

Government responses to enquiries about creation of directorate posts

Regarding media enquiries about the creation of directorate posts, a Government spokesman gave the following reply today (March 31):

To ensure the sustainability of public finances, the Government has strictly controlled the civil service establishment since 2021-22. In 2024-25, the Government will continue to maintain its target of zero growth in the civil service establishment, with the aim of containing the overall establishment at a level not exceeding that as at end-March 2021.

Maintaining the target of zero growth in the overall establishment does not imply that there can be no growth in the establishment of individual bureaux/departments (B/D). The establishment of individual B/Ds, including directorate and non-directorate posts as well as permanent and time-limited posts, may still increase having regard to operational needs and with full justifications. However, on the premise of maintaining zero growth in the civil service establishment, the number of posts created by the Government will not exceed that of the posts expected to be deleted.

As compared to that of end-March 2021, despite the continuous increase in public services, not only has the size of civil service establishment not increased in the four-year period, but has reduced by about 2 000 posts on an accumulated basis.

The civil service establishment includes posts on the permanent establishment and time-limited posts. Time-limited directorate posts are referred to as "supernumerary directorate posts", which are posts on the non-permanent establishment. It does not mean that they are counted outside the establishment. To avoid misunderstanding, the Government has clearly pointed out in its submissions to the Legislative Council (LegCo) since November last year that time-limited directorate posts are also counted towards the establishment and there is absolutely no "double-talk".

The number of directorate posts accounts for less than one per cent of the overall civil service establishment. The Government has a rigorous mechanism to ensure that any proposal for the creation of a directorate post is supported with full justifications and the concerned post has a substantial operational need before seeking necessary approval from the LegCo. While the change in individual non-directorate posts does not require the approval of the LegCo, any increase will be subject to stringent internal scrutiny by the Government.

In 2024, the Government expects to submit proposals to the Establishment Subcommittee of the LegCo to create four permanent civil service directorate posts and four time-limited civil service directorate posts, and to retain three time-limited civil service directorate posts. The proposed number of civil service directorate posts represents a significant reduction compared

to the number of posts proposed to be created in the past few years. The same applies to non-directorate posts.