

LCQ8: The problem of crimes committed by “bogus refugees”

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

Regarding the problem of crimes committed by "bogus refugees", will the Government inform this Council:

(1) among the crimes which occurred in Hong Kong in the past year, of the number of those involving non-ethnic Chinese non-refoulement claimants, together with a breakdown by month, offence and district in which the crime occurred;

(2) as it has been reported that the problem of crimes committed by "bogus refugees" has plagued Hong Kong for many years, and a number of recent gang fights and robberies in busy districts are also related to these refugees, whether the authorities will target those districts with a higher number of crimes committed by "bogus refugees" (e.g. Yau Tsim Mong and Sham Shui Po) by deploying additional police officers on patrol and conducting random checks on suspicious persons, so as to combat crimes and triad activities in such districts; if so, of the manpower arrangements, as well as the major initiatives to be implemented in the future to combat crimes and triad activities involving "bogus refugees"; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has plans to further shorten the length of stay of non-refoulement claimants in Hong Kong (including enhancing the efficiency in processing appeal cases related to non-refoulement claims, strengthening communication with the countries concerned to expeditiously verify the nationality and identity of "bogus refugees", and speeding up the repatriation procedure), so as to prevent them from committing crimes in Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) and the Immigration Department (ImmD), the consolidated reply to Dr the Hon Johnny Ng's question is as follows:

(1) According to the Police's record, the number of non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) persons on recognisance and issued with Form No. 8 (mainly non-refoulement claimants) who were arrested for criminal offences in 2023 and 2024 (as at end-March) is tabulated below with breakdown by month:

Month	Number of persons
January 2023	56
February 2023	53
March 2023	49
April 2023	60
May 2023	48
June 2023	75
July 2023	58
August 2023	76
September 2023	77
October 2023	47
November 2023	81
December 2023	54
January 2024	65
February 2024	47
March 2024	37

The monthly numbers of persons arrested in the above table represent the real-time figures of the corresponding month-end. The numbers of persons arrested may have been updated due to reclassification and readjustment upon the compilation of quarterly or yearly statistics. The figures with breakdown by police region/police district tabulated below are based on the statistics of the numbers of persons arrested after compilation:

Police region/police district	2023	2024 (January to March)
Hong Kong Island Region	150	31
Central District	36	10
Wan Chai District	69	8
Western District	19	3
Eastern District	26	10
Kowloon East Region	41	9
Wong Tai Sin District	12	3
Sau Mau Ping District	10	4
Kwun Tong District	10	1
Tseung Kwan O District	9	1
Kowloon West Region	386	80
Yau Tsim District	192	36
Mong Kok District	61	10

Sham Shui Po District	94	24
Kowloon City District	39	10
New Territories North Region	117	24
Border District	0	0
Yuen Long District	83	21
Tuen Mun District	28	2
Tai Po District	6	1
New Territories South Region	42	6
Tsuen Wan District	11	1
Shatin District	7	2
Kwai Tsing District	14	2
Lantau District	8	1
Airport District	2	0
Marine Region	9	1
Hong Kong overall	745	151

The number of NEC persons on recognisance and issued with Form No. 8 (mainly non-refoulement claimants) who were arrested for criminal offences, after compilation, is tabulated below with breakdown by crime category:

Offence	2023	2024 (January to March)
Shop theft	193	47
Miscellaneous thefts	71	22
Serious drug offences (Note 1)	99	11
Wounding and serious assault	75	10
Criminal damage	33	10
Serious immigration offences (Note 2)	38	5
Burglary	18	4
Others (Note 3)	218	42
Total	745	151
Triad-related	27	5

Note 1: "Serious drug offences" include possession of dangerous drugs exceeding a specified amount (i.e. possession of drugs, such as 5 grams of cocaine/heroin/marijuana, etc.), manufacturing dangerous drugs, trafficking of dangerous drugs, etc.

Note 2: "Serious immigration offences" include aiding and abetting illegal

immigrants (IIs), arranging passage of unauthorised entrants to Hong Kong, using an identity card relating to another person, etc.

Note 3: "Others" include forgery and coinage, offences against public order, pickpocketing, disorder/fighting in public places and possession of offensive weapon etc.

In addition, according to the ImmD's record, the number of NEC persons on recognisance and issued with Form No. 8 (mainly non-refoulement claimants) who were arrested for taking unlawful employment contrary to section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance (Cap. 115) are tabulated below.

