

## LCQ15: Chinese medicine practitioners admitted via talent admission schemes

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

The Government announced on May 16, 2023 an updated Talent List (the updated List) that applies to the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the General Employment Policy, as well as the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. The updated List comprises 51 professions under nine industry segments, including Chinese medicine (CM) practitioners under the healthcare services industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the announcement of the updated List, whether there are employers which have brought in CM practitioners via the aforesaid talent admission schemes; if so, of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the Government, as well as the numbers of CM practitioners involved; among the approved applications, the number of CM practitioners who have already come to Hong Kong;

(2) of the work contents of CM practitioners granted with visas to enter Hong Kong as mentioned in (1), including whether they will provide CM diagnostic and treatment services; and

(3) given that under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549), all persons practising CM in Hong Kong must first apply for registration with the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong and apply for a practising certificate, how the authorities will perform proper gatekeeping to ensure that no CM diagnostic and treatment services will be provided by CM practitioners admitted via the aforesaid talent admission schemes until they become holders of the relevant practising certificate?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Immigration Department, the consolidated reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong is as follows:

The Government announced in May 2023 the expansion of the Talent List to cover 51 professions under nine industry segments, encompassing all 13 statutory healthcare professions (including Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs)). The Talent List applies to the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the

General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. This initiative aims to provide immigration facilitation for healthcare professionals who have already fulfilled the prevailing local statutory registration requirements, and convey the positive message that the Government is determined to strive to attract qualified non-locally trained healthcare professionals to come to Hong Kong, giving a positive effect on drawing in talents and stabilising the manpower supply. Nonetheless, this initiative changes neither the professional qualifications nor the practising requirements for the relevant persons' practice in Hong Kong.

In accordance with the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549), all persons practising Chinese medicine (CM) in Hong Kong are required to apply to the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (CMPB) of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong for registration as a CMP. Any non-locally trained CMP (including non-Hong Kong resident) who wishes to be a registered CMP in Hong Kong can take and pass the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination (CMPLE) (Note) before making such an application for registration. Registered CMPs must hold valid practising certificates to practise CM in Hong Kong.

CMPs who wish to enjoy immigration facilitation under the Talent List through applications to the three aforesaid talent admission schemes have to hold qualifications registrable in Hong Kong under the Ordinance. Taking the example of registered CMPs, non-Hong Kong residents who fulfill the training requirements for CM practice, take and pass the CMPLE, and after completing registration and obtaining practising certificates, are provided with immigration facilitation under the Talent List to work and practise as a registered CMP in Hong Kong.

Since the expansion of the Talent List and as of October 31, 2023, none of the three aforesaid talent admission schemes has received or approved any application fulfilling the professional qualifications for CMPs as required under the Talent List.

Note: The CMPLE is open to any person who has completed an undergraduate degree course of training in CM practice or its equivalent as approved by the CMPB. There is no requirement that candidates must be Hong Kong residents.

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## **LCQ17: Loan schemes launched for tour coach trade**

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

On April 29 this year, the Government launched the Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Scheme (DLGS) for Travel Sector and the DLGS for Cross-boundary Passenger Transport Trade to support the travel sector and cross-boundary passenger transport trade to resume their services as soon as possible after the COVID-19 epidemic. However, some operators of local tour coaches as well as cross-boundary coaches and hire cars have relayed that the vetting and approval of applications under the schemes concerned has been very slow, and the progress of their resumption of business has been affected due to the prolonged delay in loan receipt. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on (a) the DLGS for Travel Sector and (b) the DLGS for Cross-boundary Passenger Transport Trade since their launch: (i) the respective numbers of applications received, approved, rejected and being processed by the lending institutions participating in the vetting and approval of loans, together with a breakdown by local tour coach as well as cross-boundary coach and hire car, and their percentages in the total number of eligible vehicles; (ii) the average processing time for approved applications; and (iii) the reasons for those applications being rejected;

(2) as it is learnt that only 12 lending institutions currently participate in the aforesaid dedicated schemes and these institutions solely process the relevant applications submitted by their existing customers, whether the Government knows, among the approved applications, the number of those in which the applicants are new customers of these lending institutions; and

(3) whether it will motivate the lending institutions participating in the aforesaid dedicated schemes to expedite the vetting and approval procedures of the relevant schemes and proactively assist the sector and trade concerned in resolving the cash flow problem; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Insurance Limited (HKMCI), which is responsible for the administration of the two dedicated schemes, and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, I would like to provide a consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Frankie Yick as follows:

The Financial Secretary proposed in his 2023-24 Budget to launch 100% loan guarantee schemes for the cross-boundary passenger transport trade and the tourism sector to facilitate their speedy recovery. The objective of the Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Scheme for Cross-boundary Passenger Transport Trade is to allow eligible operators/registered vehicle owners/ferry owners of cross-boundary passenger transport to apply for the loan for the purpose of vehicle/ferry repair and maintenance, buying insurance, etc, with a view to resuming services as soon as possible. The Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee

Scheme for Travel Sector aims at assisting licensed travel agents and local tour coach registered owners to resolve short-term funding difficulties so that they can hire staff as soon as practicable and accelerate operational capability enhancement, thereby complementing the pace of resumption of inbound and outbound tourism activities. The two dedicated schemes were launched on April 29, 2023, with the application period till April 28, 2024.

