

LCQ5: Recruitment of police officers

Following is a question by the Hon Edmund Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

On May 5 last year, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) relaxed the entry requirements for recruit police constables, probationary inspectors and auxiliary police constables, including the removal of the minimum height and weight requirements and the introduction of the Recruit Police Constable Written Examination (Written Examination) to provide applicants who do not have Level 2 or above in English Language and Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination or equivalent an alternative way to meet the language proficiency requirements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applicants for recruit police constables, probationary inspectors and auxiliary police constables each month since the relaxation of the aforesaid entry requirements and, among them, the respective numbers of applicants who were required to attend the Written Examination and those who had a pass;

(2) whether, after the removal of the height and weight requirements, it has observed a decline in the physical fitness of the trainees trained at the Hong Kong Police College as compared with past trainees; if so, whether HKPF will make adjustments to the physical training programmes to enhance the physical performance of the trainees; and

(3) as it has been reported that HKPF has recently sent two delegations to Beijing and Shanghai to conduct recruitment activities to solicit applications from Hong Kong students in the Mainland who are interested in joining the Police Force, of the response to the recruitment; whether HKPF will consider sending staff to overseas regions to conduct recruitment; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) has been adopting proactive recruitment strategies to attract high calibre candidates who have the competence to become a police officer, the affection for the Motherland and Hong Kong, and the passion to serve the public, so that the Force can continue to demonstrate its professional capability and maintain Hong Kong as one of the safest cities in the world.

The HKPF regularly reviews its recruitment policy to ensure that the

entry requirements are up-to-date while the HKPF's competitiveness in the human resources market is maintained. For example, since the design of gas mask has been improved to enable spectacled police officers to use it, frontline officers can now carry out their duties with their spectacles without affecting their operational fitness. In fact, after reviewing most of the posts in the HKPF, it is confirmed that police officers who need to wear spectacles or contact lenses can discharge their duties without compromising their operational effectiveness.

With effect from May 5, 2023, the HKPF has adjusted the entry requirements. For the positions of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) and probationary inspector, the minimum height and weight requirements have been removed to align with other disciplined services. Applicants are also allowed to pass the visual acuity test with the use of spectacles or contact lenses, while the requirement for colour perception test remains unchanged. Moreover, for the position of police constable (including auxiliary police constable), applicants may choose to sit for a Recruit Police Constable Written Examination (Written Examination) newly introduced by the HKPF.

After consulting the HKPF, my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) There is no change in the language proficiency requirements for the recruitment of all police officers. Applicants applying for the position of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) should have Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) or the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), or equivalent, and should be able to read and write Chinese and speak fluent Cantonese. To provide police constable (including auxiliary police constable) applicants with an additional means to meet the language proficiency requirements, the Written Examination was introduced on May 5, 2023. Also benchmarked against Level 2 in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKDSEE, the Written Examination has incorporated more tailor-made assessment content to suit the police officers' practical needs in communication and comprehension when performing their day-to-day duties.

For the position of probationary inspector, no adjustment has been made to the language proficiency requirements. Applicants are required to attain Level 1 in the two language papers (Use of Chinese and Use of English) in the Common Recruitment Examination; or Level 2 or above in Chinese and English in the HKDSEE or HKCEE, or equivalent. Applicants should also be able to read and write Chinese and speak fluent Cantonese.

As at December 31, 2023, the numbers of candidates sitting for the General Chinese Test and General English Test in the Written Examination were 87 and 623 respectively. Among them, 14 candidates took both tests. The passing rates for the General Chinese Test and General English Test were 49.4 per cent (43 candidates) and 27.6 per cent (172 candidates) respectively.

After the adjustment of the entry requirements in May 2023, the monthly average numbers of applicants for the positions of police constable, probationary inspector and auxiliary police constable in the eight months that followed were 644, 478 and 283 respectively, representing a significant increase of more than 80 per cent, 90 per cent and 55 per cent over those in the eight months prior to the adjustment. The monthly numbers of applicants for police constable, probationary inspector and auxiliary police constable in 2023 are at Annex.

(2) Notwithstanding the removal of the minimum height and weight requirements, the selection and training standards of the HKPF, and the requirements for physical fitness and professional skills of police officers remain unchanged. All applicants for the positions of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) and probationary inspector must pass the Physical Fitness Test to ensure they are physically capable for the job before they are recruited. All recruits would undergo training at the Hong Kong Police College, where they have to go through physical development training and pass the Final Examination (including knowledge in policing, foot drill, physical fitness and weapons handling) before graduating and serving the public as a member of the HKPF.

(3) Apart from local publicity and recruitment campaigns, the HKPF has launched the Police University Recruitment Express (Mainland) since November 2022 in view of the rising number of Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland in recent years, which aims to recruit them and facilitate early commencement of foundation training upon their graduation and return to Hong Kong. Besides Beijing and Shanghai, the HKPF sent delegations to Wuhan, Guangdong, Fujian and Chengdu to deliver recruitment talks, provide recruitment related information and conduct on-site selection processes for Hong Kong students studying in universities thereat. A total of 2 898 Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland participated in the activities, amongst which 852 students applied and participated in the on-site selection processes. In total, 266, 551 and 35 applications for the positions of probationary inspector, police constable and auxiliary police constable were received respectively. As at December 31, 2023, 23 applicants have joined the HKPF as police constables through the Police University Recruitment Express (Mainland), whilst 746 applicants are in various stages of the recruitment process.

In addition, the HKPF has been conducting publicity and recruitment campaigns in overseas cities, such as London, Toronto and Sydney. Since 2018, the HKPF has extended the Police Mentorship Programme (PMP) to include Hong Kong students from overseas universities, with a view to enhancing their understanding of policing work and encouraging them to join the HKPF upon graduation. Since the launch of the PMP, 281 overseas students have participated and 40 of them have joined the HKPF. In the past 12 months, the HKPF has recruited 93 graduates from overseas universities. With relaxation of travel restrictions and social distancing measures after the pandemic, the HKPF will progressively resume the overseas recruitment campaign to attract high calibre candidates to become police officers and facilitate their participation in the recruitment process. It is the HKPF's initial plan to

resume publicity and recruitment campaigns overseas later this year.

The HKPF will continue to keep in view its manpower needs, implement an effective mechanism for overall manpower planning and assessment of the future manpower situation, and regularly review its staff establishment to meet the community's demand for the HKPF's services.

Thank you, President.