

## LCQ15: Facilitating employees from multinational enterprises to work in Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

It is learnt that there is a serious shortage of manpower in many professional sectors, particularly among middle managers and professionals, as well as an increased need for large-scale consolidated and multinational enterprises to internally redeploy overseas or Mainland employees to work in Hong Kong. However, applications by foreigners or Mainland residents to work in Hong Kong on grounds of intra-company transfer under the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals require a significant number of supporting documents and lengthy processing time, which fails to meet the immediate need of enterprises for staff redeployment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications under the two aforesaid schemes in each of the past five years and, among such applications, the respective numbers of those made and approved on grounds of intra-company transfer;

(2) in respect of the aforesaid applications made on grounds of intra-company transfer, whether the Government has studied the further streamlining or enhancement of the vetting and approval procedures of the relevant schemes, in order to facilitate the expeditious redeployment of talents to Hong Kong by enterprises; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether, in addition to streamlining procedures, the Government has considered allocating to large-scale enterprises with good governance a certain percentage of quotas according to their total number of employees, with a view to allowing them to flexibly redeploy their staff to work in Hong Kong through internal procedures, thereby making up for the shortfall in local management and professional talents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The General Employment Policy (GEP) and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMP) are employment-tied schemes which aim to attract qualified overseas and Mainland talent and professionals to work in Hong Kong in order to meet local needs and enhance Hong Kong's

competitiveness in the global market. These talent must possess special skills, knowledge or experience essential to Hong Kong and not readily available or in shortage locally to contribute to the daily operation of the concerned enterprises and sectors with a view to promoting economic development in Hong Kong. In view of the prevailing severe and broad-based manpower shortage, the Government has since the end of last year streamlined the process for the two schemes and extended the limit of stay of relevant visas so as to encourage admitted persons to settle in Hong Kong for development in the long term, thereby enriching the local talent pool.

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

(1) The statistics on applications received and approved under the GEP and the ASMTP in the past five years are tabulated as follows:

Talent admission scheme		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (as at October)
GEP	No. of applications received	45 288 (6 170)	17 688 (3 667)	15 515 (3 851)	15 082 (3 103)	22 806 (2 720)
	No. of applications approved	41 289 (6 024)	14 617 (3 327)	13 821 (3 614)	13 495 (3 005)	20 901 (2 661)
ASMTP	No. of applications received	16 413 (2 390)	9 026 (2 498)	10 485 (2 517)	13 155 (3 661)	18 556 (4 103)
	No. of applications approved	14 053 (2 060)	6 995 (2 077)	9 065 (2 281)	11 768 (3 262)	16 227 (3 705)

Note 1: Figures in brackets indicate the number of applications received and approved in respect of intra-company transfers.

Note 2: Applications approved in a year may not necessarily be those received in the same year.

(2) and (3) As mentioned above, the ImmD has implemented a series of facilitation measures for eligible employing companies and applicants, including simplifying the requirements of supporting documents. If an applicant is internally transferred from employing company's office outside Hong Kong to work in Hong Kong and the application fulfils the following requirements, proof of local recruitment exercise by the sponsoring company is not required:

- the post concerned is at managerial or professional level;
- the transferee has worked for the company for not less than one year;
- the remuneration package is commensurate with the prevailing market level; and

- the number of intra-company transferees sponsored by a company at any one time should be reasonable when compared to the total number of employees and the business nature of the company.

Other facilitation measures include:

(i) if the posts to be filled by applicants fall under professions in shortage of local talents as covered in the Talent List, or the vacancies on offer are with an annual salary of HK\$2 million or above, employers are not required to prove their difficulties in local recruitment and may apply for talent admission directly; and

(ii) if the employing company is listed on the Main Board or Growth Enterprise Market of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited or has successfully obtained an employment or training visa/entry permit for a non-local employee in the past 24 months immediately before submission of the new application, it would not be necessary for the employer to submit the Business Registration Certificate, proof of financial standing, details of company background, business plan (e.g. business activities, mode of operation, source of funds) and staff list.

