

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

THB(T)038

(Question Serial No. 1682)

Head: (60) Highways Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (2) District and Maintenance Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (Daniel K W CHUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The plans for 2017 include -

- (a) cleansing all footbridges and subways at least once per quarter;
- (b) inspecting/cleansing traffic signs, directional signs at least once per quarter;
- (c) inspecting/cleansing traffic signs, directional signs on expressways at least twice per year.

However, the results are often less than satisfactory in the areas maintained by the Highways Department (HyD). By contrast, contractors of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) (Head 49) are required by tenders to clean busy streets at least 1 time per week and even 3 times for markets. Also, there are ample examples of street name plates being blocked by vegetation or covered in dust. Regarding Programme (2) District and Maintenance Works, would the Government advise -

- (1) Why the ultimate reduction of 6.1% in expenditure in 2016-17 was not spent on improving the various cleansing tasks mentioned above?
- (2) Will more efforts be devoted to cleansing of footbridges and subways through redeployment of departmental resources or the increased provision of 19.3% in 2017-18, so as to be on a par with the FEHD in terms of cleansing frequency?
- (3) Without the sweep of rain water, various road signs under noise barriers or subways are especially dirty; blockages by different kinds of vegetation are also frequently found on other roads, with situations near work sites being the worst. Both scenarios cause difficulty to drivers in noting the road conditions. As provision is increased, will this issue be dealt with comprehensively, with more inspections and cleansing in this year? If not, what other specific options for improvement will be given?

Asked by: Hon LAM Cheuk-ting (Member Question No. 44)

Reply:

- (1) In contrast to decreasing as a result of the adjustment in overall expenditure, the HyD's expenditure on road cleansing in 2016-17 as compared to that in 2015-16 had increased, with such expenditure of the Urban and the New Territories Regional Offices for 2015-16 and 2016-17 being \$65 odd million and \$69 odd million. Cleansing of

footbridges, subways and road facilities including street name plates, traffic signs and directional signs belongs to one of the items under the HyD's maintenance contracts, with the cleansing standard and requirements for these road facilities stipulated in the relevant contracts. The HyD will closely monitor the performance of the contractors to ensure their work is up to the stipulated standard. Depending on the actual situation, such as traffic flow, pollution level in the surroundings and the number of complaints, etc., the Department will also increase the frequency of cleansing in order to maintain the cleanliness and the condition of the structures of roads.

(2) There is established division of cleansing work concerning footbridges and subways, including the associated lifts and escalators, between the HyD and the FEHD. In brief, the HyD is responsible for the structural maintenance of the footbridges and subways under their ambit. To ensure the structures of these facilities are in good condition, the HyD will deploy staff to conduct regular inspection on footbridges and subways so as to timely arrange for the cleansing works. Normally, thorough cleansing of footbridges and subways will be conducted at least once per quarter whereas the floor of footbridges and subways of high usage will be cleansed at least once per month. Depending on the actual need, the HyD will also conduct more inspections and cleansing to ensure their structures remain in good condition. As regards routine hygienic cleansing and refuse clearing for footbridges and subways, including the clearing of vomits and excretions of pets, these tasks are under the purview of the FEHD. The FEHD will also, if necessary, carry out localised cleansing for affected areas after clearing vomits or excretions of pets. Due to the different nature of work performed by the HyD and FEHD, no direct comparison between the departments can be made in terms of cleansing frequency.

(3) Under the current contracts between the HyD and contractors, the latter have to carry out regular cleansing of road facilities, including noise barriers and various road signs. At busy road sections, the frequency of cleansing will be higher. During regular inspections to public roads, the contractors will make prompt arrangements to trim the vegetation if driving safety is found compromised. The HyD will deploy staff to conduct site inspection to ensure the relevant work is conducted in accordance with the contractual requirements. Moreover, when the state of cleanliness of road signs for some road sections cannot be upkept by the regular cleansing schedule, the HyD will require the contractors to carry out additional cleansing works. As regards the state of cleanliness in areas near work sites, the sites' responsible parties will be reminded by the HyD from time to time to pay attention to cleanliness and hygiene of the sites and nearby areas, in particular to the suppression of dust and weed growth to upkeep the cleanliness of the roads near the sites.

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