

**For information on
17 November 2005**

**LegCo Panel on Manpower
Employment Service of the Labour Department**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the employment service and special employment programmes offered by the Labour Department (“LD”).

Comprehensive Employment Service

2. Reflecting the steady recovery of the employment market, in the first 10 months of this year, LD received altogether 362 129 vacancies, up 46.1% over the same period last year and overtaking the total of 302 961 for the entire 2004 by 19.5%. The vast majority of the vacancies came from the private sector. At the same time, LD achieved 93 029 job placements, up 32.2% over the same period last year, and surpassing the total placements of 86 257 for the entire 2004 by 7.9%. On average, the department secured 35 688 vacancies from the private sector and placed 9 303 job-seekers per month during the period. These compare with 24 334 vacancies and 7 036 placements for the same period last year.

3. The following paragraphs highlight the enhancements of LD’s employment service and programmes to better serve the public.

Job Centres

4. The LD currently operates 10 job centres throughout the territory to help place job-seekers into employment. Job-seekers may apply for jobs through referrals made by staff of the job centres or approach employers direct for jobs with contact details displayed. Telephones, fax machines and computers with internet connection and résumé-building software are available in the job centres for use by job-seekers. Job-seekers may use the facilities provided there to complete the whole job hunting process. Resource corners are also set up in all job centres to provide job-seekers, including new arrivals and ethnic minorities, with comprehensive employment information.

5. To strengthen our employment service for job-seekers, particularly those living in the remote areas of the New Territories, LD will set up a job centre each in Yuen Long and North District in the latter half of 2006. The two centres, providing a full range of employment service, will bring the number of LD's job centres to 12. The opening of the two centres underlines the commitment of LD to reach out to job-seekers in the north-western part of the New Territories which has been experiencing a relatively high unemployment rate.

Interactive Employment Service

6. Job-seekers can gain easy access to vacancy information through the Interactive Employment Service ("iES") on the Internet (www.jobs.gov.hk). The iES plays an important role in the dissemination of job market information to the community and has become the Government's most popular website. Since May 2005, we have expanded its bandwidth to facilitate greater and faster traffic. In the first 10 months of 2005, a total of 753 million page views was recorded, averaging 2.5 million per day.

7. The iES also provides dedicated webpages to disseminate employment information of topical interest to job-seekers, such as information on employment in the Mainland and Macao.

Vacancy Search Terminals

8. Vacancy Search Terminals ("VSTs") are installed at the job centres for job-seekers to access to the huge vacancy data bank of the department. The terminals are equipped with user-friendly search engines and printing facilities which enable job-seekers to choose vacancies according to various selection criteria. In addition to installing VSTs at the Social Security Field Units of the Social Welfare Department, in 2005 we have further provided VSTs at the Public Enquiry Service Centres/Community Centres under the Home Affairs Department to facilitate more job-seekers to gain access to the vacancies.

Telephone Employment Service

9. The LD operates a Telephone Employment Service (TES) which enables registered job-seekers to obtain job referrals over the telephone (2969 0888) without the need to visit a job centre. From January to October 2005, the TES handled 182 793 calls, or on average about 800 calls daily.

Job Fairs

10. We organise large-scale job fairs to facilitate job-seekers to apply for jobs and, where appropriate, attend interviews with employers on the spot. LD is also holding more district-based job fairs at its major job centres to help employers to recruit local residents. Job-seekers can attend interviews at job centres, thus saving the time for cross-district travelling. The job fairs have proved to be very popular among employers and job-seekers. In the first 10 months of 2005, 11 large-scale job fairs and 42 district-based job fairs have been held. These have already exceeded our original target of 10 large-scale job fairs and 36 district-based job fairs for the entire 2005.

Job Matching Programme

11. Job-seekers facing greater problems in job search may join the Job Matching Programme. Placement officers will help job-seekers evaluate their academic qualifications, job skills, work experience and job preferences, with a view to facilitating them to look for suitable jobs actively. Placement officers will also introduce to them suitable training offered by the Employees Retraining Board where appropriate.

Special Employment Programmes

12. During the past few years, the LD has implemented a number of programmes to help place different groups of job-seekers into employment. These programmes are briefly described below.

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP)

13. The YPTP, launched in September 1999, aims to enhance the employability and competitiveness of school leavers aged 15 to 19 through a wide range of employment-related training.

14. Under the YPTP, there are four modules of training, i.e., (a) leadership, self-discipline and team building; (b) job search and interpersonal skills; (c) elementary/intermediate computer application; and (d) job-specific skills training. After completing the modular training, trainees will undergo workplace attachment training at government departments, social service institutions, as well as public and private organisations. Career counselling

and support services will be rendered to trainees throughout the programme and after job placement. The training lasts about six to nine months.

15. Over the past six years, the YPTP has provided training to more than 66 000 young persons. Discounting those who pursued further studies on completion of the programme, about 70% of the trainees had secured employment.

16. Each year, the YPTP provides 12 000 training places and is delivered in two phases: the first phase in September and the second in February of the following year.

