

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Update on national studies and Basic Law training for civil servants

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the national studies and Basic Law programmes and related training activities offered to civil servants.

Background

2. In keeping with the development of closer ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the Civil Service Bureau devotes continuous efforts to enhancing civil servants' understanding of and exposure to the systems and developments in the Mainland. These efforts take the form of training courses and theme-based visits in the Mainland, local seminars, civil service exchange programme and a dedicated website on Mainland-related information and developments. In addition, we also provide training on the Basic Law for civil servants and organize a variety of promotional activities to enhance the awareness of the Basic Law amongst civil servants. In his 2007/08 Policy Address, the Chief Executive pledged to further enhance Basic Law training for civil servants.

National Studies

3. A brief description of the training programmes and activities related to national studies is given below.

(i) Tsinghua/Peking University Programmes

4. We have been organizing the Tsinghua University Programme and the Peking University Programme since 1993 and 2004 respectively for senior civil servants whose salary is at point 45 of the Master Pay Scale (MPS) or equivalent or above. Both programmes last for 17 days and include classroom lectures and visits to state agencies in Beijing, as well as a 3-day visit to selected Mainland cities. The programmes provide participants with a comprehensive introduction of the political, social, economic, cultural and legal developments

in the Mainland. They also aim to enhance communication between participants and Mainland officials. So far about 1,800 civil servants have attended the two programmes and the feedback has been very positive. Participants generally considered the programmes highly effective in improving their understanding of the Mainland and its latest development.

(ii) National School of Administration (NSA) Programme

5. This is a two-week programme introduced since 1999 for civil servants at the directorate level. Through lectures and talks delivered by distinguished Mainland scholars and senior Central People's Government officials, the programme aims to deepen participants' understanding of the current policies and topical issues in the Mainland, and to enhance networking between participants and Mainland officials. As at the end of 2007, 14 classes have been organized for about 270 directorate civil servants. Participants' feedback on the programme has been highly positive.

6. To enhance the training of directorate Administrative Officers in Mainland affairs, we commissioned NSA to organize a customized one-week national studies programme in 2005 and 2006. We organised a total of seven such classes, attended by over 100 directorate Administrative Officers.

(iii) Foreign Affairs Studies Programme

7. Since 2004, we have commissioned the China Foreign Affairs University to organize a one-week Foreign Affairs Studies Programme for directorate and other civil servants involved in external affairs. The programme covers China's foreign affairs, protocol and other related topics. So far, four classes have been organized for about 70 civil servants, including heads of our Economic & Trade Offices.

(iv) Thematic Study Programmes

8. Since 1991, thematic study programmes have been organized through the coordination of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO). These programmes mainly take the form of familiarization visits to selected Mainland provinces and cities, and they aim to enhance participants' general understanding of the systems and developments in the Mainland in selected policy areas or themes. As at the end of 2007, 58 such programmes have been organized for more than 1,000 civil servants. The themes of the more recent programmes include "Development of Western China" and "Economic Development of the Bohai Region".

(v) **National Studies Programme for Middle Managers**

9. To enable middle-ranking civil servants whose salary is at MPS 34 to 44 or equivalent to acquire a better understanding of the Mainland's systems, and to deepen their knowledge on the developments in the Pearl River Delta region, we have commissioned the Sun Yat-sen University and the Shenzhen Graduate School of Peking University since 2006 and 2007 respectively to organize a one-week national studies programme for these civil servants. The programme covers the latest socio-economic and political developments in the Mainland, with special focus on the Pearl River Delta region. So far, 10 classes have been organized for over 370 civil servants. Overall, the feedback received has been very positive.

(vi) **Civil Service Exchange Programme with the Mainland**

10. The civil service exchange programme with the Mainland commenced in 2002. So far, we have entered into exchange agreements with the municipal governments of Beijing and Shanghai, the city government of Hangzhou and the provincial government of Guangdong. Under the programme, civil servants of one side are attached to the government of the other side for about four to eight weeks with a view to widening exposure, sharing experience and expertise, and fostering partnership and communication. While on attachment, the participants will study the relevant legislation, rules and regulations, and codes of conduct, if any, of the host departments. They will also observe the practices of the host departments through attendance at briefings and demonstrations, participation in training, meetings, discussion forums, experience sharing sessions and site visits, etc. Where appropriate, they will be given the opportunity to assist in small scale projects. Civil servants taking part in such exchange programme will not take up any specific posts or duties in the host departments.

11. As at the end of 2007, 45 Hong Kong Government departments/public organizations and about 90 Mainland departments/agencies have participated in the exchange programme. HKSARG has sent a total of 60 civil servants at senior professional level to the Mainland, while about 100 Mainland officials mostly at division director (處級) or deputy division director (副處級) ranks have been sent to Hong Kong. The scope of exchange covers a wide range of disciplines, including infrastructure development, city planning, traffic management, environmental protection, landscape architecture, public housing, health and food safety, economic and financial management, trade and commerce, census and statistics, science promotion and information technology, social security, community development, human resource management, culture and arts, telecommunications, quality examination, auditing, intellectual property, public security, immigration control and tourism, etc.

