LCQ9: Talent admission schemes

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Dennis Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (November 27):

Question:

It was announced in this year's Policy Address that a reform will cover the regime of the Top Talent Pass Scheme, the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS) and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of talents admitted to Hong Kong under the above schemes so far this year, together with a breakdown by their country or place of origin;

(2) of the respective average time taken to vet and approve the applications of the talents mentioned in (1);

(3) of the respective numbers of persons who have come to Hong Kong as dependants of the talents mentioned in (1);

(4) as the Government has enhanced the General Points Test under QMAS since the 1st of this month, whether the progress of the vetting and approval of the applications submitted before that date will be affected; and

(5) as some QMAS applicants have relayed that it has been more than six months since they submitted their applications, and it has been reported that the Government encourages those who submitted their applications before the 1st of this month to cancel their original applications and submit new ones, whether the vetting and approval of new applications submitted by these individuals will be expedited?

Reply:

President,

To address the challenge of labour shortage in Hong Kong, the Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address to reform various aspects of the talent admission regime, so as to maintain the competitiveness of the relevant measures and build a quality talent pool for meeting Hong Kong's future development needs.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau implemented on November 1 this year's enhancement measures, including extending the validity period of the first visas of high-income talents under the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) from two years to three years, expanding the list of eligible universities under the TTPS, and improving the criteria and arrangements for the General Points Test

under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS).

Our reply, in consultation with the Immigration Department (ImmD), to Member's questions is as follows:

(1) to (3) In the first 10 months of 2024, about 180 000 applications were received under various talent admission schemes, with nearly 120 000 approved. Amongst those approved under various talent admission schemes, around 75 000 talents arrived in Hong Kong. At the same time, about 75 000 dependants arrived in Hong Kong together with the approved talents.

Among them, 34 360, 9 423 and 21 296 applications were approved under the TTPS, the QMAS and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTP) respectively. The breakdowns of the numbers of applicants by region and the numbers of applicants under Categories B and C of the TTPS by region of their graduating universities are at Annex 1. The numbers of dependants admitted to Hong Kong by the above three talent admission schemes are at Annex 2.

The processing of the applications for visa/entry permits under the TTPS and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals will normally be completed within four weeks upon applicants' submission of all the required information and supporting documents. The applications submitted under the General Points Test (GPT) of the QMAS before November 1 this year have to go through the procedures of verification of eligibility and consultation with the Advisory Committee on Admission of Quality Migrants and Professionals. It takes a longer processing time than that of other talent admission schemes. The processing time also varies in view of the complexities of different cases. In general, it takes about six to nine months.

(4) and (5) The ImmD will continue to process the applications submitted under the GPT of the QMAS before November 1 this year in accordance with the pre-existing criteria and arrangements. Starting from November 1 this year, the enhanced GPT was introduced under the QMAS which adopts more objective and explicit assessment criteria and streamlined selection procedures. The processing efficiency will be enhanced. If applicants opt to withdraw their previous applications and submit new ones under the enhanced regime, the processing time will be shortened.