

LCQ7: Civil service establishment

Following is a question by the Hon Stanley Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

It is learnt that while the Government has been continuously creating civil service directorate posts in recent years, the number of posts on the civil service establishment has slightly decreased for two years in a row. In addition, the Government has indicated that the target of zero growth in the civil service establishment will remain unchanged this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the proportion of the number of civil service supernumerary directorate posts in the total directorate civil service establishment at present;

(2) whether there is any requirement which limits the ratio of the number of civil service supernumerary posts to the number of civil service permanent posts at present; and

(3) whether it has studied how to eliminate the perception among members of the public and grass-roots civil servants that the target of maintaining zero growth in the civil service establishment and the arrangement of continuously creating additional civil service directorate posts are "fattening the top and thinning the bottom"?

Reply:

President,

Reply to different parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The civil service establishment includes both permanent and time-limited posts. Time-limited directorate posts are also known as "supernumerary directorate posts", which means they are non-permanent posts. It does not mean they are counted outside the establishment. As at May 2, 2023, the civil service establishment stood at 1 482 for permanent directorate posts and 81 for time-limited directorate posts respectively. In other words, the proportion of the number of time-limited civil service directorate posts in the total directorate civil service establishment was approximately five per cent.

(2) Whether a permanent post or a time-limited post is to be created depends on the job nature of the post concerned. So, it is not appropriate to set a specific ratio between these two types of posts. For jobs of time-limited nature or jobs that are subject to future review, creation of time-limited

posts is more appropriate and can ensure proper use of public money as well.

(3) Among civil service posts, there are time-limited posts deleted every year upon expiry of the duration for which the posts are created or upon completion of the jobs concerned. In addition, some posts would be deleted upon changes in the mode of operation (e.g. upon replacement of manual work by resorting to information technology). On the premise of maintaining zero growth in the civil service establishment, the number of new posts (including permanent and time-limited posts at directorate and non-directorate ranks) created by the Government will not exceed that of the posts expected to be deleted. In creating posts at different ranks, the primary consideration rests with the operational needs. With the on-going development of the society, various issues grow in complexity, and competition in the international arena has also grown in intensity. Under such circumstances, the Government has to enhance the governing capability and create strong impetus for growth, with a view to building a better future for Hong Kong. In this regard, the current-term Government has put forth a host of innovative and strategic initiatives, including the establishment of the Steering Committee on Northern Metropolis, the launch of the "Hong Kong Talent Engage" one-stop platform, etc. To take forward these initiatives, the Government would require additional manpower with leadership, co-ordination, organisation and professional competencies at the directorate and senior levels to steer various bureaux/departments in delivering the relevant policies and measures. Accordingly, while maintaining zero growth in the civil service establishment, it is only reasonable and necessary for the mix of posts at different ranks to be adjusted as appropriate to meet the latest need of the Government in the administration of Hong Kong.