

## LCQ12: Support for ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Lam So-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

According to the 2021 Population Census, there are about 620 000 ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong. Regarding the support for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that quite a number of EM students have reflected that they have encountered difficulties in studying the Chinese Language Subject specifically designed for Chinese-speaking students, whether the authorities have looked into the learning situation of EM students, and whether they will enhance the measures to support their learning of Chinese;

(2) of the current number and percentage of EMs appointed to the civil service, and whether more EMs will be recruited; and

(3) as the Social Welfare Department launched a three-year EM District Ambassador pilot scheme in 2020-2021 to enhance EM services provided by district centres/service units in nine districts with higher EM population, whether the Government has evaluated the effectiveness of the scheme?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Education Bureau (EDB), the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and the Labour and Welfare Bureau, a reply is provided as follows:

(1) The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students (including ethnic minority students) into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The EDB has implemented a series of support measures since 2014, which include the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" (Learning Framework) in primary and secondary schools, substantial increase in the additional funding for schools as well as provision of learning and teaching resources, teacher training and professional support for schools, thereby strengthening the support for NCS students to learn Chinese and the creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools.

As for curriculum, the "Learning Framework" implemented in primary and secondary schools has provided steps and methods for learning and teaching, and assessment according to the needs of NCS students of learning Chinese as

a second language. With reference to the "Learning Framework", teachers can set learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes on reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as adapt and develop teaching materials at the school-based level for NCS students with different starting points and abilities, so as to help them learn Chinese progressively. The EDB also offers "Applied Learning Chinese" courses at the senior secondary level for NCS students, including "Chinese in Business Service", "Chinese in Practical Context" and "Practical Chinese", to help them build a foundation for using Chinese in the workplace through learning the Chinese language in different contexts.

Furthermore, the EDB has all along been developing diversified learning and teaching resources to provide teachers with guidelines and support in curriculum planning, learning and teaching, and assessment. All these resources have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage and will be updated on an ongoing basis. Among others, the EDB has developed a set of learning and teaching materials, including student textbooks, workbooks and teaching reference materials, for NCS students at the primary level. The materials have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage and distributed to schools. Schools may adapt these materials with reference to their curriculum and students' abilities to cater for the different learning needs of NCS students. The EDB will continue to organise relevant professional development programmes to enhance teachers' professional capacity. Besides, the EDB has implemented other complementary measures, which include encouraging parents of NCS children to enrol their children in local kindergartens so that they would adapt to the local education system and to expose them to the learning of the Chinese language as early as possible; providing summer bridging programmes to help NCS students at the primary levels adapt to classroom setting and consolidate their Chinese learning; and providing parent education especially for parents of NCS students so that they would support and encourage their children to master the Chinese language as well as gain better understanding of the multiple pathways available to their children, etc.

Apart from the above, as per the additional measures set out in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address, the Government would continue to strengthen support for NCS students to facilitate their mastery of the Chinese language, including designing diversified learning materials under the Online Chinese Language Self-learning Resources for NCS students to help them extend their learning and consolidate what they have learnt in class; preparing for the offer of after-school Chinese language courses for lower primary NCS students on a trial basis using adapted learning materials for the Youth Chinese Test; and expanding the Summer Bridging Programme to include NCS students progressing to Primary Five and Primary Six to provide more comprehensive and continuous support for their Chinese learning.

(2) In the civil service recruitment process, the Government assesses all applicants on the basis of their ability, performance, character, and the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements (including language proficiency requirements). Race is not a relevant consideration. Given that neither job applicants for civil service jobs nor serving civil servants are required to declare their ethnic origins, we do

not possess statistical information on the number of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service.

The Government's policy is to maintain a biliterate and trilingual civil service. In order to maintain effective communication for delivering public services, Heads of Department/Grade will, having regard to the job requirements of the grades under their respective purview, specify appropriate Chinese and English language proficiency requirements as part of the entry requirements for the grades concerned. To achieve the policy objective of providing equal employment opportunities for all civil service job applicants (including non-ethnic Chinese), CSB has introduced a series of measures. The Government encourages departments to design their own language tests according to the job requirements of individual civil service grades to provide an additional way for applicants to meet the appointment requirements in respect of language proficiency. We will also strengthen dissemination of government recruitment information to non-ethnic Chinese, so they could receive such information in a more direct and efficient manner. In addition, we have launched an internship programme for non-ethnic Chinese students since 2019. Starting from this year, we provide the interns with basic workplace Chinese language training, with a view to enhancing their understanding on the application of the Chinese language and the required level of Chinese proficiency in daily work, as well as their interest in learning Chinese. The interns are also encouraged to continue to strengthen their learning of Chinese through other community resources.