Since the launch of the two aforesaid dedicated schemes to November 30 this year, the HKMCI received a total of 237 loan applications from the participating lending institutions, of which 195 (82 per cent) have been approved, 29 (12 per cent) are under processing, the remaining 13 (6 per cent) are overdue (with no further feedback from the applicants) or withdrawn by the applicants. The HKMCI and the lending institutions have been processing the applications expeditiously. Insofar as the approved loan cases are concerned, it takes an average of two to three weeks for the HKMCI's approval of the applications submitted by the lending institutions. Some of the cases may need more time for processing, mostly for the reasons that applicants have to submit supplementary information and confirm or correct their application information. For some applications which may cover multiple vehicles, including local tour coaches, cross-boundary coaches and cross-boundary hire cars, relatively longer processing time is needed to handle a larger volume of documents submitted by the applicants. The application situation is as follows:

(As at November 30, 2023)	Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Scheme for Travel Sector		Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Scheme for Cross-boundary Passenger Transport Trade	
	Licensed travel agents	Owners of local tour coaches	Owners of cross-boundary coaches	Owners of cross-boundary hire cars
Number of applications received	121	103	9	4
Number of applications approved	102	86	6	1
Number of vehicles involved in the approved applications (percentages in the total number of eligible vehicles)	N.A	516 (16.7%)	27 (1.8%)	5 (0.8%)

Average number of working days for each approved application processed (from the day the application is submitted to the HKMCI by the lending institution to the day the application is finally approved)	6	18	19	29
Number of applications under processing	10	15	2	2
Number of overdue applications (with no further feedback from the applicants) or number of applications withdrawn by the applicants	9	2	1	1
Number of applications not approved	0	0	0	0

Currently, there are a total 12 lending institutions participating in the two dedicated schemes, covering major banks serving local small and medium enterprises. Individuals may contact the participating lending institutions of the schemes for appropriate support as necessary. The HKMCI noted that there are lending institutions assisting new customers who opened their accounts only this year in processing the loan applications under the schemes. However, the HKMCI does not have the relevant statistics on whether applicants are new customers of the lending institutions.

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## [LCQ11: Recruiting talents to Hong Kong](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Carmen Kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

Regarding the work on recruiting talents to Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the terms of reference, composition, staffing establishment and estimated operating expenditure of the Hong Kong Talent Engage Office which was established on October 30 this year, and whether the authorities will set performance indicators for the work of the Office; if so, of the details; if

not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the respective numbers of applications made in respect of the various talent admission schemes which the authorities have received, approved and rejected since January this year; among the approved applications, the number of applicants and their dependants who have entered Hong Kong, with a tabulated breakdown by the talent admission scheme to which the applicants belong (for applicants of the Top Talent Pass Scheme or the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, by their application category) and the following information: place of origin, gender, age, academic qualification and working experience;

(3) for applicants and their dependants who have been granted visas to come to Hong Kong, whether the authorities will proactively reach out to them to follow up their living and employment situation in Hong Kong, and take such situation as a factor to be considered by the Immigration Department in deciding whether or not to approve their applications for extension of stay in the future; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) for talents from regions with capital control, of the policy initiatives put in place by the authorities to remove red tape for the two-way flow of such persons' capital between Hong Kong and their places of origin?

Reply:

President,

To address the challenges of labour shortage, apart from promoting training and retraining, and providing appropriate employment and other support services, the Government introduced in last year's Policy Address an array of measures to proactively trawl for talent worldwide, and launched the online platform of Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE) at the end of last year to provide one-stop electronic services for talent from around the world. The measures have received enthusiastic responses since implementation. This year's Policy Address, under the ongoing strategy of attracting and retaining talent, announced further measures including expanding the coverage of universities under the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) and establishing the physical office of HKTE.

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

(1) HKTE, established at the end of October this year, aims to assist talent in their long-term development in Hong Kong by providing them with comprehensive one-stop support services, formulate targeted recruitment and publicity strategies for different talent groups, and collaborate with different industry players and stakeholders as well as the Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents in the Mainland and overseas in carrying out proactive external promotions of Hong Kong, so as to attract more talent to come to Hong Kong to pursue development. HKTE comprises nearly

40 staff members, with an estimated annual expenditure of about \$83 million.

