

Remarks by SCS at media session

Following are the remarks by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, at a media session after attending a radio programme to elaborate on initiatives related to the civil service in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" this morning (October 24):

Reporter: In the Policy Address that was announced last week, the Government will offer three days of childcare leave per year to civil servants with children under three years of age, and they are allowed to leave early for more festivals. Is it actually possible to add more leave for civil servants, and what are the concerns for the Government in increasing the number of leave? As well as the civil servant shortage, the figure stood at around 10 per cent as of June this year. Is the Government worried about this and why this is the case?

Secretary for the Civil Service: For childcare leave, we have to balance our operational need with the introduction of more family-friendly measures. I think, as a start, we have to be prudent and so we have decided that we will offer three days per year for each child under three years of age who needs more care by their parents. We will review how this works out and see if there is room for improvement or whether it really affects our work seriously. We cannot tell at the present moment as it is a new measure but we will review this after it has implemented for some time.

As for the vacancy rate, we are proceeding with full force our recruitment efforts. But at the same time, I would also say that we will also be very careful with the use of manpower. One of our measures, in fact this year in the Policy Address, is to see if technological solutions can be introduced to make better use of existing manpower, whether processes can be streamlined, whether priorities can be changed to make better use of existing manpower. Making better use of existing manpower, or reducing the need for manpower we involve in labour intensive jobs by applying more technological solutions, are also ways of dealing with the present vacancy rate.

Reporter: From the Government observation, what are the possible reasons behind the vacancy rate of around 10 per cent?

Secretary for the Civil Service: In the past few years, we have seen a high retirement wave. It is simply because of the age of civil servants. And also the number of graduates is not as many as decades ago. So we have to really compete for talents. We have seen that Hong Kong has a very low unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is almost telling us that there is full employment in Hong Kong so we really have to compete fiercely with the private sector, with other employers, for talents. So these are all the reasons contributing to a higher vacancy rate or needing more time to recruit the manpower that we need.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)