

LCQ17: Importation of labour

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Since February of last year, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Hong Kong has remained at 2.8 per cent, which is a record low since 1998. Operators of quite a number of industries have relayed that as they have encountered difficulties in staff recruitment, they hope that the Government will relax the criteria for vetting and approval of applications for importation of labour under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (the Scheme). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that from 2015 to 2017, the success rates of applications for labour importation under the Scheme for the (i) transport, storage and communications industries and (ii) financing, insurance, real estate and business services industries were lower than those for other industries, whether the Government has looked into the causes for that; if so, of the outcome; whether it will review the Scheme, with a view to raising the success rates of applications for importation of labour for those industries;

(2) whether it will (i) consider afresh setting industry-specific quotas for labour importation, and (ii) relax the manpower ratio requirement of two full-time local workers to one imported worker under the Scheme; and

(3) as the Chief Executive stated in last year's Policy Address that the Government would consider allowing a greater flexibility for subsidised elderly service and rehabilitation service units to import carers, of the details and progress of the relevant work; whether the Government will examine allowing a greater flexibility also for other industries to import labour; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government operates different schemes for employers to apply for importation of labour on account of their actual operational circumstances so as to supplement skills not readily available in the local labour market and sustain the competitiveness and development needs of Hong Kong. Depending on the skill levels and/or educational requirements of the job vacancies concerned, employers may apply to the Immigration Department for admission of professionals or to the Labour Department (LD) for importation of workers at technician level or below under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS).

SLS has not prescribed a quota ceiling of imported workers for the labour market as a whole or for individual sectors. Each application is considered on its actual merits, such as whether the employer has a genuine need for importation of labour, the number of local employees, and the employer's business and financial situation. Besides, in vetting applications, except for specific posts such as farm workers, LD normally requires a specific manning ratio, e.g., employers shall employ two full-time local workers for bringing in one imported worker from other places (i.e. 2:1), with a view to safeguarding the employment opportunities of local workers. The Government at this stage has no plan to adjust the above manning ratio.

(3) Relevant government bureaux and departments will closely monitor the manpower supply and demand of different sectors, as well as enhance training and attract new recruits. The Government appreciates that the elderly care service sector has manpower shortage problems. The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address announced that, on the premise of safeguarding local workers' priority for employment, consideration might be given to allowing greater flexibility for subsidised elderly service and rehabilitation service units to import carers. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) conducted a survey on subsidised elderly and rehabilitation service units in 2017 to understand the manpower situation of frontline care staff. The results of the survey showed that the vacancy rate of the relevant posts reached 18 per cent.

To help the sector recruit and retain frontline care staff, the Government has since 2018 allocated additional resources to subvented welfare service units to enhance the remuneration of frontline care staff. In this connection, LD staged a "Job Expo for Elderly and Rehabilitation Services" in July 2018 to help social welfare organisations recruit the staff required. SWD is currently conducting another survey on subsidised elderly and rehabilitation service units to gauge if additional resources to increase the remuneration for these organisations have changed the manpower situation of frontline care staff. The relevant data analysis is expected to be completed by mid-2019. The Government will study the relevant statistics in planning the way forward.

LCQ11: Medical and nursing manpower

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

In 2016, Hong Kong had 1.9 doctors and 7.1 nurses per 1 000 persons, and such ratios were lower than those of Singapore and Japan. In addition, as the

population of Hong Kong will continue to grow and age in the coming two decades (with the elderly population in 2036 rising by more than one million compared with that of 2016), it is expected that the shortage of medical and nursing manpower will aggravate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will set target ratios of (i) doctor to population and (ii) nurse to population; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as the Report of Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development of 2017 projects that the shortfalls in medical and nursing manpower will continue to aggravate (with the shortfalls rising to 1 007 doctors and 1 669 general nurses respectively in 2030), whether the Government has introduced new measures to reduce such shortfalls and assessed the effectiveness of such measures; and

(3) given that the retirement age for those doctors and nurses recruited by the Hospital Authority (HA) since June 2015 has been raised from 60 to 65, whether it knows if HA will raise the retirement age to 65 across the board for doctors and nurses recruited before June 2015; the measures put in place by HA to attract more retired doctors and nurses to accept rehiring offers?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Chun-ying is as follows:

