

LCQ8: Smart Government Innovation Lab

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (June 17):

Question:

The Government established the Smart Government Innovation Lab (Smart LAB) in April last year to promote the development of Smart Government and facilitate the development of innovation and technology in Hong Kong. Regarding the work of the Smart LAB, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that none of the 15 solutions with potential and with proof-of-concept arranged by the Smart LAB features innovative elements which are groundbreaking, and all such solutions are to be applied to individual government departments only, whether the Government will try to think out of the box by developing solutions that can support cross-departmental applications, with a view to providing more convenient services to members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Government implemented in April last year a new procurement policy which aimed at encouraging government departments to (i) adopt marking schemes and raise the technical weighting in assessment, (ii) make the innovative suggestions submitted by bidders as one of the assessment items, and (iii) refrain from including, in general, bidders' experience as a mandatory requirement for participating in procurement, so as to afford small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups more opportunities to participate in bidding government contracts, of the respective numbers of cases in the 12 months since April last year in which SMEs and start-ups participated in bidding and were awarded government contracts; how such figures compare with those in the preceding 12 months; and

(3) given that the Government is carrying out a pilot project of applying robotics technologies in smart office, and will invite the various government departments to participate in a competition by submitting conceptual proposals which can effectively apply robotics technologies to enhance the quality of public services, of the government departments that will apply the robotics technologies concerned?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, we set out our reply to the questions as follows:

(1) The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) established the Smart Government Innovation Lab (Smart LAB) in April 2019 to

encourage and facilitate wider adoption of innovation and technology in government departments, and promote active participation of industry players to assist government departments in adopting various information technology solutions to improve public services. In addition, the Smart LAB has set up a thematic website (www.smartlab.gov.hk) setting out the challenges faced by different public services and inviting industry players to submit technology solutions and product suggestions.

The Smart LAB organised technology fora on various topics in the past year, and invited industry participation and sharing on examples of different technology applications, including smart city infrastructure, intelligent transport system and traffic management, as well as blockchain. Departments will consider adoption having regard to their practical needs and OGCI0 will also provide suitable technical support on different technological aspects. In blockchain application, for instance, four departments have arranged pilot implementations in areas such as transfer of trademarks, optimisation of procedures for preparing environmental impact assessment reports, improvement of traceability and management for pharmaceutical products, and enhanced monitoring of filing status of company documents in the light of their business needs. Aside from that, OGCI0 also supported departments in conducting big data analytics by adopting a data-driven approach in decision making in order to foster innovative mindset to raise government operational efficiency and improve public services. The Smart LAB will also focus on exploring the application of robotics technologies, and plan to develop robotic process automation modules, such as establishing an automated workflow for form processing, streamlining the processing of general public enquiries, etc., to expedite the adoption of related technologies by various departments.

Given differences in the public services provided by various departments, the Smart LAB will source suitable technology solutions from the industry through exchanges with the industry, and thematic workshops to enable a better understanding by the industry of the operation and service needs of departments, so to formulate corresponding solutions. The Smart LAB will also arrange proof-of-concept (PoC) for suitable solutions to facilitate departments' better understanding on the feasibility of the solutions and whether they are able to address their practical needs, so that implementation plans and procurement requirements can be drawn up more effectively, including inter-department adoption of similar solutions.

(2) All along, the Government procures goods and services required through fair, transparent and competitive procedures in accordance with the Government's procurement policy and principles under the Agreement on Government Procurement of the World Trade Organization. The Government treats all tenderers on an equal footing. As the Stores and Procurement Regulations of the Government does not require tenderers to specify whether they are SMEs and start-ups, the Government does not have information on SMEs' and start-ups' participation in and award of government contracts.

However, the Government understands that SMEs and start-ups may have limited experience and track record in undertaking government contracts. To

encourage more SMEs and start-ups to participate to bid for government contracts, the Government has minimised the entry barriers under the pro-innovation procurement policy by requiring that, as a general rule, procuring departments should not set tenderers' experience as an essential requirement for participating in procurement unless absolutely necessary and with prior approval.

(3) Robotics technologies encompass different technologies and modes, including machine learning, cognitive systems, intelligent agent, robotic process automation etc. Combined with artificial intelligence and big data analytics, related applications can facilitate various departments to automate complicated workflow and information dissemination, thereby enhancing departments' operational efficiency and quality of public services. The Smart LAB will arrange seminars, thematic workshops and technology fora in the second half of this year to raise the awareness of various departments about robotics technologies, and invite industry participation through online briefings and virtual fora etc. To further promote robotics technologies, OGCI0 will invite government staff of various departments to participate in a competition to submit conceptual proposals which can effectively apply robotics technologies to enhance public services. Upon short-listing of proposals and completion of PoC, winning teams will be selected. These winning proposals can encourage relevant departments to arrange further implementation and OGCI0 will also provide technical support.

ENB to launch graduates subsidy programme under Green Employment Scheme

The Environment Bureau (ENB) announced today (June 17) that a subsidy programme for graduates will be launched under the Green Employment Scheme (GES) to subsidise private companies to employ fresh graduates working in areas related to environmental protection, ecological conservation, green energy and energy conservation, climate change, sustainable development and more, with a view to providing job opportunities to graduates interested in environment-related fields and to nurturing talents for meeting needs on various environmental fronts. The programme will be implemented by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and applications will open on June 26.