Year	Number of persons arrested
2023	484
2024 (January to March)	73

(2) In the first quarter of 2024, a total of 151 NEC persons who were issued with Form No. 8 were arrested for criminal offences, representing a drop of four per cent compared to that in last year. The criminal offences involved were mainly shop theft, miscellaneous thefts and serious drug offences. Among them, five persons were involved in triad-related cases, accounting for three per cent only. The number of NEC persons who were issued with Form No. 8 and were arrested reduced by 147 and 61 compared to that in 2018 and 2019 respectively, representing a corresponding drop of around a half and 30 per cent, which shows that the situation has improved.

Regarding those triad-related or violent cases and serious offences such as robbery that are of concern, it is imperative for the Police to solve these cases as soon as possible. In May last year, the Police upgraded its Crime Wing Working Group on NEC Involvement in Organized Crime and Triad Activities to a steering committee. The steering committee, chaired by a Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police, strengthens the review of the relevant crime situation and intelligence collection; enhances co-ordination; and formulates more strategic enforcement actions. After the conviction of individual NEC person on recognisance and issued with Form No. 8 of an offence in Hong Kong, the prosecution will also provide to the Court the crime statistics or case laws of the relevant group and invite the Court to consider enhancing the sentence as a result of the accused's status. The Police will conduct risk assessment based on the crime situation, including strengthening patrol, stop and search and carrying out anti-crime operations in high risk hours and regions.

To further enhance crime prevention and detection, and achieve a greater deterrent effect on violent and serious crimes on the streets, the Police have started to install closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs) in public places with higher crime rate and pedestrian flow, among which 15 installations have been completed for technical tests in Mong Kok in early April. In the same month, the Police successfully used CCTV cameras to detect a robbery case involving NEC persons issued with Form No. 8 and a triad-related possession

of imitation firearm case respectively, and arrested four suspects within 24 hours after the time of the incident. After optimisation of the operation, the Police will continue to install the remaining 600 sets of CCTV cameras in regions with higher crime rate from mid-2024.

(3) The Government attaches great importance to issues relating to non-refoulement claims and has all along adopted a multi-pronged strategy. The Security Bureau amended the legislation in 2023 to include the Nei Kwu Correctional Institution as a place of detention of the ImmD, thereby increasing the total number of detention capacity by 33 per cent to 900. The ImmD is committed to making gainful use of the existing facilities to detain claimants who pose higher security risks to the community in accordance with the law. On the other hand, since the introduction of the updated removal policy with effect from December 7, 2022, the ImmD will proceed with the removal of unsubstantiated claimants from Hong Kong upon dismissal of their judicial reviews or relevant leave applications pertaining to their non-refoulement claims by the Court of First Instance, irrespective of whether there are outstanding court proceedings. Since the implementation of the updated policy until March 2024, the ImmD has removed a total of 2 401 claimants from Hong Kong, including 249 under the updated policy. The number in 2023 has significantly increased by 63 per cent compared to 2022.

The Government has all along been maintaining close communication with Consulates-General of the major source countries. The relevant Consulates-General agreed to step up efforts in providing correct information about the non-refoulement claim mechanism to their nationals. In addition, the Government has all along been maintaining close liaison with relevant stakeholders including the relevant Consulates-General and airlines in such aspects as requesting the Consulates-General for expediting the issuance of re-entry travel documents, arranging special flights for large-scale removal operations as and when necessary, so as to expedite the removal of unsubstantiated claimants from Hong Kong. For instance, the ImmD has deployed officers to conduct a total of 24 removal operations from November 2022 to March 2024 with in-flight escort of unsubstantiated claimants who were unco-operative and refused to be removed with a view to implementing forced repatriation and combating the delaying tactics of unsubstantiated claimants. During the same period, the ImmD also carried out 10 large-scale removal operations, removing a total of 252 unsubstantiated claimants from Hong Kong. At end-August 2023, the Secretary for Security also paid a visit to Vietnam to witness the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the ImmD of Hong Kong and the Immigration Department of Vietnam, which covers, among others, enhanced co-operation of both parties in respect of verification and repatriation of non-refoulement claimants.

