

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 1242)

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:

Information shows that the actual percentages of forecasts perceived as accurate by the public for 2014 and 2015 were as low as 77% and 78% respectively, while the planned percentage for 2016 is still maintained at 78%. Such figures are not desirable. Under the severe cold spell earlier, there was frost in some areas of Hong Kong and the temperature even dropped to 3 degrees. The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) was criticised for providing inaccurate forecast, with forecasting ability poorer than its counterparts overseas. In this connection, would HKO introduce any measures or procure any new equipment in 2016-17 to enhance its forecasting accuracy, with a view to restoring public confidence in HKO and raising the percentage perceived as accurate by the public?

Asked by: Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun (Member Question No. 9)

Reply:

The percentage of forecasts perceived as accurate by the public represents the subjective impression assessment made by the public in response to telephone surveys. The percentages of accurate public forecasts as verified by objective means were 91% and 92% in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In the past year, the average error of temperature forecasts made by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) was approximately 1 degree Celsius, the performance being on par with top standards in the world.

The main meteorological facilities of HKO comprise meteorological radars, meteorological satellite reception system, a lightning location network, etc. Such facilities are adequate for meeting the present needs of HKO in relation to the provision of weather forecast services. HKO will keep abreast of developments and consider acquiring more advanced meteorological facilities suitable for use in Hong Kong in a timely manner, so as to enhance the department's ability in carrying out weather monitoring, forecasts and warnings.

HKO has drawn experience from the cold weather event in January, with a view to enhancing its forecasting techniques to meet the challenges of more extreme weather conditions brought by climate change. HKO will continue to exchange experiences with meteorological organisations around the world on matters such as weather monitoring, forecasts and warnings.

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