(3) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has launched a 3-year Ethnic Minority District Ambassador pilot scheme (pilot scheme) in nine districts with higher ethnic minority population since October 2020, providing additional resources to service units of the SWD and non-governmental organisations operating subvented welfare services to engage ethnic minorities or designated persons to enhance the provision of welfare services for ethnic minorities. As of September 2023, the pilot scheme contacted over 24 000 ethnic minorities and achieved satisfactory results. The pilot scheme has been extended for three years to September 2026. The SWD will continue examining the effectiveness of the pilot scheme to formulate the way forward.

---

## **LCQ6: Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine Pilot Programme**

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

In 2014, the Government engaged the Hospital Authority (HA) to implement the Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine (ICWM) Pilot Programme (the Programme) to provide ICWM treatment for HA in-patients of three selected disease areas (i.e. stroke care, musculoskeletal pain management and cancer palliative care). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of patients of each of the aforesaid three selected disease areas who have participated in the Programme since its introduction, and the percentage of the number of participating patients of each disease area in the total number of patients enrolled in the Programme;

(2) given that at present, the Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres participating in the Programme provide out-patient follow-up services to discharged patients under the Programme at a fee of \$120 per visit, and that the relevant fee will be waived for recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, whether it knows the respective numbers of patients who have been granted fee waivers and are required to pay the fee since the introduction of the Programme (as well as the total amount of fees paid by the patients), together with a breakdown by the aforesaid three selected disease areas;

(3) whether it knows the financial expenditure incurred by the Programme since its introduction, and whether the authorities will consider increasing the amount of funding for the Programme in order to provide fee waivers to patients enrolled in the Programme, so that patients will not be deterred from participating in the Programme due to economic factors; and

(4) whether it knows if the authorities have reviewed the effectiveness of the Programme and taken measures to enhance its popularity, and whether the authorities will consider extending the service scope of the Programme to cover all public hospitals and healthcare institutions in Hong Kong; if the authorities will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong is as follows:

To explore the operation of Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine (ICWM) and Chinese medicine (CM) in-patient services and gather operational experience for formulating a roadmap for the future development of CM, the Government commissioned the HA to launch in 2014 the time-limited ICWM Pilot Programme (Pilot Programme) for the provision of ICWM treatment to in-patients of selected disease areas (namely stroke care, musculoskeletal pain management and cancer palliative care) at eight designated hospitals (Note) by phases.

The HA plans the development of its services on a cluster basis.

Following regularisation of the Pilot Programme in early 2023, the HA has further expanded ICWM services to more public hospitals and other disease areas for leveraging the advantages of CM and ICWM. To support cancer patients of different stages in particular, the HA has incorporated ICWM services into the cancer treatment protocol, and launched the new cancer care pilot programme at Princess Margaret Hospital and Tuen Mun Hospital in September and October 2023 respectively to provide such services for the first time in day chemotherapy centres. In 2023-24, the HA has also included CM rehabilitation in the clinical framework for stroke care in-patient services and gradually increased the number of participating public hospitals providing stroke care ICWM services to cover all seven hospital clusters. The aforesaid new initiatives on ICWM services have been announced in the 2023 Policy Address.

For the long-term development of sustainable ICWM services, the HA will continue to explore from multiple perspectives the feasibility of extending ICWM services to cover more disease areas (such as elderly degenerative diseases), starting from those where CM has advantages. In addition, under the Greater Bay Area CM Visiting Scholars Programme launched by the HA in November 2022, Mainland CM experts have been invited to come to Hong Kong to provide coaching and clinical training on in-patient services, with a view to strengthening the clinical capability of CM practitioners in treating in-patients, thereby promoting the development of ICWM services.