Applications for employment of outside talent to work in Hong Kong should be processed both efficiently and prudently. In processing each application, the ImmD will examine whether the applicant meets the specific eligibility criteria under the relevant admission scheme and normal immigration requirements, and will take into account the individual circumstances of each application. This is to ensure that only applicants meeting the relevant immigration policies will be admitted into Hong Kong for employment or stay. The Government will closely monitor the implementation of the two above-mentioned schemes, and there is currently no plan to introduce any quota on intra-company transfers for individual enterprises.

---

## [LCQ16: Importation of labour](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

To alleviate the manpower shortage across different sectors, the Government has successively launched the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes (Special Scheme), the Labour Importation Scheme for the Construction Sector, and the Labour Importation Scheme for Transport Sector – Public Light Bus/Coach Trade. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the visa/entry permit for imported labour under the aforesaid schemes is valid for a period of 24 months or the full term of the Standard Employment Contract, whichever is shorter, whether the Government will study the extension of the maximum period and allow the renewal of work contracts upon their expiry; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given the overwhelming response in the first round of applications under the Special Scheme, whether the authorities will increase the scheme quotas in the light of the usage of quotas under the scheme and the manpower needs of the trade concerned; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that some public light bus associations have pointed out that importing Mainland drivers is costly, whether the Government will render assistance to employers importing drivers under the aforesaid scheme (e.g. exempting such employers from paying the Employees Retraining Levy); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it will, by modelling on the aforesaid schemes for the construction and transport sectors, introduce labour importation schemes for other sectors experiencing labour shortages; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as the Government has earlier announced the enhancement of the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), including suspending the general exclusion of the 26 job categories as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from SLS for two years, of the number of applications received since the implementation of SLS and the number of workers involved, with a breakdown by job category; among such applications, the number of those involving the 26 job categories and the respective numbers of workers involved?

Reply:

President,

The Government is highly concerned about the supply and demand of manpower in Hong Kong. On the premise of ensuring the employment priority for local workers, the Government allows increasing the number of imported workers on an appropriate and regulated basis, with a view to alleviating the manpower shortage in individual sectors/job categories. These are time-limited and non-permanent measures. The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged strategy, including promoting training and retraining, providing appropriate employment support services and driving technology adoption for productivity uplifting, etc., so as to address the manpower shortage problem.

Having consulted the concerned bureaux and departments, I provide a consolidated reply to the Hon Ng's question as follows:

(1) Under the previous arrangement for the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), if the approved employment contract period of an imported worker exceeded 12 months (the maximum duration was 24 months), the Immigration Department

(ImmD) first granted an initial 12-month visa/entry permit. The imported worker needed to apply for extension of stay during the employment contract period to cover the remaining employment period. The Government has reviewed the above procedures. The visas/entry permits issued by the ImmD for imported workers approved under the Special Scheme to Import Care Workers for Residential Care Homes (Special Scheme), the Labour Importation Schemes for Construction Sector and Transport Sector (Sector-specific Schemes), and the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) will be valid for 24 months upfront or the whole employment contract period, whichever is shorter. Employers may apply for fresh quotas/approvals before the expiry of the employment contracts of imported workers if they wish to retain the imported workers in employ. Relevant bureaux and departments will assess whether relevant employers still have the need for employing imported workers in accordance with the requirements of relevant schemes.

(2) To address the problem of manpower shortage in residential care homes (RCH) for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and enhance the quality of service of the RCH sector, the Government launched the Special Scheme in June this year, with the total quotas for imported care workers capped at 7 000, including 4 000 plus imported care workers approved under the SLS who are working in Hong Kong. The Special Scheme invites applications for the additional 3 000 quotas by batches and has so far approved 1 003 quotas. The remaining quotas will be allocated by batches. The Government will continue to monitor the manpower needs of the RCH sector and review the effectiveness of the Special Scheme in a timely manner.

