

## LCQ4: Work and manpower arrangements of Labour Department

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

It has been reported that during the period from November last year to February this year, the Registry of Trade Unions of the Labour Department (LD) received a total of 273 applications for registration of newly-formed trade unions, representing a huge year-on-year increase by 120 times. According to the relevant performance pledge, the LD will complete the processing of such applications within four weeks upon receipt of all relevant information and documentation. Furthermore, some trade unions have pointed out that with the economy of Hong Kong being badly hit by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, an upsurge of cases relating to unemployment, wage defaults and labour disputes is foreseeable in the coming few months. Regarding the work and manpower arrangements of the LD, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications for trade union registration that the LD (i) received and (ii) approved in each of the past two years and since January this year, together with a breakdown by the trade to which the trade unions belonged;

(2) of the number of applications for trade union registration currently being processed and, among such applications, the expected number of those the processing of which can be completed within the timeframe specified in the aforesaid performance pledge; the projected number of outstanding applications as at the end of this month; whether the LD will deploy additional manpower to handle the backlog of applications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the LD has plans to recruit additional manpower to handle the anticipated upsurge of cases relating to job seeking, wage defaults and labour disputes in the coming few months; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Registry of Trade Unions (RTU) of the Labour Department (LD) respectively received 16, 142 and 1 578 applications for registration of new

trade unions in 2018, 2019 and January to March 2020, while 13, 25 and 88 new trade unions were respectively registered in the same period.

A breakdown of new trade unions registered by industry is provided below:

Industry	No. of new trade unions registered in the year		
	2018	2019	January to March 2020
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4	3	10
Human health and social work activities	3	6	11
Financial and insurance activities	2	3	4
Public administration	1	3	5
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services	1	2	9
Education	1	1	5
Electricity and gas supply	1	–	–
Construction	–	2	17
Administrative and support service activities	–	2	8
Information and communications	–	1	3
Manufacturing	–	1	2
Real estate activities	–	1	1
Import/Export, wholesale and retail trades	–	–	3
Art, entertainment and recreation	–	–	3
Work activities within domestic households	–	–	2
Accommodation and food service activities	–	–	1
Other service activities	–	–	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>88</b>

The RTU does not keep a breakdown of applications for registration of new trade unions by industry.

(2) The LD has arranged additional manpower including 11 Labour Officer Grade staff and 1 Clerical Grade staff through internal deployment to assist in handling the applications for registration of new trade unions and the related work. As at end-March 2020, 1 607 applications were under processing

by the RTU. Owing to differences between trade unions in their rules, objects, scale, proposed names, eligibility for becoming promoters and circumstances of the trades and/or occupations of members, and depending on the completeness of documents submitted, etc., the time required for processing each application for registration varies. Among the 1 607 applications under processing, the RTU expects that about 60 more applications for registration could be completed by end-April and the remaining applications would be processed thereafter.

(3) The LD has been closely monitoring the impact of the prevailing social and economic environment on labour relations, and will redeploy manpower and related resources as necessary to ensure delivery of effective and timely services for the public.

In light of the deteriorating employment situation, the LD will implement a series of employment support measures. The LD will raise the ceiling of on-the-job training (OJT) allowance payable to employers under the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, the Youth Employment and Training Programme and the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme in the second half of 2020, with a view to further encouraging employers to hire the elderly aged 60 or above, young people and persons with disabilities and provide them with OJT. With this enhancement, the maximum amount of allowance payable to employers engaging job seekers under these employment programmes will become \$60,000 per employee. The LD will arrange manpower through internal deployment, as and when needed, to handle the related additional work. Besides, the LD plans to launch a pilot scheme in the second half of 2020 to encourage eligible elderly persons, young people and persons with disabilities to undergo and complete OJT under these employment programmes through the provision of a retention allowance, thereby stabilising employment. Subject to the length of OJT period, the maximum amount of retention allowance that a full-time employee may receive is \$12,000. To take forward this three-year pilot measure, the LD has been allocated three additional posts for three years starting from 2020-21.