-25 Enhanced Public Toilet Refurbishment Programme, and the estimated expenditure on the projects in the year is around \$43 million. The Programme is undertaken by staff from various departments who have to handle other work at the same time, whereas the management and operation of public toilets under the purview of the Department is part of the duties of staff of the Cleansing Sections and the service contractors. A breakdown of the relevant manpower and expenditure is not available.

2&3. Service contracts are awarded by the Department through open tender in accordance with the Government's procurement requirements and procedures. Starting from 1 April 2019, the Government has implemented a series of measures to enhance the

protection of outsourced non-skilled workers in respect of their remuneration and benefits. The Department has forthwith incorporated/amended the relevant terms in the tender documents for the outsourced cleansing service contracts, which include increasing the weighting of technical assessment in the tender marking scheme to 50%; increasing the weighting of remuneration of workers under technical assessment to 25%; stipulating a 6% contractual gratuity for workers with 12 months of service upon expiry of contract or termination of employment; and stipulating a statutory holiday pay for those with 1 month of service and an additional pay of at least 50% of wages for working during typhoon signal no. 8 or above. In May 2023, the Government further implemented enhancement measures to stipulate that non-skilled workers with less than 1 year of continuous service will be entitled to contract gratuity payment at 6% if their employment contracts have been terminated because the services provided under the related service contracts are no longer required by the Government, or the performance of the contractor is unsatisfactory.

Upon implementation of these measures, the pay levels and benefits of non-skilled workers employed by the contractors have been significantly improved. From April 2019 to December 2023, the Department awarded a total of 74 street cleansing service contracts. The average committed monthly wage offered to a toilet attendant by a tenderer has increased by about 61% from \$10,129 in end-2018 to \$16,314 in December 2023.

The Department has implemented an approach of procuring the public toilet management service separately through dedicated contracts on a pilot basis in Mong Kok and Tsuen Wan districts since October 2022 and May 2023 respectively. This means that the public toilet management service is taken out from the current street cleansing service contracts and covered separately by dedicated contracts. According to the Department's evaluation, there are improvements in both the cleansing service performance and the contract management efficiency for public toilets under the new approach. The Department is planning to progressively extend the application of such approach to other districts.

The Department is committed to raising public awareness of environmental hygiene by enhancing public education and publicity through various channels, including the social media platform pages of Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak and display of posters at prominent places in public toilets with a higher patronage to disseminate the messages of keeping the toilets clean and hygienic as well as proper use of toilet facilities.

- End -