(1) The Government has not set any target doctors/nurses-to-population ratio. Regarding the Hospital Authority (HA), different types and levels of services are provided to patients having regard to the conditions and needs of each patient. Therefore the HA does not prescribe any doctors/nurses-to-patients ratio. Nevertheless, the HA has established a mechanism for assessing manpower needs and conducting manpower planning to ensure that there is sufficient doctors/nurses to meet the service demand. The HA will continue to keep in view the manpower situation and make appropriate arrangements in manpower planning to cope with the growing demand for healthcare services.

(2) Over the past decade, the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded medical and nursing training places have been increased substantially from 250 and about 520 in the 2005/06 academic year to 470 and 630 in the 2016/17 academic year respectively. In the 2019/20 to 2021/22 UGC triennium, the Government will further increase the numbers of UGC-funded medical and nursing training places both by 60 each year. The Government will also subsidise 1 160 students to pursue self-financing undergraduate programmes in nursing under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors in the 2019/20 academic year, representing an increase of about 400 places compared with that of the 2018/19 academic year. We expect that increasing the number of training places will alleviate the manpower shortage of healthcare staff in the medium to long term.

The HA will employ all qualified locally trained medical graduates and provide them with relevant specialist training. It is expected that there will be a total of over 2 000 medical graduates becoming registered doctors in the coming five years. The HA will also employ all fresh graduate nurses and non-fresh graduate nurses who are willing to work in the HA.

In addition, the HA will continue to proactively implement the following human resources measures to retain professionals and alleviate the shortage of manpower:

(a) The HA will actively recruit non-locally trained doctors under limited registration, part-time and temporary healthcare staff, as well as agency nurses and supporting staff. Further to the establishment of the Locum Office, the HA launched the Locum Recruitment Website in November 2018 to expedite the process of recruiting part-time staff. To alleviate the manpower shortage and assist in knowledge transfer, the HA also implemented the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme to hire retiring doctors, nurses and supporting staff to continue to perform clinical duties on a full-time basis.

(b) To retain doctors, the HA set up the centrally co-ordinated additional Associate Consultant Promotion Mechanism in 2011-12 to create more promotion opportunities. HA will also provide its doctors with more training courses and overseas training opportunities.

(c) To retain frontline nursing staff, the HA reinstated the annual increment mechanism in April 2018 to boost staff morale. On training and promotion of nursing staff, the HA created the post of Nurse Consultant in 2008-09 to enhance the development prospects of the nursing profession. A total of 1 476 nurses were promoted in the past three years. Besides, the HA provides subsidies each year for over 100 experienced nurses to undergo further studies and training overseas. To enhance preceptorship support for newly recruited nurses, the HA recruits experienced nurses under the Preceptorship Programme to serve as preceptors and provide guidance for newly recruited nurses in the actual clinical setting. This also helps alleviate the work pressure of experienced nursing staff in coaching new nurses.

The HA will continue to introduce medium to long-term measures, including actively considering providing more flexible options in work arrangements to retain staff, such as allowing frontline professionals who are temporarily unable to work full-time due to special needs or for health or family reasons to work on a part-time basis under special work arrangements.

(3) The HA has implemented the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme since 2015-16 to rehire suitable healthcare professionals after their retirement, so as to retain professionals to provide training, impart knowledge and alleviate the manpower shortage in the HA. For the time being, the HA has no plan to raise the retirement age to 65 across the board for doctors and nurses recruited before June 2015.

