

LCQ4: Manpower of Police

Following is a question by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

It is learnt that the vacancy situation of the Police remains serious. As at March 31 this year, while the establishment of police officers was 33 090, the strength was 27 325. There was still a shortfall of 5 765 police officers, representing a vacancy rate of 17.4 per cent. Some members of the public are worried that the relevant situation will affect the law enforcement efficiency and the law and order situation of Hong Kong in the long run. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the specific vacancy situation of various ranks in the Police at present, and the target numbers of recruitment of police officers of various ranks this year; when all the vacancies are expected to be filled;
- (2) whether it has studied the reasons why the Police are currently unable to recruit sufficient manpower, and the impact of the reduction in the civil service establishment proposed in the Budget for this financial year on the manpower of the Police; whether it has assessed the actual impact of the manpower shortage on police duties (such as frontline patrol); and
- (3) whether the Police have explored the use of the latest technologies, such as artificial intelligence and automated equipment, to assist in the police work, thereby reducing the manpower demand; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To attract more high calibre candidates who have the competence to become a police officer, the affection for the Motherland and Hong Kong, and the passion to serve the public, to join the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the HKPF has adopted proactive and multi-pronged recruitment strategies. By removing institutional barriers and expanding the recruitment network, the HKPF is continuously and proactively attracting talents to join the Force to serve the community. Meanwhile, the HKPF is actively promoting smart policing by leveraging the latest technologies to enhance the efficiency of police work.

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

- (1) As at March 31, 2025, the numbers of vacancies for the grades of rank and file, inspectorate officers and gazetted officers (i.e. Superintendents and above) in the HKPF were 5 500, 236 and 29 respectively. The overall number of vacancies was 5 765, representing a vacancy rate of about 17.4 per cent,

which is similar to the figures over the past three years.

In setting the recruitment targets, the HKPF will review its manpower deployment, operational needs and training resources, and will take into account factors such as the overall environment of the community and the labour market. For the 2025-26 financial year, the HKPF has the target of recruiting 130 probationary inspectors and 1 140 police constables.

To enhance the effectiveness of recruitment, the HKPF has adopted a multi-pronged approach. In addition to conducting recruitment exercises throughout the year, the HKPF organises and participates in various recruitment activities on a regular basis. Furthermore, the HKPF strives to optimise the application and selection mechanism. The "2-in-1 Express" for police constables, launched in September 2024, allows candidates with outstanding performance in group interviews to attend the final interview on the same day, thereby shortening the interview process.

In addition, the HKPF has expanded its recruitment network by conducting recruitment exercises at universities worldwide. The Police University Recruitment Express (PURE) is organised at 12 local universities to provide application information and conduct on-site recruitment selection procedures for students. In recent years, PURE has been extended to Mainland universities. The HKPF visited places including Beijing, Guangdong and Shanghai to recruit Hong Kong students studying on the Mainland. In December last year, PURE was further extended to overseas universities. One-stop comprehensive selection procedures are arranged for Hong Kong students studying overseas during their vacation in Hong Kong.

The Police Cadet Training Programme was launched in 2024. Collaborating with three post-secondary institutions, the HKPF has launched a full-time one-year programme of "Diploma of Applied Education – Police Cadet Training". The programme has been designed as a seamless bridging course for graduates to proceed to the Recruit Police Constable foundation training programme.

(2) According to the Report on 2023 Manpower Projection published by the Government in November 2024, there will be serious manpower shortages in Hong Kong in the next five years. Facing changes in Hong Kong's total labour force, all industries are trawling for talents and the HKPF is of no exception. The HKPF focuses on quality over quantity in recruitment. This ensures that every prospective member joining the HKPF shares the Force's values and embodies the Force's motto of "Serving Hong Kong with Honour, Duty and Loyalty." In fact, we notice a rise in the number of people applying to join the HKPF in recent years, showing that the recruitment strategies mentioned above are effective.

The HKPF will tie in with the Government's requirement to reduce the civil service establishment by 2 per cent each in 2026-27 and 2027-28, while continuing to review and assess the effectiveness of using different resources. By re-establishing work priorities, appropriately redeploying staff and using technologies for handling police work to enhance operational effectiveness, the HKPF will ensure that the adjustment in establishment will not affect the efficiency and provision of services, and that it will

continue to provide the public with high quality and efficient policing services.

(3) The HKPF effectively utilises advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and automated equipment, to provide better services for the public, as well as enhance efficiency and reduce manpower requirements.

Examples include the following:

(i) The HKPF has implemented the "SmartView", under which closed circuit televisions are installed in phases at various locations across the territory where crime rate and pedestrian flow are higher. This initiative makes use of technologies to enhance the effectiveness in preventing and fighting crime. As at end-April 2025, "SmartView" has assisted the HKPF in detecting 282 criminal cases and arresting 513 persons. The HKPF utilised the "Crowd Size Analysis System" for the first time during the 2024 Halloween events in Lan Kwai Fong. The system used AI and video analytic functions to perform real-time crowd density assessments.

(ii) The HKPF will start issuing eTraffic Tickets from June 15. In the long run, physical penalty tickets will be cancelled and replaced by a paperless penalty ticket system. This will effectively enhance the enforcement procedures and efficiency, so that manpower can be deployed for other traffic management and traffic enforcement work.

(iii) The Smart Traffic Management System has been developed and a pilot scheme is expected to roll out in the second half of 2025. The system will collect real-time traffic data, such as traffic flow and the driving and parking habits of drivers, in the business area in Kwun Tong. Based on AI analytics, the system will make recommendations on precise allocation of Police resources, thus enabling the HKPF to take targeted and prioritised enforcement actions at critical locations and deploy manpower effectively.

(iv) The HKPF has implemented the pilot scheme for "Drones Policing" in the Border District and Kowloon West Region on May 23. Drones are used for patrolling and autonomous execution of missions to enhance patrol efficiency. For example, the infrared detection system is used to detect the presence of suspicious persons lingering or hiding at places remotely located or at difficult terrains.

Looking forward, the HKPF will continue to optimise and develop smart policing and will actively leverage technologies to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness in police work, with a view to providing better services for the public and reduce manpower requirements.

Thank you, President.