The Government will continue to adopt measures to enhance the handling of non-refoulement claims, including:

(a) on interception at source, apart from co-operating with relevant Mainland authorities to strengthen intercepting IIs at source, the Government will, through profile analysis of obvious abusers of the non-refoulement claim mechanism and via the Advance Passenger Information System to be rolled out

in phases starting from the third quarter of 2024, enhance identification of potential abusers and prevent their entry into Hong Kong;

(b) the ImmD continues to maintain high efficiency in screening non-refoulement claims;

(c) through streamlined process, the Torture Claims Appeal Board will enhance its efficiency in handling appeal cases, with the target of reducing the average processing time from over seven months in the past to around four months;

(d) on the management of detention facilities, various legislative amendments to enhance treatments of immigration detainees have been implemented starting from November 2023, so as to further uphold discipline and order at detention facilities;

(e) strengthening enforcement actions against immigration offences, including illegal employments, with a target to carry out not less than 12 000 operations on the targeted establishments every year, in order to lower the economic incentives of the claimants; and

(f) on removal operations, the Government will continue to fully implement the updated removal policy so as to enhance the efficiency and efforts in removing unsubstantiated claimants, with the target of removing not less than 1 200 unsubstantiated claimants per year.

The Government will continue to spare no efforts and adopt a multi-pronged strategy in handling issues relating to non-refoulement claims.

Auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks to be held on May 25 and 26

The Transport Department (TD) today (May 8) announced that two auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks will be held on May 25 (Saturday) and 26 (Sunday) in Meeting Room S421, L4, Old Wing, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai.

"A total of 350 vehicle registration marks will be put up for public sale at each auction. The lists of marks have been uploaded to the department's website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/index.html," a department spokesman said.

Applicants who have paid a deposit of \$1,000 to reserve a mark for auction should also participate in the bidding (including the first bid at the reserve price of \$1,000). Otherwise, the mark concerned may be sold to another bidder at the reserve price.

People who wish to participate in the bidding at the auction should take note of the following important points:

(1) Successful bidders are required to produce the following documents for completion of registration and payment procedures immediately after the successful bidding:

(i) the identity document of the successful bidder;

(ii) the identity document of the purchaser if it is different from the successful bidder;

(iii) a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation if the purchaser is a body corporate; and

(iv) a crossed cheque made payable to "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" or "The Government of the HKSAR". (For an auctioned mark paid for by cheque, the first three working days after the date of auction will be required for cheque clearance confirmation before processing of the application for mark assignment can be completed.)

Successful bidders can also pay through the Easy Pay System (EPS). Payment by post-dated cheques, cash or other methods will not be accepted.

(2) Purchasers must make payment of the purchase price through EPS or by crossed cheque and complete the Memorandum of Sale of Registration Mark immediately after the bidding. Subsequent alteration of the particulars in the memorandum will not be permitted.

(3) A vehicle registration mark can only be assigned to a motor vehicle which is registered in the name of the purchaser. The Certificate of Incorporation must be produced immediately by the purchaser if a vehicle registration mark purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(4) Special registration marks are non-transferable. Where the ownership of a motor vehicle with a special registration mark is transferred, the allocation of the special registration mark shall be cancelled.

(5) The purchaser shall, within 12 months after the date of auction, apply to the Commissioner for Transport for the registration mark to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. If the purchaser fails to assign the registration mark within 12 months, allocation of the mark will be cancelled and arranged for re-allocation in accordance with the statutory provision without prior notice to the purchaser.

For other auction details, please refer to the Guidance Notes – Auction of Traditional Vehicle Registration Marks, which can be downloaded from the department's website,

www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/tvrm_auction/index.html.

EMSD announces latest sampling results for legionella at fresh water cooling towers

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (May 8) announced that the department tested 11 water samples collected from cooling towers in seven buildings in its routine inspections in April 2024. None of them were detected to have a total legionella count at or above the upper threshold, which is 1 000 colony-forming units per millilitre. The latest statistics are set out in Annex 1.

The EMSD also announced the locations of buildings which were served with nuisance notices during the preceding three-month period as the total legionella count was found in the fresh water cooling towers to be equal to or above the upper threshold. Details can be found in Annex 2.

The EMSD publishes the latest statistics of the above information on a half-monthly basis on its website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/other_regulatory_services/cooling_towers/water_sampling/index.html).