Under the existing framework of ICWM services, the team comprising CM practitioners and western medicine (WM) doctors will collaborate in formulating clinical treatment protocol for selected disease areas where CM and WM have advantages. The team will also jointly assess the suitability of in-patients for receiving CM treatment, conduct ward rounds and consultations together, and discuss cases regularly. Invited patients may choose to accept relevant services on a voluntary basis. With government subsidies, patients only need to pay \$120 for each attendance of ICWM in-patient services (not including general fees for public hospital services), while Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients are eligible for the medical fee waiver. The HA has not received any feedback from patients for not being able to join the programme due to financial factors. Upon discharge from hospitals, patients may choose to attend government-subsidised or non-subsidised CM out-patient services in the 18 Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs).

As at March 31, 2023, the cumulative number of patients who have participated in the ICWM Programme was 3 560, of which 490 (about 14 per cent) were CSSA recipients, with the total attendance exceeding 58 000. Details are set out in the table at Annex.

On financial expenditure, the Government has earmarked a funding of \$348 million in 2023-24 for the HA to take forward initiatives for promoting CM development. They include regularisation of the Pilot Programme and ICWM services, efforts on quality assurance and central procurement of CM drugs, operation of CMCTRs to provide government-subsidised services and implement the training scheme for CM practitioner trainees, as well as enhancement to

and maintenance of the CM Information System.

The Government will work with the HA to conduct ongoing review of the development of ICWM services, continue to expand various initiatives and build a sustainable model for ICWM collaboration based on experience consolidated over the years. In parallel, the Government will maintain close liaison with the CM sector to jointly formulate the CM Development Blueprint. The Blueprint will map out long-term development strategies and plans for CM in Hong Kong, including the development and planning of CM services.

Note: A total of eight hospitals, namely Kwong Wah Hospital, Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital, Shatin Hospital, Tuen Mun Hospital, Tung Wah Hospital and United Christian Hospital.

---

## LCQ1: Facilitating immigration clearance of inbound tour groups

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

Regarding facilitating immigration clearance of inbound tour groups, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of inbound tour groups in each month since January this year and, among them, the number of those which entered Hong Kong via land boundary control points (BCPs), and set out by month in a table the following statistical information in respect of the latter: BCPs used for immigration clearance, places of departure, average tour fares, and average per capita spending of tour group members;

(2) as it is learnt that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port, Shenzhen Bay Port and Heung Yuen Wai Control Point are the major land BCPs used by inbound tour groups, of the design passenger handling capacity, tour group receiving capability and upper limit in hardware provision of coach parking spaces of these three BCPs; whether it has projected the trend of these three BCPs in receiving inbound tour groups and their division of work; and

(3) of the current provision of software and hardware ancillary facilities at the three BCPs mentioned in (2) to facilitate immigration clearance of inbound tour groups, and the measures to be put in place at these BCPs in the

future to further facilitate immigration clearance of inbound tour groups?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Chan Yuet-ming, having consulted the Security Bureau, the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Travel Industry Authority (TIA), the reply is as follows:

(1) According to requirements under the Directives for Licensees issued by the TIA pursuant to the Travel Industry Ordinance (Cap. 634), licensed travel agents in Hong Kong are required to register with the TIA Mainland inbound tour groups they receive. From January to November 15, 2023, the monthly number of Mainland inbound tour groups is tabulated below. The relevant information is updated monthly on the TIA's website:

Month	Number of Mainland inbound tour groups (based on the registration date)
January	3
February	624
March	4 126
April	4 696
May	3 901
June	3 090
July	4 212
August	4 482
September	4 482
October	6 087
November (as at 15th)	3 278
Total	38 981

The information of land control points used by Mainland inbound tour groups, places of departure and average tour fare is tabulated in Annex. The TIA has no information on the average spending of members in the relevant tour groups.

(2) All land boundary control points (BCPs) are equipped with comprehensive and advanced clearance facilities for relevant departments of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to provide quality and efficient clearance services to cross-boundary passengers (including tourists of tour groups and cross-boundary students) and cross-boundary vehicles (including cross-boundary coaches, private cars and goods vehicles).