LCQ16: Records and materials on housing policy

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Regarding the records/materials on housing policy from 1953 (the devastating fire in the Shek Kip Mei squatter area) to April 1973 (the establishment of the Hong Kong Housing Authority) (the early stage), and from May 1973 to last year (the latter stage), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of a breakdown of the quantity of records/materials on housing policy by time period of their creation and classification (i.e. (i) confidential at present, (ii) confidential when created but declassified at present, (iii) restricted at present, (iv) restricted when created but declassified at present, and (v) open/general documents since creation) (set out in the table below);

	Time period	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	Total
The early stage	1953 to 1960						
	1961 to 1970						
	1971 to April 1973						
	Total:						
The latter stage	May 1973 to 1980						
	1981 to 1990						
	1991 to 2000						
	2001 to 2010						
	2011 to 2018						
	Total:						

(2) of a breakdown of the quantity of records/materials on housing policy currently kept by the Government Records Service (GRS) by time period of their creation and classification (i.e. (i) confidential when created but declassified at present, (ii) restricted when created but declassified at present, and (iii) open/general documents since creation) (set out in the table below); and

	Time period	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	Total
The early stage	1953 to 1960				
	1961 to 1970				
	1971 to April 1973				
	Total:				
The latter stage	May 1973 to 1980				
	1981 to 1990				
	1991 to 2000				
	2001 to 2010				
	2011 to 2018				
	Total:				

(3) whether it has issued a code of practice and guidelines on records management to housing-related statutory bodies, and required them to transfer to GRS for preservation their records/materials on housing policy and of historical value, so that such records/materials may, after arrangement, be made available for public access?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Andrew Wan's question is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is the statutory body tasked to develop and implement a public housing programme to achieve the policy objective of the Government. Its executive arm is the Housing Department (HD), which also supports the Transport and Housing Bureau in dealing with all housing-related policies and matters.

HD has all along been handling records management work in compliance with the Records Management Manual and guidelines issued by the Government Records Service (GRS). A breakdown of the quantity of records by the time period of their creation and the classification as requested in the question is not readily available. The compilation of such statistics would require considerable amount of time in data collection and collation in light of the vast amount of records of various HD divisions, sub-divisions and regional offices involved. We are hence unable to provide the requested information. According to GRS' requirement, HD regularly reports the quantity of their records to GRS. In early 2019, HD reported as at December 31, 2018 a total of 92 897 linear metres of records as classified below:

Nature	Quantity (in linear metre)
Administrative records	18 304

Programme records	74 593
Total	92 897

(2) According to the General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules developed by GRS and the records retention and disposal schedules approved by GRS, bureaux/departments (B/Ds) are required to transfer time-expired records having archival value or potential archival value to GRS for permanent retention or appraisal.

There are two types of archival records: classified archival records and unclassified archival records. Records that are classified as confidential and restricted at the time of their creation fall under the category of classified archival records, and records that are not listed as classified when they are created go under the category of unclassified archival records. Access to archival records kept by GRS is subject to the Public Records (Access) Rules 1996. In general, archival records which have been in existence for not less than 30 years or whose contents have at any time been published are open for public access. Public access to archival records closed for less than 30 years requires prior application to GRS. Classified archival records containing sensitive information are handled or reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether a longer closure period is required. Every year, GRS requests all B/Ds to review classified archival records approaching the end of the 30-year closure period so as to ascertain whether these records can be made available for public inspection upon the expiry of the 30-year closure period.

At present, there are a total of 2 980 archival records transferred by the former Housing Branch and HD and retained by GRS. A total of 2 071 of these archival records are unclassified, while four classified ones have been made open to public access. A breakdown of these records by the time period of their creation and classification is as follows:

Time period	Unclassified records	Classified records open to public access	Total
1945 to 1952	8	0	8
1953 to 1960	355	0	355
1961 to 1970	207	2	209
1971 to April 1973	165	1	166
Total	735	3	738
May 1973 to 1980	286	1	287
1981 to 1990	466	0	466
1991 to 2000	504	0	504
2001 to 2010	80	0	80
2011 to 2018	0	0	0
Total	1 336	1	1 337

Grand total	2 071	4	2 075
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For the remaining 905 records, they are not yet open to public access because personal data are involved or they have been closed for less than 30 years, etc.

(3) GRS formulates and implements government records management policies and programmes, offers advice and support to B/Ds on matters and solutions related to records management, and provides storage and disposal services for inactive records. In addition, GRS identifies and preserves records of archival value, valuable government publications and printed materials, enhances public awareness of Hong Kong's documentary heritage, and provides research and reference services. GRS' purview covers all B/Ds, but its duties do not include issuing codes of practice or guidelines on records management to statutory/public organisations or monitoring their records management practices.

