

## LCQ5: Top Talent Pass Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Chau Siu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (January 22):

Question:

The Government launched the Top Talent Pass Scheme at the end of 2022. It has been reported that some of the persons admitted to Hong Kong via the Scheme have been unable to find jobs matching their academic qualifications or professions and thus have remained unemployed or have only been able to take up lower-level posts, giving rise to the problem of "under-utilisation of high-calibre talents". The authorities have pointed out that they will play a stringent gatekeeping role for each application for extension of stay, and the terms of employment of applicants must be commensurate with their academic qualifications. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications for extension of stay received, approved and rejected so far, together with a breakdown by the three application categories; the average vetting and approval time for approved applications, as well as the reasons for rejecting applications;

(2) in respect of cases of approved applications, of the following information (set out by the three application categories) on persons employed in full-time jobs: the major industries and occupations in which they are engaged; the average duration of employment; the highest, lowest and median amounts of monthly salaries; and the respective numbers of persons with a monthly salary below \$20,000, between \$20,000 and below \$30,000, between \$30,000 and below \$50,000, and of \$50,000 or above; and

(3) whether it will consider making public the specific requirements for vetting and approving applications for extension of stay, including the income levels of applicants, the business turnovers of the companies set up by applicants, etc.; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) and (2) In face of the widening manpower shortage, the Government has been implementing various talent admission schemes with different positioning to proactively trawl for talent with diversified backgrounds to come to Hong Kong to fill the local job vacancies and enrich our talent pool. Among others, the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), launched in end-2022, seeks to attract individuals of different professions with high income or full-time bachelor's degree from top universities/institutions to pursue development in Hong Kong. The eligibility criteria of the TTPS are concise and clear, and

the required information and documents are relatively straightforward. Eligible talents are not required to have secured offers of employment in Hong Kong before applying for visas through the TTPS to explore opportunities in Hong Kong. Yet, they, upon expiry of the first visas, will have to be employed, or have established or joined in business in Hong Kong so that extension of stay can be granted.

The TTPS has received enthusiastic responses since its launch. As at end-December last year, we received over 116 000 applications and approved nearly 92 000. Of these, more than 75 000 talents arrived in Hong Kong with their families. The Government has been keeping track of their situation and providing them with diversified and pertinent support through the Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE). HKTE not only assists them in adapting to the life in Hong Kong, but also co-organises with different parties job fairs for employers and talent to be directly engaged in job-matching.

While trawling for talent, the Government also focuses on retaining talent. The 2024 Policy Address has thus set a key performance indicator of approving at least 50 000 visa extension applications annually for talent from 2025 to 2027. Of course, it takes time for talent and the local job market to acclimate which is a normal interactive process. Whether a talent can ultimately be granted an extension of stay or chooses to stay in Hong Kong for development depends on his/her own conditions and other different factors. The role of the Government is not merely to provide the necessary support for talent, but also to continue the efforts in boosting the economy and the growth of emerging industries so as to provide a favorable environment for the development of local and overseas talent. This would provide concrete support for the establishment of an international hub for high-calibre talent.

The TTPS has been launched for just two years. The Government is pleased to note that many talents have gradually embarked on their careers in Hong Kong. According to the follow-up surveys earlier conducted by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, more than half of the incoming talents have been in employment, mainly taking up managerial and professional jobs with median monthly employment earnings of about \$50,000. The monthly employment earnings of about a quarter of the talents reach \$100,000 or above. In addition, nearly 20 per cent of their spouses have also taken up employment, mostly engaged in high-skilled jobs. Based on these survey results, the TTPS entrants and their spouses contribute directly to Hong Kong's economy. More than half of them are aged under 40, with many bringing their young children to settle in Hong Kong. This adds new impetus to the local labour force and brings about positive impact on Hong Kong's demographic structure.

The first batch of visas under the TTPS has just started to expire at the end of last month. The Immigration Department (ImmD) generally takes two to three weeks to complete the processing upon receipt of the applications for extension of stay and necessary documents. At present, only a small number of applications have been processed. There is insufficient relevant data for meaningful statistical analyses. The Government will analyse in detail the relevant statistics as a certain number of applications for

extension of stay have piled up and release them at an opportune time.

(3) Starting from November 1, 2024, the ImmD allows persons admitted under the TTPS to apply for extension of stay three months before expiry of their limit of stay, so that applicants will have sufficient time to prepare the necessary documents for their applications. When applying for extension of stay, applicants are required to provide the ImmD with concrete supporting information and documents to prove either that they have taken up employment in Hong Kong with a stable income, or they have established or joined a business in Hong Kong. The specific requirements for assessing applications for extension of stay under the TTPS are set out in detail in the Guidebook for TTPS and on the ImmD's website. The ImmD also avails of its social platforms, seminars and media briefings, etc, to explain in detail the relevant requirements. The HKTE also disseminates relevant information through various channels.

Applicants who have taken up employment are required to submit employment contracts, which should set out the details of the position, remuneration, other benefits, the employment period, etc. In general, the jobs secured by the applicants who are granted extension of stay should be at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and the remuneration package should be at market level. If applicants are employed by non-local enterprises and assigned to work in Hong Kong under the intra-company transfer arrangement in managerial or professional positions, their applications for extension of stay will also be considered. The ImmD will take various factors into account when assessing their applications for extension of stay, including the applicants' remuneration packages, economic benefits (e.g. tax paid in Hong Kong) brought about by their work, and duration of their stay in Hong Kong.

For applicants who have established or joined in a business in Hong Kong, they are required to provide the proof of business, which should clearly show that the business is indeed operating healthily and sustainably in Hong Kong with contribution to the local economy. In assessing an application, the ImmD will take into account various factors, including the operation and development of the business, such as the turnover, financial resources, investment sum, number of jobs created locally, economic benefits brought by the business, and duration of the applicant's stay in Hong Kong.

The ImmD has all along been playing a robust gatekeeping role to ensure that only applicants meeting the relevant requirements will be granted extensions of stay.