Since the resumption of normal cross-boundary traffic between Hong Kong and the Mainland in 2023, the daily average passenger trips at the Hong Kong-

Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Port, the Shenzhen Bay Control Point (SBCP) and the Heung Yuen Wai Control Point (HYWCP) are about 56 000, 59 000 and 35 000 respectively. Among which, the daily average of passenger trips at the HZMB Hong Kong Port is similar to that before the pandemic in 2019, while for SBCP it is about 56 per cent when compared to that before the pandemic.

Relevant departments will continue to enhance clearance efficiency through various means, including the upgrading of facilities at control points, and better utilisation of information technology, etc.

As at mid-November 2023, the coach facilities at the HZMB Hong Kong Port, the SBCP and the HYWCP are tabulated below:

BCPs	Type of Coach		
	Cross-boundary coaches		Domestic coaches
	Pick-up Bays	Set-down Bays	Pick-up/Set-down Bays
HZMB Hong Kong Port	Outbound: 22 Inbound: 45	Outbound: 11 Inbound: 11	Pick-up: 8 Set-down: 5
SBCP Hong Kong Port Area (Note 1)	Inbound: 43	Outbound: 20	/
HYWCP	Inbound: 19	Outbound: 13	Shared-use Pick-up/Set-down Bays: 9 (Note 2)

Note 1: The SBCP Hong Kong Port Area is defined as closed area under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) and only cross-boundary coaches are allowed access.

Note 2: The Government has reserved an area in the vicinity of the HYWCP for temporary parking of 30 domestic coaches where needed.

(3) There are dedicated clearance kiosks for cross-boundary coaches and different drop-off and pick-up locations for passengers taking cross-boundary coaches (including coaches for tour groups) in the HZMB Hong Kong Port, the SBCP and the HYWCP, so as to achieve traffic diversion at the three BCPs.

To address the congestion that may be caused by tour groups during long holidays or peak periods, relevant departments will make flexible deployment for operation of additional clearance counters and vehicle clearance kiosks to divert passenger and vehicular flow. More security guards are also deployed to provide crowd management support. Close liaison is maintained with the relevant Mainland authorities to closely monitor passenger flow and

to implement appropriate measures whenever necessary to ensure the BCPs are operating in an orderly manner.

In view of the surge in passenger and vehicular flow during holiday periods, the Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre, composed of relevant departments including Customs and Excise Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, and the Immigration Department, etc, will be activated during the period to monitor the situation at each BCP and take contingency actions where necessary.

In addition, prior to major long holidays, the HKSAR Government will announce through press releases and social media apps the expected passenger flow during the holiday period, and encourage the public and passengers to plan their trips in advance and make good use of the BCPs with less passenger traffic, while appealing to Mainland travellers and Hong Kong residents planning to enter or leave Hong Kong to cross the border during non-peak hours as far as possible, with a view to minimising the congestion at the land BCPs during the morning and evening peak hours in holiday periods.

---

## [LCQ10: Attracting innovation and technology enterprises to operate in Hong Kong](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

The Government has indicated that it aims to attract innovation and technology (I&T) enterprises with potential or representativeness to set up operations or expand their presence in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has analysed and studied the following information on I&T enterprises operating in traditional business districts and industrial districts: (i) their numbers, (ii) the districts in which they are located, (iii) their specific I&T uses in the I&T industry chain (broken down by upstream (research and development), midstream (prototype or application development) and downstream (manufacturing)), and (iv) their scale; and

(2) as it takes time to implement and construct new development areas to support I&T development, whether the Government will attract I&T enterprises to first set up operations in traditional business districts and industrial districts, and introduce policies and measures to ensure that the ancillary

facilities in such districts meet the operational requirements of I&T enterprises; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address specific facilitation policies on the development of technology industries, focusing on attracting enterprises and talents in technology industries with a competitive edge and of strategic significance, including life and health technology, artificial intelligence and data science, advanced manufacturing and new energy technology, etc., to establish presence or expand their business in Hong Kong.

The Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB) is working at full steam in attracting strategic innovation and technology (I&T) enterprises. In close collaboration with the Office of Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES), the ITIB is liaising with Mainland and overseas I&T enterprises in strategic industries to introduce Hong Kong's strengths as well as the latest development in I&T industry, with a view to attracting them to establish presence in Hong Kong.

