

LCQ14: Promoting living and working in same district

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

There are views that unbalanced district development in the past has resulted in a large number of residents of New Territories districts having to travel across districts for employment, with some of them commuting for as long as three hours every day, and the increase in residents' travelling expenses and commuting time is not conducive to their physical and mental health as well as work-life balance. As regards promoting living and working in the same district, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics respectively on the home-job ratios and the proportions of residents taking up cross-district employment in the 18 districts across the territory;

(2) given the Government's replanning of Tuen Mun West Area (including Lung Kwu Tan) and development of the Northern Metropolis (including Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area), whether it has estimated to what level such development will raise the home-job ratios in the Tuen Mun District, Yuen Long District and North District;

(3) as the Government has indicated in the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 that it will cease using coal for daily electricity generation by 2035, and CLP Power Hong Kong Limited has also indicated in the 2022 Sustainability Report that older coal-fired generation units at the Castle Peak A Power Station will be retired in the next few years, how the Government will make use of the site of the Castle Peak Power Station to raise the home-job ratio in the district; and

(4) of the current progress of the revitalisation and re-industrialisation of the industrial areas in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long; whether the relevant revitalisation measures will tie in with the development of new quality productive forces, and whether it has estimated the number of additional employment places that can be created?

Reply:

President,

In Hong Kong, industrial and commercial development in traditional urban areas is relatively more mature, leading to the concentration of more job positions in the urban areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. It remains

commonplace that citizens residing in the New Territories need to commute to urban areas for work. In planning the long-term development of Hong Kong, it is one of our visions to improve home-job balance. To this end, in the final report of "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" (Hong Kong 2030+) promulgated in 2021, the Government proposed introducing more land for different types of economic use in New Development Areas (NDAs) such as the Northern Metropolis through strategic land use planning, with a view to fostering development of industries and creating job opportunities. We will also provide residential housing within such NDAs to bring jobs closer to homes, thereby reducing the commuting time and improving the quality of life for workers.

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

(1) According to the statistics of the Census and Statistics Department, as of mid-2023, approximately 55 per cent (around 1 900 000 persons) of the overall labour force of Hong Kong reside in the New Territories. However, only about 32 per cent (around 860 000 persons) of the employed persons in Hong Kong work in the New Territories. The figures on labour force and employed persons across 18 districts of Hong Kong are shown at Annex. The Government does not maintain data on how residents take up cross-district employment.

(2) As a direction set out in the final report of Hong Kong 2030+ mentioned above, the Government will strive to make available more industry sites and create more job opportunities in the course of taking forward the development of various NDAs in the New Territories. Taking the Northern Metropolis as an example, one of the development targets is to achieve "industry-driven planning and better home-job balance". The Government expects that around 500 000 new jobs will be created upon the completion of the whole Northern Metropolis. We believe the new job opportunities will help reduce the need for residents of the relevant districts to commute across districts for work and promote home-job balance. For instance, the Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen NDA located in the western part of the Northern Metropolis, together with the Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Yuen Long South NDA and Lau Fau Shan, Tsim Bei Tsui and Pak Nai (Lau Fau Shan) areas, are positioned as the high-end professional services and logistics hub of the Northern Metropolis. NDAs not only could provide a considerable number of public and private housing units to address the current shortage of housing supply, but could also provide commercial and industry sites for development of finance, professional services and logistics services, etc., thereby facilitating economic development and job creation. On the other hand, new railway and major road infrastructure being planned in accordance with development of NDAs will also improve the overall traffic and commuting situation for residents.

In addition, we are conducting a planning and engineering study for Lung Kwu Tan reclamation and the re-planning of Tuen Mun West area, with a view to developing high value-added economic industries such as high-end green technology industries, advanced construction industry and modern logistics parks. It is anticipated that new job opportunities will be created in Tuen Mun district, in turn further promoting home-job balance within the district.

The study will also propose improvement measures based on the traffic demand of the proposed development, which include exploring the feasibility of widening Lung Mun Road which connects Lung Kwu Tan and Tuen Mun West areas to Tuen Mun town centre, and constructing a new road within the Lung Kwu Tan reclamation area, so as to improve the local and external transport connectivity for facilitating people who work within or outside the area. We plan to consult the relevant stakeholders on the land use proposals for this area in the first half of next year.

(3) The Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) states that the Government has announced in the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 the target to cease using coal for daily electricity generation by 2035, and to achieve the long-term target of net-zero electricity generation before 2050. Three of the four coal-fired generation units at the CLP Power Hong Kong Limited (CLP) Castle Peak A Power Station have already been retired in or before 2024, while the remaining coal-fired generation unit is expected to be repurposed for emergency backup or retired in the coming few years. The EEB understands that the CLP would start the demolition works as early as 2027 and thereafter the works are expected to be completed in phases within about five to six years. The Government will discuss the long-term arrangement for the site with the CLP in due course.

(4) The Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau indicates that the Government has put in place various measures to promote new industrialisation and to allow traditional manufacturing industries to upgrade and transform their operations through technology. These measures aim to enhance production efficiency, improve competitiveness of corporates, and inject new momentum into the development of Hong Kong's economy. On promotion of new-industrialisation, we expect that facilities such as light weight workshop and co-working space in the Microelectronics Centre in Yuen Long InnoPark, will be made available by end 2024 for tenants to move in gradually in a bid to promote the development of microelectronics.

The Development Bureau has all along encouraged the industry to revitalise old industrial buildings (IBs). The 2024 Policy Address has announced the extension of various measures under the Revitalisation Scheme for Industrial Buildings to the end of 2027, with a view to continuing to encourage redevelopment and conversion of aged IBs. Since the measures were rolled out in 2018, the Town Planning Board has approved a total of 71 applications for relaxation of plot ratio (up to 20 per cent) for redevelopment of IBs, including three cases with IBs situated in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long districts. Extension of the measures facilitates better utilisation of existing IBs in various districts and fosters economic development.