

LegCo to debate motion on reforming immigration and admission policies

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) will hold a meeting on Wednesday (March 20) at 11.30am (or immediately after the meeting for the Chief Executive's Question Time to be held at 11am) in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex. During the meeting, Members will debate a motion on reforming the immigration and admission policies.

The motion, moved by Mr Gary Fan, states: "That between mid-1997 and end 2017, there had been an annual average entry of 48 300 One-way Permit ('OWP') holders into Hong Kong, giving a cumulative inflow of 990 000 people; moreover, between 2013 and 2017, an annual average of some 53 500 non-local professionals were allowed to work and settle in Hong Kong under three major talent admission schemes; as there have been strong views in the Hong Kong community in recent years, expressing concern that the persistent increase in Hong Kong's population has created a heavy burden on public services and facilities in Hong Kong, and that some of the entrants have committed immigration frauds (including concealing overseas assets, using false identities, forging documents, engaging in bogus marriages) to obtain right of abode and social welfare, this Council urges the SAR Government to reform the immigration and admission policies by adhering to the principle of 'putting Hong Kong people first' and taking into account the local carrying capacity; specific measures include:

(1) establishing a dual vetting and approval mechanism for OWP in accordance with Articles 22 and 154 of the Basic Law and the Immigration Ordinance whereby the SAR Government can exercise the power to vet and approve entry for immigration and taking back the initiative in the policy on OWP, so as to serve properly the gatekeeping role on the population policy of Hong Kong;

(2) striving for reducing OWP quota by half to 75 per day and reviewing the quota for various talent admission schemes, so as to alleviate the burden on public healthcare services, subsidized housing, social welfare and educational resources posed by an increasing number of immigrants and entrants in the future, so that priority can be accorded to meeting the needs of the Hong Kong people in the allocation of public resources in Hong Kong;

(3) reforming the OWP application system to make it on a par with the dependents system of various talent admission schemes by incorporating the approval conditions on financial means, to be complemented by a points system, so as to make early identification and selection of immigrants having long-term means to live at a standard well above the subsistence level to settle in Hong Kong;

(4) negotiating with the relevant departments of Mainland China in respect of the OWP system for a study on the introduction of a 'return mechanism' to

allow people coming to Hong Kong on OWPs to temporarily retain their household registration in the Mainland and return to Mainland China for resettlement if they cannot adapt to the life in Hong Kong;

(5) regarding people who are granted the right of abode in Hong Kong through various talent admission schemes and the OWP system, stepping up investigation into their overseas assets if they apply for social welfare and subsidized housing in Hong Kong, so as to plug the loopholes in the existing policy;

(6) stepping up efforts in combating cross-boundary bogus marriages by, among others, drawing reference from the practice of the United Kingdom, extending the period for the issue of a Certificate of Registrar of Marriages if the Registrar of Marriages has reasonable suspicions of non-local people planning to get married in Hong Kong engaging in bogus marriages, so that government departments can have more time to conduct investigations and take enforcement actions to prevent fraudsters from obtaining through bogus marriages the requisite documents to apply for settlement in Hong Kong, and the Immigration Department should compile statistics on the number of bogus marriages in Hong Kong annually; and

(7) stepping up efforts against immigration frauds at the local and international levels by, drawing reference from the practices of the United Kingdom and Australia, establishing an inter-departmental dedicated team to tackle organized immigration crime to carry out, focusing on applications suspected of using false identities, forging documents, making false statements, etc., strict verification of supporting documents, and participating in the global cooperation on immigration fraud prevention."

Ms Claudia Mo, Mr Alvin Yeung, Mr Steven Ho, Mr Chu Hoi-dick and Dr Fernando Cheung will move separate amendments to Mr Gary Fan's motion.

Mr Wong Ting-kwong will move a motion on proactively expanding development opportunities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The motion states: "That the Central Government has promulgated the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ('the Plan'), the contents of which have taken on board the views of Hong Kong, Macao and the major cities in the Greater Bay Area, setting out the directions for future development of the Greater Bay Area, putting forward specific economic development objectives for Hong Kong and proposing a number of measures to facilitate Hong Kong people in living and working on the Mainland; in order to enable Hong Kong to properly perform the role of a core engine for regional development, grasp new opportunities of future development and improve people's livelihood, this Council urges the SAR Government to formulate policies and allocate more resources to develop pillar industries, innovation and technology and other emerging industries, and to adopt more proactive measures to facilitate the daily living and travel of members of the public in Hong Kong, so as to offer appropriate channels of business expansion in the Greater Bay Area to enterprises of different sizes (micro, small, medium and large), create more new development and employment opportunities for Hong Kong people, particularly young people, and provide Hong Kong people with living space of better quality."

Dr Lo Wai-kwok, Mr Christopher Cheung, Mr Tony Tse, Mr Yiu Si-wing, Mr Wu Chi-wai, Mr Martin Liao, Dr Kwok Ka-ki and Mr Ho Kai-ming will move separate amendments to Mr Wong Ting-kwong's motion.

In addition, Mr Chan Hak-kan will move a proposed resolution under section 34(4) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap.1) to extend the period for amending the Public Health and Municipal Services (Fees) (Amendment) Regulation 2019, laid on the table of the Legislative Council on February 20, 2019, to the meeting of April 17, 2019.

On Government Bills, the Second Reading debate on the Inland Revenue and MPF Schemes Legislation (Tax Deductions for Annuity Premiums and MPF Voluntary Contributions) (Amendment) Bill 2018 will resume. If the Bill is supported by Members and receives its Second Reading, it will stand committed to the committee of the whole Council. After the committee of the whole Council has completed consideration of the Bill and its report is adopted by the Council, the Bill will be set down for the Third Reading.

The Judicial Officers (Extension of Retirement Age) (Amendment) Bill 2019, the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2019 and the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2019 will be introduced into the Council for the First Reading and the Second Reading. The Second Reading debate on the Bills will be adjourned.

On Government Motions, the Chief Secretary for Administration will move two proposed resolutions under the Criminal Procedure ordinance and the Coroners Ordinance respectively to resolve that the Criminal Procedure (Witnesses' Allowances) (Amendment) Rules 2019, made by the Criminal Procedure Rules Committee on February 19, 2019, and the Coroners (Witnesses' Allowances) (Amendment) Rules 2019, made by the Chief Justice on February 19, 2019, be approved.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury will move a proposed resolution under the Public Finance Ordinance to resolve that the Authority is given for a sum not exceeding \$131,081,699,000 to be charged on the general revenue for expenditure on the services of the Government in respect of the financial year commencing on April 1, 2019.

During the meeting, Members will also ask the Government 22 questions on various policy areas, six of which require oral replies.

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk). Please note that the agenda is subject to change, and the latest information about the agenda could be found on the LegCo Website.

Members of the public are welcome to observe the proceedings of the meeting from the public galleries of the Chamber of the LegCo Complex. They may reserve seats by calling 3919 3399 during office hours. Members of the public can also watch or listen to the meeting via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website.