

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CEDB(CIT)306

(Question Serial No. 0257)

Head: (168) Hong Kong Observatory

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (1) Weather Services

Controlling Officer: Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (SHUN Chi Ming)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

Question:

Regarding the Cold Weather Warning, please advise on the following:

- (a) The respective figures on Cold Weather Warnings issued by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) in the past three years (2013-14 to 2015-16), and the figures on those involving reported death of or damage to vegetables and fish.
- (b) To many members of the public, the rare cold surge in January this year revealed that the weather forecasts by the HKO were not fully accurate, rendering the public, fishermen and farmers not well-prepared. What measures will be taken by the HKO to enhance its weather forecasts? What are the estimated expenditure and staffing provision involved?

Asked by: Hon Steven HO Chun-yin (Member Question No. 24)

Reply:

- (a) The number of Cold Weather Warnings issued by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) in the past three years (2013-14 to 2015-16) is as follows:

	No. of Cold Weather Warnings issued	No. of times involving reported loss of crops or death of fish [#]
April 2013 – March 2014	8	Crops: 0 Fish: 1
April 2014 – March 2015	8	Crops: 0 Fish: 0
April 2015 – February 2016 (up to end of February)	6	Crops: 1 Fish: 5

[#] Figures provided by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

- (b) In connection with the cold weather event in late January 2016, the HKO mentioned in its 9 day weather forecast on 15 January (9 days ahead) about the cold weather to be brought by an intense winter monsoon in the later part of the week of 18-24 January. In view of the intense cold surge, the HKO issued a Special Weather Tip on 20 January pointing out that the weather would turn cold significantly and there would be icing and frost on high ground and in the New Territories. The HKO further issued a Cold Weather Warning and arranged a press conference on 21 January to alert the public of the various effects of the very cold weather. The HKO subsequently issued a Frost Warning on 23 January to specifically alert the farmers and the people concerned of likely ground frost on high ground and in the northern part of the New Territories.

The HKO has drawn experience from the cold weather event in late January, with a view to enhancing its forecasting techniques to meet the challenges of more extreme weather conditions brought by climate change. The HKO will continue to exchange experience with meteorological organisations around the world on matters such as weather monitoring, forecast and warnings. This is part of the HKO's on-going work and only involves existing manpower. As the expenditure has been subsumed into the provision for the HKO, it is difficult to quantify it separately.

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