HKTE has commenced its work immediately after establishment. In October this year, HKTE and the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers co-hosted an online live recruitment event to enable Mainland talent who are interested in coming to Hong Kong for development, particularly those from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), to understand further the outlook and opportunities of the insurance industry in Hong Kong. In November and early December this year, HKTE also participated in the exhibition at the 2nd National Conference on the Development of Human Resources Services held in Shenzhen, as well as organised job fairs at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Sun Yat-sen University, to promote Hong Kong's role as the GBA's talent service hub.

This year's Policy Address announced that HKTE would organise a Global Talent Summit cum Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area High-quality Talent Development Conference next year, so as to congregate political, academic and business leaders worldwide to explore the global trends of talent development, drive regional exchange and cooperation in talent attraction, and promote Hong Kong's dual roles as an international talent hub and national talent portal and our advantages. We will take this opportunity to showcase Hong Kong's distinctive edge of enjoying strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world under the "one country, two systems", which attracts talent as well as facilitates talent exchanges and cooperation in the GBA. The event is expected to attract at least 800 attendances.

The Director of HKTE is proactively drawing up service commitments and performance indicators for HKTE's major services, which will be announced in the first quarter of next year.

(2) As at end-November this year, we received over 200 000 applications under various talent admission schemes and approved over 120 000, while around 8 600 applications were refused. The statistics are at Annex 1. In particular, the TTPS is the most popular talent admission scheme with over 60 000 applications received. Out of nearly 50 000 approved applications, more than 40 per cent in Categories B and C are applicants graduating from the top overseas universities.

Besides, in the first 11 months of this year, around 81 000 talents with visas approved under various talent admission schemes have arrived in Hong Kong, which has far exceeded our annual target of admitting at least 35 000 talents. At the same time, about 68 000 dependants have also arrived in Hong Kong. The statistical breakdowns on the number of applications approved by region, gender, age, academic qualification and work experience of applicants are at Annex 2.

(3) As mentioned in part (1) above, HKTE maintains close contact with the incoming talent to keep track of their development and needs in Hong Kong. HKTE actively expands its network of working partners, and organises a variety of online and offline activities as well as services to assist talent who have obtained visas to come to Hong Kong or have newly arrived to obtain

necessary information on living and jobs or skills, and provide them with pertinent support on job seeking, accommodation, education, integrated settlement services and networking and community in order to make it easier for them to adapt to and integrate into the new life as early as possible, hence, settle in Hong Kong for development in the long term.

In addition, the electronic matching services launched in the HKTE's online platform since end-July provide talent with matching services through the support network of our working partners from the business sector. More than 920 requests for support services have been referred to working partners so far, mostly concerning job seeking and accommodation. As at end-October this year, the online platform has also processed over 5 800 enquiries.

Talent admitted to Hong Kong under different talent admission schemes are subject to varying eligibility criteria for extension of stay. For example, a person admitted under the TTPS or the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates upon applying for extension is required to have secured an offer of employment, or have established or joined in business in Hong Kong. For a person admitted under the General Employment Policy or the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, his/her application for extension of stay will be considered only when he/she continues to meet the relevant eligibility criteria. In processing each application, the ImmD will examine whether an applicant meets the relevant eligibility criteria, and will take into account the individual circumstances of each application.

(4) Relevant Government bureaux and departments have been in discussion with relevant financial regulatory authorities on various cross-boundary remittance arrangements, such as how to provide more facilitation arrangements for the convenience and benefit of the public and the business sector while ensuring that the risks are manageable. For cross-boundary remittance arrangements for talent entering Hong Kong under the talent admission schemes, relevant Government bureaux and departments would, taking account of their practical needs, explore facilitation arrangements with the authorities concerned in a timely manner.

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## **LCQ14: Assisting Mainland talents coming to Hong Kong to invest in Hong Kong**

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:



From January to October this year, more than 43 000 talents from various places were admitted to Hong Kong through the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), and it is learnt that many of them have indicated their wish to set up companies in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council, as it is learnt that the Mainland authorities have implemented foreign exchange control, that there are also restrictions on the amount of Renminbi cash that Mainland residents may take with them when they leave the Mainland, that Mainland residents may apply for a one-off transfer of all their assets only in the case of emigration, and that there are views that such arrangements have restricted Mainland residents' investment of their capital in Hong Kong, whether the authorities will consider discussing with the State Administration of Foreign Exchange the introduction of a one-off relaxation measure for Mainland talents coming to Hong Kong through TTPS to facilitate their investment of capital in Hong Kong; if so, of the details, and of the short-term measures in place to assist such talents in withdrawing their capital for transfer to Hong Kong before the implementation of such relaxation measure?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government strives to trawl for talents with high income and good academic qualifications from all over the world. In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the consolidated reply to the question is as follows.

The Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS), launched at the end of last year, seeks to attract top talents with rich work experience and good academic qualifications from all over the world to explore opportunities in Hong Kong.

The Chief Executive also announced in the 2023 Policy Address the establishment of the Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE), which serves as the designated agency to formulate talent attraction strategies and provide support services for incoming talents. HKTE has commenced its work since establishment in October this year by reaching out to collaborating partners to provide pertinent support to talents (interested in coming to or having newly arrived in Hong Kong), through online/offline activities and services, concerning their living, work, children's education, etc. HKTE also refers incoming talents' enquiries to relevant bureaux for follow-up and assistance as needed.

We have been in discussion with financial regulatory authorities in the Mainland on various cross-boundary remittance arrangements, such as how to provide more facilitation arrangements for the convenience and benefit of the public and the business sector while ensuring that the risks are manageable. For cross-boundary remittance arrangements for Mainland talents entering Hong Kong under TTPS, we would, taking account of their practical needs (eg setting up companies, investment), explore facilitation arrangements with the Mainland authorities concerned in a timely manner.

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## LCQ20: Means of payment for transactions

Following is a question by the Hon Rock Chen and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

It has been reported that earlier on, a traveller visiting Hong Kong was denied cash as payment by a restaurant because the restaurant only accepted electronic payment (e-payment) or credit cards. Moreover, it is learnt that there have been cases from time to time of merchants and professional drivers, among others, refusing to accept 10-cent, 20-cent and 50-cent coins as payment by patrons, and there are also merchants who only accept cash payment and not any means of e-payment. There are views that such situations have caused inconvenience to members of the public and tourists. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of complaints received by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in the past three years about merchants or professional drivers refusing to accept cash payment or e-payment, as well as the trend of such complaints;

(2) whether it has assessed the prevalence of the situation of refusing to accept cash payment or e-payment in the market at present; as it is learnt that on the Mainland, no individual or merchant is allowed to refuse cash payment, or else they will be named and shamed, as well as fined in accordance with the law, and that Macao has also made it an administrative offence to refuse to accept legal tender, whether the authorities have plans to review the existing relevant legislation, and adopt administrative measures to ameliorate the situation of refusing to accept cash payment; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that there are many problems with e-payment in Hong Kong, including differences in terms of payment functions, convenience, usage scenarios, handling fees, etc, whether the authorities have plans to formulate measures to extend e-payment to more government premises, and motivate financial institutions to develop more integrated payment services?

Reply:

President,

For the three parts of the question, in consultation with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), my reply is as follows:

(1) From 2021 to end-November 2023, the HKMA received a total of 12 complaints about businesses refusing to accept cash, lower than 17 complaints received during 2018 to 2020. The HKMA does not maintain the statistics on complaints regarding professional drivers refusing to accept cash or electronic payment.

(2) Notes and coins issued pursuant to the Legal Tender Notes Issue Ordinance (Cap.65) and the Coinage Ordinance (Cap.454) are legal tender in Hong Kong. Legal tender is valid and legal means of payment, and by law regarded as adequately and effectively fulfilling payment obligations. The above-mentioned Ordinances do not confer authority upon the Government to mandate goods or service providers to accept legal tender. In any commercial transaction, it is up to the two parties to determine the terms of transaction, including the means of payment. Whether to accept notes or coins in a transaction is a purely commercial decision for goods or service providers.

The existing practice for both parties to a transaction to determine the means of payment provides more flexibility, and can encourage a diversified development of means of payment (such as electronic money). Currently, we do not intend to make legislative amendments to prohibit refusal of accepting legal tender.

(3) The Government is committed to promoting the development of Hong Kong's electronic payment (e-payment) market, and providing the public with safe, efficient, convenient and diversified e-payment options by enhancing the financial technology infrastructure and implementing a robust regulatory regime.

The Chief Executive has announced in the 2023 Policy Address that by the 3rd quarter of 2024, e-payment option will be provided for all government fees so as to offer the public a choice to settle relevant service payments via the Faster Payment System. Payment with Mainland e-wallets will be made available for government services commonly used by Mainland visitors.

We and the HKMA have been actively encouraging financial institutions to develop comprehensive payment services. There are stored value facility operators in the market providing facilitation solutions for local retail merchants, including supporting payment with Mainland e-wallets, introducing simplified QR code for accepting payment, and launching digital transformation solutions for small and medium retail merchants. We and the HKMA will continue to maintain close liaison with the industry in promoting the sustainable development of the e-payment market.