After consulting the Development Bureau (DEVB) and OASES, our consolidated reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

The DEVB pointed out that traditional business and industrial districts have the potential to promote the development of I&T given their historical development background. In terms of land use planning, traditional business and industrial districts are mainly zoned "Commercial", "Industrial" or "Industrial Estate" on statutory plans, which may accommodate a variety of uses, including those related to the "Information Technology and Telecommunications Industries" (such as data centre, data processing/computer centre, telesite or carrier hotel). The aforementioned uses are generally permitted in the relevant zones, therefore no planning permission is required to carry out the relevant activities within these zones. Hence, the Government does not maintain statistical breakdown on detailed information of I&T enterprises that operate in traditional business and industrial districts.

Meanwhile, the two I&T flagships in Hong Kong, namely the Hong Kong Science Park and Cyberport, have admitted a certain amount of I&T enterprises and gradually developed an I&T ecosystem of a certain scale. The Science Park and Cyberport also offer support for start-ups and tenants through incubation programmes and one-stop support services. In view of this, currently, when attracting strategic I&T enterprises to establish presence, the ITIB and OASES mainly suggest that enterprises consider existing facilities that could meet their needs, such as the Science Park and Cyberport.

Managed and operated by the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC), the Science Park in Pak Shek Kok, the InnoCentre in Kowloon Tong, and the three InnoParks in Tai Po, Yuen Long and Tseung Kwan O

support around 1 400 enterprises. The three InnoParks provide multi-storey and highly-efficient specialised industrial buildings to encourage manufacturers to set up production base in Hong Kong, thereby promoting smart production and attracting high value-added technology industries to set up production lines in Hong Kong. The Microelectronics Centre at Yuen Long InnoPark will be commissioned next year to provide advanced infrastructure and hardware facilities designated for microelectronics. The HKSTPC will also complete Batch 1 of Stage 2 of the Science Park Expansion Programme in 2025.

For Cyberport, it currently has four office buildings in its premises, providing a series of support services to around 2 000 technology start-ups in the fields of financial technology, digital entertainment and smart living. Construction works of the Cyberport expansion project is underway for expected completion in end-2025 to cater for the needs of the ever-expanding Cyberport community. To support the tremendous local demand for computing power and promote development of the artificial intelligence (AI) industry ecosystem, Cyberport will establish an AI supercomputing centre in phases starting from 2024 to provide the local I&T industry with strategic technology infrastructure.

To better align with the goal of attracting strategic I&T enterprises into Hong Kong, the Government will make forward planning to provide more land for I&T use and advanced manufacturing space. As the sites in San Tin Technopole (including the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Loop) will be made available gradually, more options will be available for the enterprises.

---

## **LCQ5: Environmental professionals**

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kiok and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

There are views pointing out that in order to implement the policy initiatives set out in the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 (the Plan) and strive to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality before 2050, the demand for environmental professionals will become increasingly keen in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) regarding the implementation of the Plan, whether the authorities have assessed and projected the demand for environmental professionals, and in the light of the relevant outcome, formulated policy initiatives to nurture locally and attract from overseas the relevant talents, so as to expand the talent pool for environmental professionals; if so, of the details; if not,

the reasons for that;

(2) whether the authorities will proactively collaborate with the industry to improve the professional qualifications framework and continuing professional development for environmental professionals in Hong Kong, and elevate the status of the relevant professional societies; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the Government has since 2020 launched the Graduates Subsidy Programme under the Green Employment Scheme to provide opportunities for graduates who are interested in environment-related fields to enter the industry and nurture "green professionals" by subsidising enterprises to employ graduates in environment-related fields, whether the authorities will consider improving and regularising the subsidy programme to attract the new generation to join the environment profession; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Lo is set out below.

(1) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government attaches great importance to combating climate change. The Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 published in October 2021 set out four major decarbonisation strategies, namely net-zero electricity generation, energy saving and green buildings, green transport and waste reduction, as well as specific targets, implementation timetables and roadmaps, to lead Hong Kong towards carbon neutrality. Measures to decarbonise and to adapt to climate change will not only bring about sustainable improvement to the environment, but will also drive the development of a green economy, create job opportunities in related industries such as energy supply, recycling, electric vehicles, new energy transport, as well as green and sustainable finance, and increase demand for skilled talents in environmental professions.

