

LCQ15: Manpower of Mainland offices and liaison units of Government

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

Regarding the manpower of the Mainland offices and liaison units of the Government, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number, the staffing establishment and the number of locally engaged staff of the Mainland offices in each of the past 10 years; of the average length of stay of civil servants who were posted to work on the Mainland;
- (2) of the number of recruitment activities for postings outside Hong Kong conducted by the Government in the Civil Service, the number of applications received and, among them, the proportion of applications for posting to the Mainland offices, in the past five years;
- (3) as it is learnt that there are still positions left vacant in quite a number of Mainland offices at present, whether the Government will step up efforts in recruiting civil servants to work on the Mainland and increase the support for civil servants working in the Mainland offices; if so, of the details;
- (4) whether the Civil Service College will introduce programmes in the future to train civil servants to familiarise themselves with Mainland affairs and have an understanding of national strategic alignment, and introduce the Mainland authorities' ways of handling various official, financial and legal responsibilities, thereby enabling more civil servants to have the qualifications for being posted to work in the Mainland offices; and
- (5) as there are views pointing out that with increasingly frequent exchanges between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the division of functions mainly by investment promotion, economic and trade liaison and immigration matters among the staff of the Mainland offices may no longer suffice, whether the Government will review if the civil service establishment of the Mainland offices is sufficient to meet the current and future needs; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

At present, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative

Region (HKSAR) has established a total of five offices and 11 liaison units in the Mainland. With service areas covering various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in the Mainland, the Mainland offices are responsible for strengthening communication and liaison between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Their functions include strengthening communication and liaison between the HKSAR Government and the Mainland authorities, fostering and cementing economic and trade relations between the HKSAR and Mainland provinces and municipalities, taking forward mutual exchanges and co-operation, boosting investment, promoting Hong Kong and supporting Hong Kong people and businessmen in the areas, etc.

Having consulted the Civil Service Bureau and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, response to the Hon Kenneth Leung's questions is set out below:

(1) The number of Mainland offices, their liaison units and staff establishment in the past 10 years are set out in the table below:

Year	Total number of Mainland offices and their liaison units	Staff establishment
2013-14	7	51
2014-15	9	62
2015-16	10	62
2016-17	13	73
2017-18	16	81
2018-19	16	81
2019-20	16	82
2020-21	16	82
2021-22	16	82
2022-23	16	81

The total number of locally-engaged staff in the Mainland offices and their liaison units increased from 90 in 2013-14 to 152 in 2022-23. In general, civil servants deployed to the Mainland offices and their liaison units serve a term of around two to three years.

(2) The staff establishment of the Government of the HKSAR in the Mainland offices and overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) involves different grades. Each grade will select appropriate staff for deployments in the Mainland offices and overseas ETOs taking into account the actual circumstances and different considerations. At present, there are a total of 81 and 60 civil service posts in the Mainland offices, including their liaison units, and overseas ETOs respectively. In the past five years, the Mainland offices and overseas ETOs conducted recruitment activities for around 190 civil service posts, of which the Mainland offices accounted for

around 60 per cent. We do not maintain the number of applications received.

(3) At present, there are only two posts to be filled in the Mainland offices and their liaison units. Each grade will deploy staff to take up the relevant posts in accordance with the actual circumstances as soon as possible. To carry out their work efficiently and reduce staff pressure, the Mainland offices and their liaison units will flexibly allocate their work and their manpower will be flexibly redeployed when necessary.

(4) Civil Service College (CSC) makes on-going efforts to provide training programmes in Hong Kong and in the Mainland for civil servants with different ranks, with the aim of enhancing their understanding about the systems and developments, as well as the social and economic situation in the Mainland, and to keep abreast of the national strategies and their implications for Hong Kong, so as to meet their actual operational needs, and equip officers who have opportunity to be posted to offices in the Mainland well. For example, since September 2022, CSC and Peking University have launched the two-year Master's Degree in Public Policy Programme and arranged senior civil servants with potential nominated by their departments to take part in the programme. Participants have to attend the programme on a full-time basis at Peking University in the first year and conduct social research and studies. Besides, CSC provides sponsorship for senior civil servants to attend the Executive Master of Public Administration Programme for the Project of Hong Kong Public Administrative Talents at Tsinghua University. In addition, CSC arranges civil servants to attend national studies training and thematic visits in the Mainland at different stages of their career to gain first-hand experience about the country's latest development. As regards national studies training, CSC currently collaborates with nine Mainland institutions (including the National Academy of Governance, Tsinghua University, Peking University, China Foreign Affairs University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Wuhan University, Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen University) in running national studies programmes.

In 2023, CSC will collaborate with Peking University to launch a new training programme to enhance civil servants' understanding of "One Country, Two Systems" and various aspects of the country's development including Chinese society, economy, technology and so on. CSC will also continue to run a series of talks on our country's foreign affairs in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR, so as to deepen civil servants' understanding of the international scene and the country's foreign policies.

In addition, under the Civil Service Staff Exchange Programme jointly organised by the HKSAR and the Mainland, officers from Hong Kong and the Mainland are attached to each other's side to share experience and expertise, better understand each other's structure, policy and operation, and foster networking and communication. The programme will first be launched with the Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) in 2023. The initial target is to extend the staff exchange period from four weeks in the past to about three months, so that our civil servants will have opportunities to stay longer in the Mainland to experience more deeply the development of the

GBA municipalities.

To encourage civil servants' continuous learning of national affairs, CSC provides rich e-learning resources through the online learning platform of Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus). For example, we have provided, through the "Tsinghua Lecture Series", a series of pre-recorded lectures for civil servants on national policies and the latest developments in the Mainland. In 2023, we plan to offer a series of new lectures delivered by experts and scholars from Tsinghua University, covering topics such as the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, innovation and technology, green finance and social development. Besides, CLC Plus contains a number of dedicated webpages including the Basic Law Portal, Safeguarding National Security Theme Page, National Studies Portal, GBA Theme Page, and the National 14th Five-Year Plan Theme Page, etc. These dedicated webpages provide multi-media learning resources, which include web courses, video clips, podcasts, and seminars' recording, etc. For instance, we have compiled a series of seminar highlights, covering major city clusters in the Mainland, including Yangtze River Delta, Chengdu-Chongqing region, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and GBA as online learning resources, so as to enable civil servants to stay abreast of the country's latest developments.

(5) The Government of the HKSAR reviews the manpower in each Mainland office and their liaison units from time to time and flexibly deploy manpower in accordance with the actual circumstances to meet operational needs, such as by engaging local staff in the Mainland to ensure sufficient manpower to cope with the workload. Besides, the Mainland offices have always been maintaining close liaison with and actively listening to the opinions from Hong Kong people and businessmen in the areas in order to adjust their services to improve service quality. The Mainland offices will apply for the increase of manpower to meet their operational needs in accordance with the established procedures if necessary.