A spokesman for the ENB said, "A sum of about \$24 million has been earmarked under the Anti-epidemic Fund for the programme to provide employers of fresh graduates with a monthly subsidy of \$5,610. This subsidy will form part of the monthly salary of each eligible fresh graduate paid by their employers for a period of 18 months."

The subsidy programme will be implemented from 2020-21, covering more than 200 jobs. In addition to the salary subsidy, the Environmental Academy of the EPD will collaborate with various professional societies and organisations (including the Hong Kong Institute of Qualified Environmental Professionals Limited as well as other societies and organisations) to provide graduates with professional training to help the employed graduates become better equipped with environmental expertise in different areas.

"We understand that a number of companies are facing business challenges brought about by the impact of the epidemic and the economic downturn. We hope the subsidy programme would provide the relevant graduates with more green employment opportunities and help with professional succession in the environmental sector," the spokesman added.

The EPD has commissioned the Hong Kong Productivity Council to implement the subsidy programme. Eligible private companies will be able to download the application form from the relevant website. Applications can be submitted together with supporting documents from June 26 to August 28. For more information, please call 2835 1870 or email graduates_subsidy@epd.gov.hk.

Furthermore, among the over 500 time-limited jobs created under the GES covering three categories of environmental protection work, namely "Electric Vehicles (EVs) Popularisation", "Use Less, Waste Less" and "Leave No Trace at Mountain and Sea", recruitment for more than 100 jobs commenced in late May and early June.

Jobs open for recruitment include the 30 Project Co-ordinator (electric vehicles) positions under "EVs Popularisation", 30 posts of Project Assistant (Waste Reduction and Recycling) and 40 waste reduction and recycling green ambassadors (food waste) under "Use Less, Waste Less", and 45 jobs offered by Community Green Stations through their operators. The feedback has been positive with over 5 000 applications received.

Regarding the 150 green ambassador and 50 cleaning worker positions created for further promoting the "Leave No Trace at Mountain and Sea" outing concept, the first-round recruitment process for around half of them began this month. Recruitment for other vacancies including 50 eco-tour guides and artisans, 100 ambassadors participating in coastal cleaning and publicity work and more than 10 waste reduction and recycling green ambassadors will gradually commence in the coming months.

[Subsidy to taxi or red minibus drivers](#)

under second round of Anti-epidemic Fund

The Transport Department (TD) said today (June 17) that over \$1.2 billion of the subsidy under the two rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund has been disbursed to the transport trades, and the subsidy to taxi or red minibus (RMB) drivers under the second round of the Fund is open for application starting from today until September 30.

Under the Fund, the government provides a monthly subsidy of \$6,000 for each eligible active taxi or RMB driver for a period of 6 months, from April 1 to September 30, 2020. In response to the trade's views that some of the taxi and RMB drivers have not yet renewed their driver identity plates in time, the TD decided to make appropriate relaxations on the eligibility requirements. In addition to the drivers who hold a valid taxi or public light bus (PLB) driver identity plate during the period between January 1 and March 31, 2020, the drivers who hold an old driver identity plate and have already renewed their taxi or PLB driver identity plate during the period between April 1 and May 7, 2020, are considered eligible for applying the subsidy.

The drivers are also required to provide valid rental agreement or declarations during the period between January 1 and March 31, 2020, and the period between April 1 and September 30, 2020. If they cannot provide the valid rental agreement or declarations during the period between April and September 2020, they can choose to apply for a one-off subsidy of \$7,500. For the eligibility requirements and details, please visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk).

The TD issued letters to taxi and PLB trade organisations today to inform them of the eligibility requirements and application arrangements. Eligible taxi and RMB drivers must submit application via the GovHK portal (<https://eform.one.gov.hk/form/td0015/en/>). The subsidy can be disbursed to the designated local bank account provided in the application within one month upon receipt of the applications and completion of the checking. The first payment is expected to be disbursed by end of this month.

For details on the subsidies for transport trades under the Fund, please visit the TD's website.

The People's Bank of China will issue

Renminbi Bills through the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The People's Bank of China (the PBOC) will issue Renminbi Bills through the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (the HKMA). Please find attached the tender notice and the tender information memorandum of the Renminbi Bills to be issued by the PBOC. Please also find attached the tender-related information provided by the Issuing and Lodging Agent through the HKMA.

SJ expresses sorrow over passing of retired Judge of Court of First Instance of High Court Mr Justice Nguyen

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, today (June 16) was saddened by the passing of Mr Peter Nguyen, a retired Honourable Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court and a former Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Nguyen was called to the Bar in the United Kingdom in 1970. In the same year, he served as an Assistant Crown Counsel in the then Legal Department and was subsequently promoted to the post of Crown Counsel. He joined the private practice in 1974. Mr Nguyen returned to the Government and held the post of Director of Public Prosecutions from 1994 to 1997. He was appointed Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court in 1998 and retired in 2008. Mr Nguyen was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1995.

Ms Cheng said, "Mr Nguyen had offered distinguished and dedicated service to the Hong Kong community and the Government, making significant contributions to the criminal justice system over the years. I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Mr Nguyen's family on behalf of the Department of Justice."