

LCQ9: National studies and the Basic Law training for Civil Servants

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

According to the existing policy, bureaux and government departments (B&Ds) should make arrangements for the middle-level civil servants (i.e. officers at Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 34 to 44 or equivalent) under the B/Ds to attend national studies programmes within six years from the time when they reach the relevant MPS Point/pay point threshold. Nevertheless, Report No. 71 of the Director of Audit (the Report), published in October last year, has pointed out that due to insufficient places for such programmes, it is unlikely that such training time schedule can be adhered to. Besides, the Report has recommended that the Government should enhance the tracking of the progress of civil servants' training on the Basic Law. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of training places and (ii) the number of participants for the national studies programmes, in each of the past three years; the projected number of places for such programmes in each of the coming three years;

(2) whether it has, in accordance with the recommendations made in the Report, (i) reviewed the aforesaid training time schedule, (ii) discussed with those Mainland universities currently organising such programmes to increase the number of places for the programmes, (iii) commissioned more Mainland universities to organise such programmes, and (iv) promoted B&Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such programmes so as to fully utilise the training places; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the Government has, since the latter half of last year, extended the national studies programmes to civil servants at MPS Point 28 to 33, of (i) the existing number of civil servants whose salaries are within this salary range, and (ii) the number of places to be made available for them to attend the national studies programmes in each of the coming three years; whether it has conducted a review on such training arrangement having regard to the comments made in the Report; if so, of the outcome; and

(4) as the Government has indicated that it will strengthen the content of Basic Law training for civil servants so as to incorporate the relationship between the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law, of the progress of the relevant work, including (i) the measures put in place for training civil servants to understand the Constitution and (ii) the number of training activities held so far; the new measures in the coming

three years to strengthen the training in this respect?

Reply:

President,

There are practical needs for civil servants to understand the social development and economic situation in the Mainland in performing their duties. To keep abreast with the latest development in the Mainland, they should equip themselves with updated knowledge of the national strategies and plans that could affect Hong Kong.

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has all along been attaching great importance to national studies and Basic Law training for civil servants. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and other bureaux/departments (B/Ds) have been providing diversified training for civil servants, including various seminars, talks and training courses held locally and in the Mainland, as well as visits to and exchange activities in Mainland cities. Currently, about 22 000 civil servants receive different types of national studies and Basic Law training every year.

Regarding participation of civil servants at Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 34 to 44 in national studies programmes held in the Mainland as mentioned in the Director of Audit's Report, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) of the CSB has kept increasing the number of training places for this group of civil servants to attend Mainland programmes in the past few years. It is projected that the number of trainees will rise from about 280 in 2017 to about 420 in 2019. Officers nominated by B/Ds to attend national studies programmes held in the Mainland in the past were all accepted by CSTDI, and CSTDI will continue to adjust the number of training places having regard to the number of nominations received from B/Ds so as to meet their training demands. To enhance national studies training for middle-level civil servants, CSTDI has also extended the national studies programmes held in the Mainland to include civil servants at MPS Point 28 to 33 since the second half of 2018. About 140 of these civil servants attended the Mainland programmes in 2018. It is expected that the number of such trainees will further increase to 240 in 2019.

To tie in with the increase in the number of training places for national studies programmes held in the Mainland, CSTDI commissioned two additional Mainland universities in 2018 to organise such programmes for Hong Kong civil servants. Currently, there are altogether nine Mainland institutions commissioned by CSTDI to conduct different types of national studies programmes to about 1 000 civil servants every year. In addition, other government departments also organise their own national studies programmes in the Mainland for about 1 000 officers every year having regard to their individual operational needs. Taking into account the above programmes together with others national studies training held in the Mainland and Hong Kong, currently about 10 000 civil servants receive national studies training every year.

As regards Basic Law training for civil servants, CSTDI has kept

enhancing the Basic Law foundation course for civil servants and Basic Law training for middle-level officers in the past few years. These courses and training cover topics such as the relationship between the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law and the principle of "one country, two systems", etc. CSTDI also regularly organises thematic seminars on the Basic Law for civil servants at different levels. The number of civil servants who received Basic Law training were on the rise in the past three years, and it is projected that the number of trainees will increase from about 8 900 in 2017 to about 12 000 in 2019.

Civil servants may also enhance their understanding of national affairs and development through our e-learning platform. For instance, CSTDI will launch new thematic webpages on the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus) in 2019 so that civil servants could access to the latest information about national development at their convenient time. The Basic Law Portal on the CLC Plus also provides various types of multi-media learning resources, including web courses, video clips, Basic Law Bulletin, audio clips, past seminars and online quizzes, to update civil servants' knowledge of the Basic Law.

CSTDI will continue to encourage B/Ds to nominate more civil servants at different levels to attend national studies programmes and Basic Law courses, and will correspondingly increase the number of training places to meet their training demands.