The EMSD reminds the owners of fresh water cooling towers that they have the responsibility to design, operate and maintain cooling towers properly. They should arrange regular inspections, timely maintenance and periodic testing of the water quality in their cooling towers in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fresh Water Cooling Towers issued by the department to prevent the proliferation of legionella.

SCST to visit Beijing

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, will depart for Beijing tomorrow morning (May 9). He will attend a plaque unveiling ceremony for a programme at the Palace Museum and call on the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Mr Yeung will return to Hong Kong on May 11 (Saturday). During his absence, the Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, will be the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism.

LCQ11: Encouraging Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Liao and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

The Government implemented the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme on a pilot basis (the pilot scheme) in 2021 and regularised the scheme (the regularised scheme) in 2023. On encouraging Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Greater Bay Area), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Government indicated that 718 job offers for young people had been received under the regularised scheme as at February 29 this year, of the industries in which the employed young people are engaged, and whether the participation in the regularised scheme has met the Government's expectation;

(2) as it has been reported that a total of 1 091 young people had been employed under the pilot scheme, and among the 632 people who had completed the 18-month on-the-job training, 464 were offered further employment, whether the authorities have followed up on the reasons why the young people participating in the pilot scheme quitted midway and were not offered further employment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as a survey has pointed out that some young people who have completed the pilot scheme aspire to pursue development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, but they have indicated that the Mainland job search platforms are not clear about how to recruit Hong Kong young people to work on the Mainland and resolve technical issues such as taxation and the "five insurances and one housing fund" for them, how the authorities will optimise the regularised scheme to assist the young people who have completed the scheme to continue to seek development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, so as to enhance continuity of the relevant policy initiatives;

(4) whether the authorities will consider arranging cross-programme collaborations between the regularised scheme and other youth programmes in the Greater Bay Area (e.g. the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and

Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area, and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area), so as to provide assistance for the entire community of Hong Kong young people who pursue development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, and to enhance the long-term exchanges between young people on the Mainland and in Hong Kong; and

(5) given that the authorities of the Guangdong Province have introduced measures, including the Centralised Public Recruitment of College Graduates by the Public Institutions in the Guangdong Province in 2023 and the Guangdong Province Internship Programme for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Students, to provide Hong Kong young people with employment and internship opportunities in various industries in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, how the authorities will step up co-operation with the authorities of the Guangdong Province to attract more Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, so as to encourage them to integrate into the country's overall development?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the pilot Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (the pilot scheme) in 2021 and has regularised the scheme (the regularised scheme) since March 2023, encouraging enterprises with business in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to employ Hong Kong young people in accordance with Hong Kong laws with a monthly salary of not less than HK\$18,000 and station them in the Mainland cities of the GBA to work and receive on-the-job training. Based on the number of young people employed, the Government disbursed a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 to enterprises for each person for up to 18 months.

In consultation with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) and the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), our consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) The regularised scheme for 2023 received a total of 718 notifications of employment. A breakdown of the number of employed young people by industry is set out at Annex. The regularised scheme is open to all eligible young people for participation with no pre-set quota.

(2) The pilot scheme received a total of 1 091 notifications of employment. Among the 632 young people who had completed the 18-month on-the-job training, 464 continued to be employed by the relevant enterprises. The Labour Department (LD) does not maintain information on the reasons for leaving employment or not being further employed in respect of young people participating in the pilot scheme. To evaluate the effectiveness of the regularised scheme, the LD has commissioned a contractor to conduct a 3-year "longitudinal study". The study involves following up with the participating enterprises and young people with a view to understanding the employment

situation of the young people, and collecting opinions from enterprises and young people on the Scheme. The first phase of the study commenced in March 2024.

(3) The Government provides various supporting measures to young people participating in the regularised scheme, including setting up a dedicated website to provide the scheme details and a practical guide on working and living in the GBA. The LD has also commissioned service providers to provide support services for the participating young people in the Mainland, including a telephone hotline manned by a dedicated staff to answer enquiries on daily life, laws, taxation in the Mainland, etc., setting up platforms and groups in social media, organising seminars, and assisting young people who have participated in the Scheme to establish alumni associations to strengthen their social networks and promote the sustainable development of their careers. In addition, the Interactive Employment Service website of the LD hosts a dedicated webpage of Information on Employment in the Mainland. It links to employment websites of the Mainland and publishes practical information on working in the Mainland for the reference of enterprises and job seekers.

