

## LCQ22: Overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

The overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) are responsible for handling bilateral affairs between Hong Kong and the countries under their purview, as well as attracting businesses, investment and talent. It is learnt that in recent years, the Government has been actively expanding into the markets of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Middle East, encouraging Hong Kong enterprises to enter these markets and attracting companies from these regions to list in Hong Kong. It has also planned to establish ETOs in Riyadh and Kuala Lumpur. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the staff establishment and expenditure for the ETOs in Dubai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore in the past three years, as well as their proportion of the respective totals for all ETOs;

(2) whether the Government has reviewed the effectiveness of the work of the ETOs in attracting businesses, investment and talent; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as it is learnt that the Government has shifted its focus to Southeast Asia and the Middle East in response to developments in recent years, whether the Government has considered reviewing afresh the layout and resources of the ETOs (including staff establishment and deployment) in a timely manner, and allocating more relevant ETO resources to these regions to promote economic and trade co-operation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The staff establishment and total operational expenses of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in Dubai, Bangkok, Jakarta and Singapore for the past three years are tabulated below:

ETO	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25 (Revised Estimate)	
	Staff establish-ment (number of posts)	Total operational expenses* (HK\$ million)	Staff establish-ment (number of posts)	Total operational expenses* (HK\$ million)	Staff establish-ment (number of posts)	Total operational expenses* (HK\$ million)
Dubai	17	25.0	17	25.4	17	33.1
Bangkok	17	27.2	17	26.7	17	27.2
Jakarta	14	23.4	14	25.5	14	22.8
Singapore	11	26.8	11	23.0	11	25.1

\*Total operational expenses include personal emoluments, personnel related expenses, departmental expenses and other charges.

The Dubai, Bangkok, Jakarta and Singapore ETOs altogether account for 28 per cent of the total staff establishment of the 14 existing overseas ETOs, and about 24 per cent of their total operational expenses.

Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents have been established under the overseas ETOs (Note) in line with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's "competing for talents and enterprises" strategy and objective. The Dedicated Teams actively reach out to high potential and representative strategic enterprises and talents, proactively co-operate with Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) to implement the performance indicator as set out in the 2022 Policy Address (viz. attracting at least a total of 1 130 companies to set up or expand their operations in Hong Kong from 2023 to 2025), and liaise with the world's top 100 universities and Hong Kong residents studying or working overseas to promote Hong Kong's opportunities and advantages, as well as various talent admission programmes, thereby encouraging them to settle in Hong Kong.

In 2024, InvestHK assisted 539 Mainland or overseas enterprises in establishing and expanding their businesses in Hong Kong, representing an increase of over 40 per cent as compared with the full year figure for 2023. On a pro-rata basis, the figure well exceeded the performance indicator as set out in above-mentioned Policy Address. Among those 539 enterprises, 266 of them were from overseas, representing an increase of around 8 per cent when compared with that of 2023. The effectiveness of investment promotion work by the the Dedicated Teams based in overseas ETOs has been reflected in the overall results of InvestHK's work in assisting overseas enterprises above.

In addition, we have already set various indicators for evaluating the performance of the ETOs' services, covering the three Programmes of "Commercial Relations", "Public Relations" and "Investment Promotion", and have set them out in the Controlling Officer's Report.

As mentioned in the 2025-26 Budget, in order to expand Hong Kong's economic and trade network to cover more emerging markets, and to attract

more inward investment and enterprises from the Global South markets to Hong Kong, we are following up actively with the governments of Malaysia and Saudi Arabia respectively on our plans to establish ETOs in these two countries. In addition, InvestHK set up new consultant offices in Cairo, Egypt in July 2024 and Izmir, Türkiye in January 2025, while the Hong Kong Trade Development Council has established a consultant office in Cambodia early this year to support the HKSAR Government's effort to expand Hong Kong's economic and trade network. We will continue to explore the feasibility of setting up new ETOs in different places, in particular emerging markets with potential taking into account all relevant factors (including the economic and political significance of different locations to Hong Kong, their state of law and order, air transport accessibility etc).

Note: Except for the Geneva ETO, and the Washington ETO which is primarily responsible for liaising with the political sector in the United States.