That said, GRS published a booklet entitled "Good Records Management Practices" in 2011 to share good practices in records management with these organisations and encourage them to donate records of archival value to GRS. Since 2013, GRS has also been holding annual records management seminars for these organisations. Six seminars have been held thus far, attended by over 1 500 participants from 64 statutory/public bodies. Besides, GRS has been providing records management briefings and advice to individual organisations upon request.

As mentioned in item (1) above, HD is the executive arm of HA (one of the housing-related statutory bodies) and responsible for the management of all HA records. HD manages all such records in accordance with the Records Management Manual and guidelines issued by GRS, which includes transferring records of archival value to GRS for appraisal and permanent retention.

LCQ15: Development plans for three squatter areas in Kowloon East

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

It is learnt that there are three squatter areas in Kowloon East (i.e. Chuk Yuen United Village, Ngau Chi Wan Village and Cha Kwo Ling Village) which are yet to be redeveloped. Chuk Yuen United Village and Ngau Chi Wan

Village have been zoned "Government, Institution or Community" sites but without any concrete development plans, while Cha Kwo Ling Village is within an "Undetermined" zone. Regarding the development plans for these three squatter areas, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of (i) surveyed and (ii) non-surveyed squatter structures in (a) Chuk Yuen United Village, (b) Ngau Chi Wan Village and (c) Cha Kwo Ling Village;

(2) given that the Government has earmarked a piece of land in Ngau Chi Wan Village for the construction of a community hall but has not put forward any implementation plan for years, whether there has been any change in the planned use of the land concerned; if so, of the latest planned use and the development timetable; if not, the timetable and details for the construction of the community hall;

(3) whether the Government will, in the coming three years, conduct detailed planning for the three squatter areas; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will conduct re-planning for the three squatter areas in order to release more lands for public housing development; if so, of the details as well as the estimated number and floor area of public housing units that can be provided; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to adopting a multi-pronged land supply strategy with a view to meeting the land demand for different uses at different time. With regard to squatter areas, the Government will, taking into account factors such as development plan of the squatter area (if any), environmental improvement or safety reasons, clear and demolish the squatters to release the land for alternative long-term development uses.

My reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Under the prevailing squatter control policy, squatter structures surveyed during the 1982 Squatter Control Survey (SCS) were allocated squatter survey numbers, but they remain unauthorised in nature. They are "tolerated" on a temporary basis, provided that the location, dimensions, building materials and use are the same as the record in the 1982 SCS, until the surveyed squatter structure has to be cleared for development, environmental improvement or safety reasons, or until the surveyed squatter structure is phased out through natural wastage.

At present, the numbers of surveyed squatter structures in Chuk Yuen United Village, Ngau Chi Wan Village and Cha Kwo Ling Village are around 49, 266 and 475 respectively. The number of surveyed squatter structures is based on the records of the 1982 SCS and adjusted due to deletion of SCS records after 1982 for various known reasons (e.g. enforcement against breaches of

squatter control or squatters found non-existent).

The Lands Department does not keep separate statistics on the number of squatter structures not covered in the 1982 SCS records. Appropriate squatter control actions will be taken against unauthorised structures, which are not "tolerated" on a temporary basis, once they are identified.

(2) The site reserved for the development of a community hall within Ngau Chi Wan Village is zoned "Government, Institution or Community" (G/IC) on the Ngau Chi Wan Outline Zoning Plan No. S/K12/16. At present, we have no plan to change the reserved use of this site. The Home Affairs Department will carry out the necessary planning work of a new community hall in a timely manner in liaison with relevant departments, taking into account the overall planning of Ngau Chi Wan area (including Ngau Chi Wan Village), development progress and population.

(3) and (4) We agree that redevelopment of squatter areas in urban area may release precious urban sites for addressing the shortage of developable land. With regard to the three squatter areas as mentioned in the question, we plan to first commence a study on the long-term use of Cha Kwo Ling Village and its development scale in mid-2019, and will gradually review the long-term development of Chuk Yuen United Village and Ngau Chi Wan Village in a timely manner. The long-term land uses, potential floor area and flat yield of these sites will be ascertained after completion of relevant studies.