Moreover, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office (the Office) under the CMAB has strived to make use of diversified and multi-media means and channels to promote the GBA development to various sectors of the community (including Hong Kong young people). For example, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), the Office has launched and continuously optimised the "GoGBA" digital platform, which provides support to Hong Kong residents and enterprises interested in pursuing development in the Mainland cities of GBA. The Office has also co-organised with the HKTDC a number of "GoGBA Development Day" events in Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of GBA every year and invited representatives of governments to introduce the respective local policies and support measures for entrepreneurship and employment, as well as entrepreneurs and experts to share their experiences in starting businesses or working in the GBA, etc. The Office also actively participates in the "Education and Careers Expo", "Entrepreneur Day" exhibitions, etc., so as to provide young people and members of the public with more information about entrepreneurship and employment in the GBA, including information about the GBA Youth Employment Scheme.

The HKSAR Government also established the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Promotion Centre (Promotion Centre) in April 2023. Through further strengthening strategic co-operation with the HKTDC, Invest Hong Kong and relevant Mainland organisations and institutions, the Promotion Centre organises different types of activities in the Mainland cities of the GBA for Hong Kong residents (including participants of the GBA Youth Employment Scheme) and enterprises pursuing development there, so as to promote the opportunities brought about by the GBA development and to better understand their needs for providing them with practical assistance.

(4) The HYAB and the Youth Development Commission rolled out the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in

the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Experiential Scheme) and the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Entrepreneurship Scheme), which assist young people to understand the entrepreneurial opportunities in the huge Mainland market, as well as to provide start-up capital, entrepreneurial support and incubation services to Hong Kong young people who are interested in starting their businesses, help them cope with the difficulties they encounter at the early stages of starting a business, and support them in establishing and developing their businesses. The new round of Entrepreneurship Scheme and Experiential Scheme just started in early April 2024, with a number of optimised arrangements to provide more comprehensive support services for more Hong Kong young people who are interested in starting their businesses locally and in the Mainland cities of the GBA. Furthermore, the HYAB provides funding through the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland (FSYEM) for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise youth exchange projects in the Mainland. The objectives are to promote Hong Kong youth's awareness and understanding of their home country, strengthen their sense of national identity, and enhance exchanges between youths of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Under the first round of the FSYEM in 2024-25, over 140 projects were approved to provide around 12 000 exchange places in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

The Government established the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area (the Alliance) in December 2023 to further support Hong Kong young people to start their businesses in the GBA. The HYAB, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the People's Government of Guangdong Province, and the Human Resources and Social Security Department of Guangdong Province are the leading parties of the Alliance. Nearly 60 organisations from various sectors in the GBA have joined the Alliance as members, including government and public organisations, innovation and entrepreneurial bases, NGOs and social organisations, post-secondary institutions and scientific research institutes, professional organisations and venture funds. The Alliance leverages the resources and networks of member organisations to provide a one-stop information, publicity and exchange platform, thereby providing young entrepreneurs with comprehensive support. The HYAB also provides funding through the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland (FSYIM) for NGOs to organise youth internship projects in the Mainland. Participants may deepen their understanding of the employment market, workplace culture and development opportunities in the Mainland, which will help them set their future career goals, accumulate work experience, build interpersonal network and boost their employment advantage. Under the FSYIM in 2024-25, 75 projects were approved to provide around 2 600 internship places in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

(5) The LD maintains close contact with the governments of the Guangdong Province and the GBA Mainland cities to step up promotion of the GBA Youth Employment Scheme and the support for young people, and visits higher educational institutions in the Guangdong Province from time to time to conduct promotional briefings. The Guangdong Provincial Government has introduced supporting measures, including online and offline support.

Individual municipal governments also offer housing, taxation and other preferential treatment to young people participating in the Scheme. To further support the participating young people to adapt to working and living in the Mainland, the Guangdong Provincial Government doubled the living allowance to a maximum of RMB2,000 per month in August 2023. The Government will continue to strengthen the collaboration with the Guangdong Provincial Government to support Hong Kong young people to pursue careers in the Mainland cities of the GBA and to actively integrate into overall national development.

The LD will continue to listen to the views of enterprises, tertiary institutions and other stakeholders, and actively explore appropriate measures to further enhance the GBA Youth Employment Scheme.