

LCQ7: Measures to combat drink driving

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Wong-fat and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (April 14):

Question:

The Road Traffic Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 ("the Amendment Ordinance") was enacted in 2008 to implement measures such as empowering police officers to conduct random breath test on drivers and raising the penalties on drink driving offences, in order to step up efforts in combating drink driving. The Amendment Ordinance came into operation on February 9 last year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the respective numbers of traffic accidents caused by drink driving in each of the 12 months before and after the Amendment Ordinance came into operation; and
- (b) whether the authorities have any plan to assess the effectiveness of the aforesaid measures, and whether it is necessary to further step up measures to combat drink driving?

Reply:

President,

The Road Traffic Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 ("the Amendment Ordinance") has introduced various measures to combat drink driving. These include raising penalties on drink driving offences by disqualifying the offenders from driving for not less than three months on first conviction and requiring them to attend a driving improvement course on a mandatory basis; and empowering the Police to conduct random breath tests.

My reply to the two parts of the question is as follows:

- (a) The above measures to combat drink driving have come into effect since February 9, 2009. There were 90 and 29 drink-driving related accidents involving injuries or deaths in each of the 12-month-period before and after the implementation of the measures respectively. Detailed figures with monthly breakdowns are provided at

Annex.

(b) There has been a significant drop of about 70% in the number of traffic accidents involving drink driving since the implementation of the above measures, which shows the effectiveness of the measures. Nevertheless, drink driving can bring about grave consequences and the Killed and Serious Injuries rate for drink driving accidents has consistently been higher than the corresponding rate for all traffic accidents. The public continues to have concern about drinking driving offences. We plan to introduce a Bill into the Legislative Council in this quarter with a view to implementing a series of measures to further combat drink driving and relevant offences. The measures include introducing a 3-tier penalty system with a sliding scale (i.e. the higher the alcohol level in excess of the prescribed limit, the longer the driving disqualification period); making a high alcohol level (at or exceeds three times of the prescribed limit) as a circumstance of aggravation in all dangerous driving offences; and providing for the consecutive implementation of imprisonment and driving disqualification.

On law enforcement, the Police will continue with the random breath test operations. We will also continue to step up publicity and education to enhance the drivers' awareness of safe driving and the grave consequences of drink driving.

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