

LCQ18: Used clothes collection cages

Following is a question by the Hon Choy So-yuk and a written reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Professor Arthur K C Li (in the absence of the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho) at the Legislative Council meeting today (March 14):

Question:

The Government adopted a new approach in July last year to deter recyclers from placing cages on the streets to collect used clothes. It has been reported that the problem has rekindled recently, with collection cages more roughly made than previous ones being placed on the streets for over a week and not removed. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the following from July last year to February this year:

- (i) the respective numbers of collecting cages seized in various districts each month; and
- (ii) the number of persons prosecuted for placing collection cages on the streets and the penalties imposed on them;

(b) of the number of staff deployed to implement the new approach, and whether additional staff will be deployed; and

(c) whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the new approach; if it has, of the outcome of the review, including the areas for improvement identified; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) (i) From July 2006 to February 2007, the Authority removed a total of 875 unauthorised on-street collection cages. The monthly breakdown on the number of cages removed in each district is shown in Table (1).

(ii) The Authority initiated the above clearance operations under the Summary

Offences Ordinance. To make prosecutions under the Ordinance, the Authority must confirm ownership of these on-street cages. Most of the cleared cages do not bear correct information about the owners, and no one has claimed back the cleared cages since the launch of the new measures. Hence, the Authority does not have any prosecution cases up to now.

(b) The District Offices of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) have deployed existing staff resources to implement the new measures. The actual manpower requirement for each operation will depend on the scale of the operation. Under normal circumstances, FEHD will deploy at least one enforcement officer and two to three workmen for each operation. The concerned HAD District Office will deploy one officer to co-ordinate the clearance operation.

Since the implementation of the new measures, the concerned departments are able to promptly remove the on-street cages through blitz operations or referrals by members of the public. We will closely monitor the adequacy of existing resources to ensure that the measures against on-street cages are vigorously enforced.

(c) Since the adoption of the new measures, HAD District Offices have been closely monitoring the situation of on-street used clothes collection cages. They have also coordinated government efforts against the problem. The number of on-street used clothes cages has been substantially reduced and the situation has been improved visibly. Based on our observations and feedback from members of the District Councils, the new measures have effectively addressed the problem of on-street used clothes collection cages. In fact, there is a notable decrease in the number of complaints received by Lands Department concerning illegal occupation of government land by used clothes collection cages.

When reviewing the effectiveness of the clearance operations, the Authority was of the view that more legitimate channels should be provided to facilitate the community to donate used clothes. In October last year, HAD launched the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks scheme which aims to facilitate the public to donate used clothes in support of environmental protection and charitable purposes. Under the scheme, HAD District Offices liaised with the concerned departments and identified around 170 convenient off-street locations (such as parks, entrances to community centres and sports centres, etc.) for placing collection banks operated by non-profit making organisations. The scheme has shown good progress. The amount of used clothes collected under the scheme has increased steadily. We

will continue to identify more suitable locations for placing Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks. We will also continue our public education efforts through the media to encourage people to donate used clothes through legitimate channels.

Ends/Wednesday, March 14, 2007