(3) To address the long-term shortage of drivers in the public light bus (PLB) and coach trades, the Government launched the Labour Importation Scheme for Transport Sector – PLB/coach trade (Transport Sector Scheme) in July this year, under which the PLB/coach trade is suitably allowed to apply for importation of drivers with a quota ceiling of 1 700. The wage levels of imported workers under the Transport Sector Scheme must be no less than the median monthly wages of relevant posts in Hong Kong, and the quota ceiling accounts for only around half of the labour shortage within the trade. The purpose of the said features is to allow importation of labour where suitable on the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers.

A stakeholder consultative group, comprising the Transport Department (TD), relevant transport trade associations and labour representatives, has been set up to gauge the views of the relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the Transport Sector Scheme. The TD will continue to maintain communication with the consultative group and closely monitor the implementation of the Transport Sector Scheme.

According to the Employees Retraining Ordinance (Cap. 423) (the Ordinance), employers approved of importing low-skilled workers should contribute towards the fees for training and retraining of the local workforce. Employers of imported workers are required to pay the Employees Retraining Levy according to the Ordinance, and such levy is transferred to the Employees Retraining Fund administered by the Employees Retraining Board for providing training and retraining to local workers. The levy is amounted to \$400 per imported worker per month. The total amount payable by employers

is \$400 multiplied by the number of months covered by each employment contract up to a maximum of 24 months. The above arrangement of the levy meets the policy objective of assisting the retraining of local workers. The Government currently has no plan to adjust such arrangement for employers of particular sectors.

(4) The Labour Department (LD) launched the ESLS on September 4 this year to enhance the coverage and operation of the SLS, including suspending the general exclusion of 26 job categories as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from the SLS for two years. The ESLS allows enterprises in sectors outside the Special Scheme and Sector-specific Schemes to have greater flexibility in applying for labour importation.

(5) From September 4 to October 31, the LD received a total of 1 113 applications under the ESLS seeking to import 12 745 workers, including 7 255 workers falling within the previous 26 job categories generally excluded from labour importation. The classification of job categories may be subject to revisions upon verification of information from employers. A breakdown of the number of imported workers applied for by job category is at Annex.

---

## [Speech by CE at Greater Bay Area Conference \(English only\) \(with photos/video\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Greater Bay Area Conference today (November 22):

Honourable Vice-Chairman C Y Leung (Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), Deputy Director Lu Xinning (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Mr Qu Yingpu (Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of China Daily), Dr Jane Lee (Deputy Secretary-General of the Hong Kong Coalition), Consuls-General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, and a very warm welcome to our visitors to Hong Kong. I am pleased to join you all at this year's Greater Bay Area Conference.

First of all, I congratulate China Daily and the Hong Kong Coalition on jointly organising this event.

The theme of this conference is "When GBA Meets ASEAN – One Heart and One Mind". Where better to explore this topic than here in Hong Kong!

Indeed, Hong Kong is a vibrant and open meeting place of hearts and

minds. It is also a perfect location for traders, investors and financial planners from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and ASEAN member states to meet and co-operate with one another.

Hong Kong's regional connectivity is underpinned by the unique "one country, two systems" principle. On the one hand, we have resounding support from the Central Government and close links to the Mainland, which ensure our city's long-term stability and prosperity. At the same time, our longstanding systems governing the flows of international trade, finance, talent and ideas provide strong foundations, for our role as a bridge connecting the Mainland with the rest of the world.

Hong Kong's world-class business environment is buttressed by a long tradition of the rule of law, as well as the abundance of multilingual and multi-talented professionals.

Under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong has a unique role to play in the far-reaching Belt and Road Initiative, first announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013. The Initiative promotes cross-border infrastructure, trade, financial and cultural development through closer government-to-government, business-to-business and people-to-people connectivity.

All this plays to Hong Kong's strengths, making our city a "super connector" as Vice-Chairman Mr C Y Leung has already mentioned, and I will also add, as a "super value-adder" for the Belt and Road regions, including ASEAN.

Hong Kong dovetails its development with national strategies. They include the National 14th Five-Year Plan, which supports our development as international hubs in eight areas, including finance, trade, shipping, innovation and technology, and cultural exchange.

Allow me to highlight three key areas that I think are relevant to the topics covered in today's conference.

First, about promoting people-to-people exchange in the region.

