

# Opening remarks by SCS at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 8):

Chairman,

Among the matters related to the civil service in the 2022-23 Draft Estimates of Expenditure, I would like to focus my introduction on three items.

The first item is the civil service establishment. The Government's target of zero growth in the civil service establishment will remain unchanged in 2022-23, with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of public finances. The projected civil service establishment by end-March 2023 will be about 197 000 posts. We encourage bureaux and departments to enhance effectiveness and efficiency through re-prioritisation, internal redeployment and streamlining of work processes, so that the workload can be coped with even without an increase in the civil service establishment.

The second item is on the creation of time-limited jobs under the Anti-epidemic Fund. To relieve the worsening unemployment situation due to the epidemic and the anti-epidemic measures, the Government has earmarked \$13.2 billion under the Anti-epidemic Fund in 2020 and 2021 to create around 60 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors for people with different skill sets and academic qualifications. As at end-January 2022, around 60 000 jobs have been created under the two rounds of the Job Creation Scheme, with half of the jobs being created in the Government and the other half in the non-governmental sector. Among the jobs already created, around 48 000 jobs have been filled while recruitment for the remaining 12 000 or so jobs is in progress or will commence shortly. In view of the persistently high unemployment rate, the Government has earmarked in February 2022 an additional funding of \$6.6 billion under the latest round of the Anti-epidemic Fund for the creation of around 30 000 additional time-limited jobs. Relevant government departments are liaising with the non-governmental organisations or relevant associations under their purview to formulate details of the additional jobs.

The third item is about financial provisions. It mainly involves two aspects. Initiatives in strengthening civil service training on the constitutional order and national studies were included in the 2021 Policy Address Supplement. We have set aside resources for such initiatives. In 2022-23, the estimated expenditure on national studies training is \$29 million, which is \$5.8 million higher than the original estimate of the previous year, representing a 25 per cent increase.

In addition, in the 2022-23 Draft Estimates of Expenditure, we have

reserved over \$2,700 million for the Government to continuously improve the medical and dental services for civil service eligible persons (including pensioners). About \$1,050 million out of the said provision is for providing medical and dental services at Families Clinics and government dental clinics respectively. Apart from meeting the operating expenses of the clinics, the provision will also be used for strengthening manpower support and setting up additional specialised dental surgeries. Also, we have reserved over \$1,660 million for the payment and reimbursement of medical fees and hospital charges, to meet expenses on reimbursement of medical fees, which are not entirely predictable.

Chairman, this is the end of my introduction. I would welcome questions from Members.