

LCQ3: Assist the youth in securing employment

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (November 18):

Question:

As Hong Kong's economy has been hard hit by social disturbances and the epidemic, the unemployment rate has surged to 6.4 per cent which is the highest in 16 years, and the unemployment rate of the youth aged 20 to 24 even stands as high as 20 per cent. In addition to creating around 30 000 time-limited jobs in the coming two years, the Government will recruit over 10 000 civil servants and hire about 5 000 short-term youth interns. However, some academics have pointed out that as fresh graduates and the youth have less working experience, their unemployment rate will continue to climb. On the other hand, the rapid economic development of the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) in recent years can provide quite a number of employment opportunities for the youth of Hong Kong, but this requires the Government's provision of more support measures and incentives for them. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the progress of the work to create jobs for the youth, with a breakdown of such jobs by the industry to which such jobs belong and the job type;
- (2) of the measures in place to help and facilitate youth who are interested in going to the Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area for career development, to have a better grasp of the information on living, the job markets and working environments in such cities, with a view to helping them seek employment there and overcome barriers; and
- (3) whether it has plans to collaborate with the business sector in creating job opportunities in Hong Kong and the Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area for the youth, and to step up job matching services for them; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant bureaux and department, my reply to the Member's question is set out below:

- (1) The Job Creation Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund will create 30 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors in the coming two years for people of different skill sets and academic qualifications to relieve the worsening unemployment situation due to the epidemic. As graduates and young

people lacking work experience have encountered great difficulties in finding job opportunities, many of the jobs under the Job Creation Scheme are created specifically for fresh graduates, or especially suitable for young people to apply. Among the some more than 20 000 jobs already created, nearly 10 000 belong to this type of positions. With elements or training conducive to long-term career development specially included in these job positions, young people will be able to gain the necessary work experience. For example, around 2 000 jobs are created to subsidise private employers to employ graduates and assistant professionals from the engineering, architecture, surveying, town planning and landscape streams. More than 2 000 jobs are created to subsidise the financial services sectors, local fintech companies, start-ups and other enterprises engaging in fintech-related businesses to employ staff. More than 500 jobs are created to subsidise private companies to employ fresh graduates working in areas related to environmental protection. There are also jobs created in other sectors such as new positions specifically for university graduates in the logistics sector. In addition, there are also time-limited jobs for handling executive and clerical work in government departments, and training subsidy schemes for university graduates and trainee places, etc.

(2) The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) subsidises non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland to organise Mainland internship activities for local young people, with a view to enabling them to see for themselves the actual workplace environment of the Mainland, as well as acquire a deeper understanding of the employment market, work culture and development opportunities therein. In particular, being one of the major cooperation initiatives between Hong Kong and Guangdong, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Hong Kong Youth Internship Scheme launched under the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland has been expanded to cover all the Mainland cities in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) since last year. Approximately 950 young people have taken up internship placements in GBA, from which they have gained a deeper understanding of the labour market, workplace culture and career prospects of the Mainland. It has also helped our young people set their career goals ahead, accumulate work experience and build interpersonal networks, thus facilitating their future development in GBA.

In addition, a new funding scheme has been introduced under HAB's Youth Development Fund to subsidise NGOs to organise short-term experiential programmes at the innovation and entrepreneurial bases in the Mainland cities in GBA, with a view to enriching Hong Kong young people's understanding of the innovation and entrepreneurial bases, as well as the relevant policies and supporting measures on innovation and entrepreneurship of the Mainland. This will in turn assist the young people to consider settling in the relevant innovation and entrepreneurial bases and starting businesses therein in the future.

HAB will continue to enhance and expand the various youth internship and entrepreneurship programmes on the Mainland with a view to providing young people of Hong Kong deeper, wider and more diversified opportunities to explore GBA as well as other Mainland provinces and cities. By experiencing

the local culture and conducting in-depth exchange with local young people, Hong Kong youth could gain a better understanding of and seize the opportunities in GBA and integrate in the overall development of the country.

(3) The Labour Department (LD) provides comprehensive and free employment services to job seekers (including young people) through its job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and e-platform, etc., and works closely with employers from different industries, canvassing vacancies suitable for job seekers with different qualifications and work experience, with a view to assisting the job seekers in securing employment. The job centres also provide personalised employment advisory services for job seekers in need and help match them to suitable jobs.

To enhance the employability of young people, LD implements the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) to provide one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training (OJT) for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below. In view of the deteriorating unemployment situation, LD increased the OJT allowance payable to employers under YETP in September 2020 to further encourage employers to engage young people. At the same time, LD launched a pilot scheme to encourage eligible young people participating in YETP to undergo and complete OJT through the provision of a retention allowance, thereby stabilising employment.

LD has strengthened the liaison with various partners, including supporting the Hong Kong Chinese Enterprises Association in launching the New Graduates-New Opportunities Scheme. The scheme provides local university graduates 2 000 newly created vacancies lasting for not less than six months and offering a monthly salary of not less than HK\$12,000.

LD has since 2015 organised in collaboration with relevant chamber of commerce a total of 12 large-scale thematic job fairs featuring employment and vacancy information of the Mainland to enhance the understanding of local job seekers (including young persons) on job opportunities and employment conditions on the Mainland (including GBA), and to assist them in finding suitable jobs. LD has also set up a dedicated webpage of Information on Employment on the Mainland in its Interactive Employment Service website, providing information on job vacancies on the Mainland advertised by local employers, as well as introducing Mainland employment information.

The Government will continue to liaise with different sectors of the society to strive to create more employment opportunities in Hong Kong and GBA for young people.