

LCQ4: Encouraging the youth to develop careers on the Mainland

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Liao and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (January 6):

Question:

As Hong Kong's economy has been hard hit by the epidemic, the youth unemployment rate remains high. In this connection, the Government has launched the "Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme" and the "Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" to encourage the youth to develop their careers in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area). However, the concern of society is that whether the youth of Hong Kong have been misled by the hatred-inciting and anti-establishment riots that lasted for as long as one year, resulting in their dampened desire to go to the Mainland for development. The findings of a survey targeting at the youth aged between 15 and 39 have shown that, while the percentage of respondents who have heard of the development plan for the Greater Bay Area has increased significantly from 55 per cent two years ago to over 85 per cent, those identifying with it only account for 22 per cent, representing a slight drop as compared with that two years ago, and the percentage of respondents who are unwilling to go to the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area for development has risen substantially from 31 per cent two years ago to more than 50 per cent. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the details, including the numbers of persons and percentages, of Hong Kong youth who are currently studying or have taken up employment in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, together with a breakdown by the age group to which they belong; if such figures are unavailable, whether it will compile the statistics on a regular basis;

(2) of the eligibility criteria for and other details of the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, and the respective estimated numbers of youth who can benefit from the two aforesaid schemes; the measures in place to assist other youth who cannot benefit from such schemes in developing their careers in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area; and

(3) whether it will examine the reasons why an increase in the number of youth who have heard of the development plan for the Greater Bay Area does not lead to a rise in the number of those who identify with it; what targeted measures the newly established Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office will take, when it conducts strategic publicity and promotion activities, to facilitate the youth to gain an in-depth understanding of and identify with the development of the Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

The objectives of the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) are to further deepen cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, promote coordinated regional economic development, leverage their complementary advantages, and develop an international first-class bay area for living, working and travelling. The Greater Bay Area has a population exceeding 72 million with a gross domestic product of approximately US\$1.7 trillion. As one of the most open and economically vibrant regions in China, the Greater Bay Area has many opportunities to offer and has huge development potential.

The development of the Greater Bay Area not only will give new impetus to the economic development of Hong Kong, but will also be where major opportunities for Hong Kong's economic recovery after the pandemic lie. It will provide young people with more and greater room for development.

Since the promulgation of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in February 2019, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government) has kept in close contact with relevant central ministries, the governments of Guangdong Province and the Mainland municipalities of the Greater Bay Area, as well as the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region to proactively take forward the development of the Greater Bay Area on the basis of "one country, two systems". Many policy initiatives facilitating Hong Kong residents – especially young people – who wish to study, work and start new businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area have since been introduced by the Central Government, including measures supporting youth innovation and entrepreneurship, and the opening up of positions in the civil service and at public institutions for application by Hong Kong and Macao residents. These measures will provide young people from Hong Kong with more quality job opportunities, a career ladder and a broader scope of development. The HKSAR Government encourages young people to focus on the Greater Bay Area and to grasp the opportunities it provides.

Upon consulting the Home Affairs Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Education Bureau, our consolidated reply to the Hon Martin Liao's question is as follows:

(1) The HKSAR Government does not maintain statistics or breakdowns on the number of young people from Hong Kong studying or working in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. Yet, information provided by the Ministry of Education shows that there were in total some 7 700 Hong Kong students studying at higher education institutions and research institutes in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area in the 2017/18 academic year. Although at present the HKSAR Government does not maintain such statistics, we will, having regard to our work and research needs relating to the development of the Greater Bay Area, consider seeking relevant statistics and

information on specific subjects or projects where appropriate, including conducting surveys or obtaining information from relevant departments on the Mainland.

(2) The Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (Youth Employment Scheme) encourages enterprises with business in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to employ university graduates from Hong Kong and station them to work in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. A total of 2 000 places will be made available under the Youth Employment Scheme. Hong Kong residents who are legally employable in Hong Kong and hold bachelor's degrees or above awarded by universities in or outside Hong Kong from 2019 to 2021 may participate in the Youth Employment Scheme.