LCQ10: Future plan for the General Post Office Building in Central

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

The Government plans to relocate the Hongkong Post's Headquarters, which is currently housed in the General Post Office Building in Central (GPO Building) situated in Site 3 of the new Central harbourfront, to a postal complex to be built in Kowloon Bay. The vacated GPO Building will be demolished to allow Site 3 to be used for commercial development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the timetable for the demolition works of the GPO Building;
- (2) of the planned timing for including Site 3 in the Land Sale Programme;
- (3) as some community groups have requested that the GPO Building be preserved in-situ in view of its conservation value, whether the Government has invited the Antiquities Advisory Board to conduct a historical building

grading exercise for the building; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that Docomomo International, an international conservation body, included the GPO Building in the list of "Heritage in Danger" in 2015, and wrote to the Chief Executive in 2018 urging the Government to preserve the building, whether the Government has made a response; and

(5) whether it will consider afresh preserving in-situ and revitalising the GPO Building?

Reply:

President,

The General Post Office Building (GPO Building) is at the south-western corner of Site 3 of the new Central harbourfront. The design concept of Site 3 was formulated under the Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront (UDS) completed in 2011 following two stages of public engagement (PE) exercises. The relevant urban design requirements were subsequently incorporated into the planning brief for the site endorsed by the Town Planning Board (TPB) in December 2016 after consultation with the Central and Western District Council (DC) and the Harbourfront Commission. When taking forward the development of Site 3 in future, the developer should deliver and comply with the requirements laid down in the planning brief.

According to the design concept recommended by the UDS and the requirements of the planning brief, implementing the development of Site 3 requires demolition of the GPO building. The development of the site will not only provide additional supply of Grade A office in the Central Business District, its prime harbourfront location will also be conducive to providing quality public open space for public enjoyment. The design for the site has to incorporate a low-density commercial development with building height significantly lower than surrounding office blocks; a quality and green public open space occupying more than half of the site area (i.e. at least 2.5 hectares); and a continuous landscaped deck, stretching across the site in a north-south direction and bringing people from the hinterland of Central to the new harbourfront, which will enhance the accessibility of the new Central harbourfront.

My reply to Hon Hui Chi-fung's question is as follows:

(1) The GPO Building will be demolished by the developer of Site 3 upon completion of the following two reprovioning works:

(a) reprovioning of the Hongkong Post Headquarters to a government site near the Central Mail Centre in Kowloon Bay. The Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) approved the related funding in October 2018 and the new building is expected to commence operation in 2023; and

(b) reprovioning the district-tied postal facilities (viz. GPO Delivery Office, Speedpost Section, GPO Post Office Counters and Post Office Box Section) in the part of Site 3 to the north of Lung Wo Road. The facilities will be holistically designed and constructed by the developer in accordance

with the requirements laid down by the Government.

(2) Site 3 has yet been included in the 2019-20 Land Sale Programme. As similar to other commercial sites disposed of by the Government, the Government will make necessary announcement in the annual and quarterly land sale programmes following the established practice.

(3), (4) and (5) A concern group requested the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) to carry out grading assessment on the GPO Building in October 2018. In December 2018, the AAB, on the basis of its decision in September 2013 (i.e. grading assessment on buildings built in 1970 or later would not be carried out for the time being), decided not to carry out grading assessment on the GPO Building, which commenced operation in 1976.

As mentioned above, the UDS recommendations are made after extensive PE exercises. Different public and advisory bodies, including the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development, AAB, former Harbour-front Enhancement Committee, TPB and the 18 DCs, had been consulted during the process. It is worth mentioning that respecting cultural heritage was one of the urban design themes in Stage 2 PE of the UDS. To this end, the relevant consultation digest had listed a range of cultural heritage sites in Central, and the GPO Building was not amongst such sites. Retaining the GPO Building will contravene the design concept of Site 3 and requirements stipulated in the planning brief, undermining the overall development potential of Site 3 and preventing the vision of creating a more attractive, vibrant and accessible new Central harbourfront from being brought into fruition.

As we have responded at the meetings of the LegCo Public Works Subcommittee and FC, the Government will continue to take forward the development of Site 3 according to the original design concept and the planning brief of the site.