Hong Kong boasts a captivating cultural blend of East and West. We have a plenty of interesting and significant historical buildings, declared monuments and museums.

We also have unique and fascinating intangible cultural heritage, including food and festivals, music and art. We strive to provide more workshops and special guided tours to give visitors a deeper understanding and appreciation of Hong Kong's fascinating cultural heritage.

I certainly encourage our visitors here today to find time to enjoy our city's many charms and cultural attractions, and make full use of our enterprising environment to exchange with people from around the world.

Since taking up the post as Chief Executive in July last year, I have led high-level business delegations to visit four ASEAN countries so far, and I hope to visit more soon. At each stop, I have been very encouraged by the

warm welcome I have received, as well as the great enthusiasm to build stronger ties with Hong Kong and the GBA.

I am also grateful to the governments of the respective ASEAN countries for their support of Hong Kong's bid to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RCEP is the world's largest free trade agreement, and I am confident that Hong Kong's early accession to this group would bring great benefits to all RCEP members, including ASEAN.

Hong Kong is committed to contributing to regional development, through our prowess in professional services, and our connectivity within the GBA.

That brings me to my second point, promoting green finance and fintech.

As Asia continues to drive global economic growth, different economies are seeking a sustainable means of furthering their development. Statistics show that in the next 30 years, the Asian region will require 66 trillion US Dollars in climate investment. This demonstrates the immense demand for green finance.

Hong Kong is a global financial centre, and an emerging hub for international innovation and technology. We aim to be at the forefront of the global green finance and fintech revolution.

Among other things, we are enhancing our green fintech ecosystem.

In my Policy Address, I announced that we will launch a dedicated proof-of-concept subsidy scheme for green fintech in the first half of 2024.

The new scheme will promote the development of technological solutions and provide early-stage funding support for pre-commercialised green fintech.

We are also working with relevant regulators and stakeholders in formulating a "Green Fintech Map". The map will provide one-stop information on the status of green fintech companies in Hong Kong and related services.

With the GBA being an engine for growth in our region, we maintain close co-operation with relevant financial authorities throughout the area.

In April, we organised the first "GBA Green Finance Cooperation Meeting". It brought together financial heavyweights to discuss the work directions for deeper collaboration to create a comprehensive green and sustainable finance ecosystem in the GBA.

In June, our Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau signed a landmark MoU (Memorandum of Understanding), with the Cyberspace Administration of China, on facilitating cross-boundary data flow within the GBA. It will ensure the safe and orderly flow of Mainland data to Hong Kong.

By reducing compliance costs for enterprises and promoting the digital economy in the GBA, this initiative contributes to our active integration into the GBA and the overall development of the country.



The third topic that I wish to highlight is on public services co-operation.

We have recently launched the Cross-Boundary Public Services initiative. It is our joint effort with the Guangdong Provincial Government in developing the "Digital Bay Area". It will enable enterprises and the public in both places to enjoy simple and convenient cross-boundary services. It also facilitates the provision of public services and investment in the GBA, from taxation and company registration, to talent admission and elderly services.

Soon, self-service kiosks will be set up in Hong Kong and Guangdong Province respectively, for the convenience of local residents. Our target is to roll out the Hong Kong self-service kiosk in Guangzhou by the first quarter of 2024, and gradually cover all nine Mainland cities in the GBA.

Alongside a new "multiple-entry visa" for foreign staff working in companies registered in Hong Kong, as well as our enhanced talent admission scheme, I am confident that these measures will help our friends in ASEAN to better grasp the development opportunities of the GBA. They will also help Hong Kong's internationally-minded professionals better leverage the advantages brought by regional co-operation.

Working together, we can surely create an even brighter future for our people and our economies, when GBA meets ASEAN with one heart, and one mind.

On that note, I wish you all a very enjoyable conference, and a memorable stay here in Asia's world city, Hong Kong.

Thank you.



---

## [Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley](#)

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (November 22). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours

before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

#### A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

##### 1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

##### 2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

#### B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

##### 1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

##### 2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35

minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

#### C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

#### D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.

---

# Red flags hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (November 22) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.