Participating enterprises have to employ the target graduates in Hong Kong according to Hong Kong laws, offer them a monthly salary of not less than HK\$18,000, and station them for a long period in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to work and receive on-the-job training. The HKSAR Government will pay the enterprises a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 for each qualified graduate employed for up to 18 months.

On supporting young people from Hong Kong to start their businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, the Home Affairs Bureau has introduced, under the Youth Development Fund, the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with a view to encouraging Hong Kong young people to make optimal use of the innovative and entrepreneurial bases in the Greater Bay Area and helping them develop their businesses in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. In her 2020 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced further raising the funding of the current-round funding scheme, with a view to supporting more youth start-ups to strengthen their corporate governance, adaptability and digital competence. It is estimated that more than \$100 million will be granted for over 10 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement youth entrepreneurship projects, under which subsidies will be provided for more than 200 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs), while start-up support and services will be rendered to about 4 000 young people.

The Home Affairs Bureau also subsidises NGOs through the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland to organise Mainland internship activities for young people from Hong Kong, with a view to enabling them to obtain real-life experience in the actual workplace environment on the Mainland, as well as to acquire a deeper understanding of the employment market, work culture and development opportunities therein. In particular, as 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 has been expanded to cover all Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area since last year. Approximately 950 young people have taken up internship placements in the Greater Bay Area under the internship scheme. Subject to the development of the pandemic, the HKSAR Government will continue to enhance and expand the relevant schemes in the future, with a view to providing Hong Kong young people with more diverse

opportunities to enter the Greater Bay Area.

(3) With the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau established the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office (Greater Bay Area Office) and appointed its Commissioner on November 23, 2020. One of the key responsibilities of the Greater Bay Area Office is to help the public better understand the significant opportunities that the development of the Greater Bay Area brings to Hong Kong. Specifically, the Greater Bay Area Office will, through strategic publicity and promotional activities, strengthen the understanding of different sectors of society of the development of the Greater Bay Area, as well as the various opportunities brought to the general public and enterprises or professionals. Young people are a key target of the HKSAR Government's publicity efforts. As such, the Greater Bay Area Office has been promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area through various platforms proactively. For example, the Greater Bay Area Office launched two new television and radio Announcements in Public Interest (APIs) on January 4, 2021 to publicise how the policy measures announced after the two plenary meetings of the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area held in 2019 can facilitate the general public, young people and professionals from Hong Kong to develop and live in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. Moreover, after the television series "11 Charms of the Greater Bay Area" was aired in late September 2020, the Greater Bay Area Office collaborated with Television Broadcasts Limited again to produce a mini-television programme, which consists of 60 two-minute episodes to be broadcast over 12 weeks, covering useful information about studying, working, starting businesses, development opportunities and living in the Greater Bay Area. The aim is to instil amongst viewers, especially young people, a positive impression of the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area and to create a vision for their own development there in the future.

Apart from making use of traditional channels such as television programmes as well as television and radio APIs, the HKSAR Government is also making use of internet platforms which are more commonly used amongst the younger generation to disseminate positive information about the development of the Greater Bay Area, and to encourage the public (especially young people), businesses and professionals to make the best of the opportunities it has to offer. These platforms include the dedicated Greater Bay Area website (bayarea.gov.hk) which serves as a "one-stop" portal for relevant information, social media pages on Facebook and Instagram ([hk.bayarea](https://www.instagram.com/hk.bayarea)) and a WeChat official account (HKCMAB). After the pandemic, the Greater Bay Area Office will proactively organise larger-scale local promotional and publicity events, as well as briefings and meetings with different local institutions and bodies, with a view to strengthening the understanding of various sectors of society of the development of the Greater Bay Area development.

We hope that young people will continue to understand our country and the development of the Greater Bay Area, as well as to make the best of the significant opportunities the Greater Bay Area offers them in their personal and career developments.