[LCQ9: Attracting overseas technology talents to come to Hong Kong for career development](#)

      Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (May 9):

Question:

      The Secretary for Innovation and Technology has said that the development and retention of technology talents is one of the key foci in the Policy Address published in October last year, and the Government will introduce measures to attract talents from top universities and research institutions overseas to come to Hong Kong for career development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) regarding the various admission schemes for non-local talents, of the respective numbers of applications received and, among such applications, the respective numbers of those made by technology talents and the respective numbers and percentages of their applications approved, in each of the past 10 years; the current number of technology talents who were admitted to Hong Kong and have now acquired the Hong Kong permanent resident status, and whether it knows, among these talents, the number of those who are currently living in Hong Kong for most of their time and still engaging in technological research;

(2) whether it has assessed the number of technology talents needed by Hong Kong in each of the coming five years; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that and whether it will conduct such an assessment expeditiously; and

(3) of the latest position of the implementation of the various measures for attracting technology talents to Hong Kong (including the Technology Talent Scheme and the pilot fast-track admission scheme for technology talents); whether the Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology will further review the existing policies relating to the admission of technology talents, and formulate targeted policies to facilitate this type of talents to come to Hong Kong for career development, with a view to further attracting technology talents to Hong Kong gearing to the needs arising from innovation and technology development in the territory; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Security Bureau, our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the information provided by the Immigration Department (ImmD), the numbers of applications received and approved under the General Employment Policy (GEP), the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTP) and the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme in the past 10 years are set out at Appendix 1. The numbers of applications approved under the above schemes with breakdown by industry/sector are at Appendix 2. Technology industries and sectors including academic research and education, biotechnology, information technology, manufacturing industry and telecommunications etc. are covered. However, the ImmD does not maintain other breakdown figures requested in the question.

(2) and (3) Technology talent is involved in various industries, coupled with the rapid development of technologies, it is difficult to forecast the number of technology talents needed in the future. However, it is clear that Hong Kong needs to attract and nurture technology talent to promote the development of innovation and technology (I&T). The Chief Executive announced in her Policy Address in October 2017, to establish the Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology, personally led by herself, to examine and steer measures in the eight areas of I&T development, which include pooling together technology talent.

Technology Talent Admission Scheme

Currently, there is intense global competition for technology talent with aggressive measures to attract these talents. At the same time, the local technology sector has expressed concern over the shortage of local technology talent in certain specific areas and the lead time needed to admit technology talent from outside Hong Kong. To address these concerns, the Government will introduce a three-year pilot Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS) to provide a fast-track arrangement to admit overseas and Mainland technology talent to work in Hong Kong.

The pilot TechTAS will, as a start, be applicable to tenants and incubatees of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (Cyberport) that are engaged in the areas of biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science. Each eligible technology company/institute may apply for quota to admit overseas/Mainland technology talent to work for it on research and development (R&D) in the above areas. In its first year of operation, the TechTAS will admit a maximum of 1 000 persons from overseas/Mainland. Each eligible company/institute may be allotted with a quota to admit not more than 100 persons per year.

The HKSTPC and the Cyberport will receive and examine the quota applications, and provide recommendations to the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC). The applicant company/institute would need to demonstrate the basis of the quota requested (e.g. for a new setup or for expansion of

its R&D programme). It would also need to demonstrate that talent with the relevant skills, knowledge or experience is short in supply or not readily available in Hong Kong, and hence the concerned positions cannot be fully taken up by the local workforce. Having considered comments from the HKSTPC / the Cyberport, the ITC will decide on the quota allotment.

Each quota is valid for six months. Companies/institutes allotted with a quota should sponsor individual non-local persons to apply to the ImmD for employment visa/entry permit to come to Hong Kong for R&D work in the companies/institutes. This has to be done within the quota validity period and in accordance with the specifications pertaining to the job positions set out for the quota (including main job duties, academic requirements, technical skills, relevant experience and remuneration package). Persons admitted under the TechTAS should be degree-holders in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) from a well-recognised university. Work experience is not compulsory for those with a Master's or doctoral degree, while those with a Bachelor's degree only should possess a minimum of one year work experience in the relevant technology area.

To facilitate nurturing of local technology talent, for every three non-local persons admitted under the scheme, the technology company/institute allotted with a quota under the TechTAS would need to employ one new local full-time employee plus two local interns. All these local employees should be engaged in technology-related work. The full-time employees should possess at least a Bachelor's degree while the interns can be undergraduates, graduates or post-graduates.

The pilot TechTAS has its merits. By allotting applicant technology companies/institutes with a quota, it will provide certainty for them to proceed with their recruitment and business plan as soon as possible. Besides, to safeguard local work opportunities, the TechTAS still requires these companies/institutes to demonstrate at the quota application stage that talent with relevant skill, knowledge or experience is short in supply or not readily available in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, by doing away with the requirement to demonstrate local recruitment failure each and every time the companies/institutes seek to bring in talent through the GEP or the ASMTP, the arrangement could help save their time and resources needed for recruitment, and effectively streamline the actual admission procedure and shorten the processing time, thus allowing the talent to be in position to commence R&D work the earliest possible.

Moreover, by expediting the procedures for an individual to obtain the visa/entry permit, the chance of such talent being poached to work elsewhere could be minimised.

In addition, the "3:1+2" non-local to local employment requirement would provide more local job opportunities and help nurture our local talent effectively. In brief, the pilot TechTAS would help attract talent from different parts of the world, encourage cross-fertilisation of local and non-local talent, and hence contribute to Hong Kong's technological development.

Our target is to start receiving application in June 2018. We will review the design and impact of the pilot scheme in a timely manner.

Technology Talent Scheme

In addition, we have set aside $500 million under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) for a five-year pilot Technology Talent Scheme to nurture and bring together more technology talent. The scheme comprises the Postdoctoral Hub Programme which will provide funding support to the ITF recipients as well as incubatees and I&T tenants of the HKSTPC / the Cyberport to recruit up to two postdoctoral talent for R&D work. The ITF will provide a monthly allowance of $32,000 for each postdoctoral researcher for up to 24 months. The concerned researcher must possess a doctoral degree in a STEM-related discipline from either a local university or a well-recognised non-local institution. This includes local talent having obtained a doctoral degree outside Hong Kong and non-local talent having admitted to Hong Kong through the TechTAS. We are working on the operation details of the programme with a view to launching it in the third quarter of 2018.