To assist various sectors of the community in seizing the opportunities brought by low-carbon transformation, tertiary institutions have introduced undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in environmental studies to nurture talent for green industries. In the area of green finance, the Government launched in December 2022 the Pilot Green and Sustainable Finance Capacity Building Support Scheme for application by market practitioners, related professionals as well as students and graduates of the relevant disciplines. After completing eligible programmes, applicants can apply for a subsidy of up to \$10,000. The Green and Sustainable Finance Cross-Agency Steering Group also launched the Sustainable Finance Internship Initiative in October 2022 to create more internship opportunities for students. In addition, the Government has added "financial professionals in environmental, social and governance (ESG)" to the Talent List of Hong Kong since 2021 to provide

immigration facilitation to these talents.

The Government has drawn up the Talent List to attract high-quality talent in an effective and focused manner. The List covers the industry segment of environmental technology services and provides immigration facilitation to non-local talents in the environmental profession who submitted applications under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals.

In respect of technical personnel, to encourage young people to join the Technician Training Scheme offered by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), the EMSD participated in the Vocational Training Council (VTC) Earn & Learn Scheme as an employer. Technician trainees who join the scheme would be granted an allowance and government subsidy by instalment during the training period of two to three years. In the new round of recruitment conducted in August this year, the EMSD recruited around 230 trainees. Trainees who completed the scheme with satisfactory performance might be considered with priority for employment as Technician I or Technician II of the EMSD. The Government is also collaborating closely with the trades to strengthen the training of technical and maintenance personnel for electric vehicles (EVs). In August this year, the VTC launched the Certificate in EV Repair and Maintenance programme, which offers opportunities for existing practitioners to study and enhance their technical skills. In addition, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is exploring collaboration with the VTC to roll out an environmental protection-related apprenticeship scheme and provide on-job training opportunities for students taking Certificate of Vocational Education, Diploma of Vocational Education or Higher Diploma programmes.

(2) & (3) The EPD has all along been supporting the continuous development of environmental professions in Hong Kong, so that the standards and credibility of environment-related services and industries can be enhanced through professionalisation. Apart from promoting exchanges and development of environment-related professions with various professional institutes, we also supported the establishment of the Hong Kong Institute of Qualified Environmental Professionals (HKIQEP) by local environmental professionals in 2015, the development of professional qualification framework and continuous professional development for environmental professionals, as well as gradually enhancing the professional status of environmental professionals. We will continue to support the continuous development of the environmental professions in Hong Kong.

In respect of training, the EPD collaborates with relevant professional institutes to provide internship training for graduates in environment-related disciplines and young environmental professionals, so as to help them acquire relevant professional qualifications and increase their chances of securing employment in the environmental protection sector. For example, the EPD has been working with the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers for more than 25 years in providing university engineering graduates with environmental engineering-related internship training opportunities to assist

them in acquiring the qualification of environmental engineer.

There were tremendous pressure and challenges on the local employment market brought about by the epidemic. Through the Anti-epidemic Fund, the then Environment Bureau and the EPD launched three rounds of Graduates Subsidy Programme under the Green Employment Scheme from 2020 to 2022 to subsidise eligible private companies and suitable organisations to employ fresh graduates working in areas related to environmental protection, ecological conservation, green energy and energy conservation, climate change, sustainable development, etc. In the light of the easing of the epidemic situation with society and economy returning to full normalcy, the Graduates Subsidy Programme has ended. To help more graduates of environment-related disciplines to join the environmental profession, the EPD is exploring collaboration with the HKIQEP to recruit graduates to participate in internship training in different organisations with a view to assisting them in acquiring environmental professional qualifications.

In addition, the EPD has been organising summer internship programmes over the years to provide university students with internship and training opportunities, with a view to enhancing their understanding of career development in environmental protection-related fields. The EPD has also launched the Job Shadowing Programme this year, through which secondary four to secondary six students can learn about the work of the EPD by shadowing professional and technical staff, with the aims of cultivating their interest and passion in environmental protection and preparing them for future studies and career development. As at end-October this year, 160 secondary school students have participated in the Job Shadowing Programme.