17. Starting from the 2005-06 Programme Year, we have introduced the following improvement measures:

- (a) To cater for the diverse training needs of individual trainees and help enhance their employability, we allow trainees to take more training courses from a mix of options.
- (b) To encourage more trainees to take up workplace attachment, the workplace attachment allowance will be increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

The Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS)

18. In July 2002, we launched the YWETS to provide employment in the form of on-the-job training for young people aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment below degree level. Together with the YPTP, the LD provides a one-stop service in offering training and employment opportunities to our young people. Joint application for both schemes has been introduced since July 2003 and a mechanism is in place to stream applicants to appropriate schemes according to their age and previous training in the YPTP.

19. Under the YWETS, trainees are placed in training vacancies and provided with on-the-job training for six to 12 months under the guidance of mentors appointed by employers. They will each be assigned a case manager, who is a registered social worker. Trainees are encouraged, during the period of training, to attend suitable courses leading to vocational

qualifications. They are entitled to a subsidy of not more than \$4,000 for taking related training courses and examination.

20. Participating employers receive a monthly training subsidy of \$2,000 for each trainee engaged during the employment and training period ranging from six to 12 months, as well as support services.

21. As at the end of October 2005, more than 25 000 trainees have been successfully placed in training vacancies. In addition, some 13 000 trainees were able to find jobs in the open market with the assistance of their case managers.

22. To maximize the benefits for trainees of the YPTP and YWETS, a “Revolving Door” mechanism has been introduced to allow them to move between the two programmes at different stages during the programme year. A trainee will receive counselling service from the same non-government organisation (NGO) when they move between schemes. Case managers of YWETS trainees may refer suitable trainees to take up appropriate YPTP training. As for YPTP, trainees can be referred to the YWETS for placing in training posts when they are ready for employment. Together, the two programmes provide one-stop training and employment services to young people aged 15 to 24. We have sufficient places to accommodate all applicants. In fact, we never rejected any qualified applicants in the past.

Employment Programme for the Middle-aged

23. The Programme was launched in May 2003 to encourage employers to engage unemployed persons aged 40 or above. For each eligible participant engaged, the employer will receive a training allowance of \$1,500 per month for up to three months. As at the end of October 2005, the programme has placed 16 324 into employment. They are mainly engaged as security guards, cleaners and labourers.

Work Trial Scheme

24. We launched this scheme in June 2005 to enhance the employability of job-seekers who have special difficulties in finding jobs. During the one-month work-trial, participants will be arranged to work in jobs offered by participating organizations. On satisfactory completion of the one-month work trial, the participant will be paid an allowance of \$5,000, of which \$500

is contributed by the participating organization. As at end-October 2005, a total of 211 job-seekers have been placed into work trial.

The Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers (LDHs)

25. We launched the Scheme in June 2003 to promote the LDH service and address the mismatch in supply and demand arising from geographical locations and working hours. Qualified LDHs¹ who are willing to work across districts or during “unsocial hours” (from 5pm to 9am) are eligible for a daily allowance of \$50 for 144 days within one year, with an overall cap of \$7,200. A total of \$60 million has been set aside for the scheme which will cater for 8 000 LDHs. As at end-October 2005, there were 5 783 approved applications.

26. With effect from 1 December 2005, we will extend the claim period from one year to two years, whilst the ceiling of 144 days and \$7,200 will remain unchanged. All expired cases could also be re-activated for one more year if their ceiling of \$7,200 has yet to be reached. We will also extend the “unsocial hours” to cover weekends, i.e. all day of Saturday and Sunday. The relaxations will give eligible LDHs more flexibility to make claims and help promote the development of the LDH market.

Personalised Employment Service for Disabled Job-seekers

27. The Selective Placement Division of the LD provides personalized employment assistance to the disabled job-seekers, with the objective of placing them into open employment jobs that best suit their abilities. Employment services provided include vocational assessment and counselling, job matching and referral, as well as follow-up service after placement.

Public Education and Promotional Programmes

28. The LD regularly organises public education and promotional programmes to promote public acceptance of people with disabilities (PWDs) and enhance their employment opportunities. These programmes include presentation ceremonies to give public recognition to enlightened employers

¹ Those who (1) have completed the LDH training offered by ERB; (2) are in possession of a competency card; and (3) take up a job through the referral of ERB’s Integrated Scheme for LDHs.

and outstanding disabled employees, seminars, exhibitions, radio programmes, and production of videos/VCDs on successful employment cases of PWDs.

Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS)

29. The WOPS is a new employment initiative introduced in April 2005 to help place disabled job-seekers into employment. It features:

- (a) Pre-employment training for disabled job-seekers on job-search, interviewing techniques, communication/interpersonal skills, etc;
- (b) A monthly allowance to the participating employers equivalent to half-month's wages of each PWD engaged (subject to a ceiling of \$3,000) for up to three months; and
- (c) A one-off cash award of \$500 to a mentor appointed by the participating employer who has assisted the disabled employee to continue with his work trial after the first month.

30. As at the end of October 2005, the Scheme had 232 disabled participants in its pre-employment training programme and achieved 220 work placements.

The Way Forward

31. We will continue to adopt a proactive and cost-effective approach in further strengthening our employment service to job-seekers and employers and continue to offer the above special employment schemes in 2006. We will also support district-based poverty alleviation measures in so far as they relate to employment service.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau
Labour Department
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