12. To prepare participants on both sides for the programme, prior to the commencement of the attachment, the host governments will provide participants with an orientation and briefing. At the end of the programme, an evaluation will be conducted to collect feedback from participants. In respect of the programmes organized so far, participants from both sides have found them very useful and effective, especially in enabling them to understand the structure and operation of the host governments. They also valued the opportunity to experience the work culture of their counterparts, and strengthen their network and relationship with the respective authorities.

(vii) *Local Seminars on Subjects Related to National Studies*

13. We work closely with local and Mainland institutions on seminars on the latest developments in the Mainland. These seminars target a wide range of civil servants from frontline staff to directorate staff of different grades. They cover a wide variety of topics such as the Mainland's political and government reforms, legal system, economic and social changes, administrative and civil service systems, foreign affairs, etc. Seminars on topical issues, e.g. macro economic measures, regional developments, further opening of the financial market, development of a harmonious society in the Mainland, etc, have also been organized.

14. Apart from local scholars, we also have invited scholars and experts from the Mainland to speak in the above-mentioned seminars. In the past, professors from the Peking University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University, Zhongshan University, Jinan University and Beijing Normal University have accepted our invitation to talk on subjects related to anti-corruption, political and economic developments, civil service reforms, regional developments, environmental protection, China's foreign policy, etc. Officials from the Development Centre of the State Council, the National Development and Reform Commission, the People's Bank of China, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR, the Ministry of Education, etc. have also accepted our invitation to talk on subjects such as banking reforms, monetary policy, developments in the national economy, the Eleventh Five Year Plan, etc.

15. In the past seven years, more than 24,000 participants from different grades and ranks have attended our national studies seminars.

(viii) *National Studies E-Learning Portal*

16. Established since 2002, the learning portal on national studies in our “Cyber Learning Centre Plus” website provides comprehensive information about the Mainland, covering such areas as the political and civil service systems, the economy, the legal framework and geographical data. In-depth analyses of current issues are also available. To help keep civil servants abreast of the latest developments, the portal also houses up-to-date policy documents of the Central People’s Government, relevant speeches on key policies and developments, and useful linkages. The e-learning portal provides a convenient platform for civil servants to pursue national studies at their own pace and in their own time. The portal has been well received, recording a hit rate of over 240,000 since July 2005.

Basic Law

17. Since the promulgation of the Basic Law in the early 1990's, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) (then Civil Service Training Centre) has been providing training on the Basic Law for civil servants centrally. With “Understand One Country, Realise Two Systems” (認識一國、實踐兩制) as the central theme, CSTDI has organized a range of training programmes and promotional activities. They cover the core concepts and provisions of the Basic Law, including the status of the Basic Law in the legal system of the Mainland, relationship between the Central People’s Government and the HKSAR, interpretation of the Basic Law, etc. CSTDI has also issued various publications related to the Basic Law.

18. In the past 10 years, over 17,000 participants attended dedicated training programmes on the Basic Law and 5,000 participated in our promotional activities. Many civil servants have also learned the Basic Law through our e-learning portal on national studies. In addition, some 1,700 senior civil servants, who took part in the national studies programmes at Tsinghua University, Peking University and National School of Administration, also attended lectures on the Basic Law delivered by Mainland experts.

19. In line with the Chief Executive’s 2007/08 Policy Address, we will further enhance Basic Law training for civil servants to ensure that the training forms an integral part of training for civil servants, and is provided in a systematic and well planned manner which takes into account the needs of civil servants of different levels and work nature. We will adopt a multi-pronged approach which includes classroom training, e-learning, publications and diversified promotional activities to achieve this objective. A brief description of our planned programmes and activities is given below.

(i) **Core Programmes on the Basic Law**

20. Three core programmes on the Basic Law will be introduced with effect from 2008/09 to enable civil servants, at various stages of their careers, to have the opportunity to learn and refresh themselves on knowledge about the Basic Law. These programmes are the Introductory Course for New Civil Service Appointees; Intermediate Course for Middle Level Civil Servants (MPS 34 - 44); and Advanced Course for Senior Level Civil Servants (MPS 45 - 49 and directorate staff). These programmes generally aim to enhance civil servants' understanding of the key concepts and provisions of the Basic Law. In the Intermediate and Advanced Courses, more in-depth analysis will be provided and court cases related to the Basic Law will be discussed. A diversity of speakers including academics, legal practitioners and officials from both Hong Kong and the Mainland will be invited to conduct the programmes.

(ii) **E-learning Resources on the Basic Law**

21. At present, a section of our national studies e-learning portal contains online resources on the Basic Law for self-learning by civil servants. These resources include reference materials as well as the latest information updates related to the Basic Law. They also include the presentation materials of the Basic Law course speakers, the background to and judgments of major court cases relating to the Basic Law, and relevant articles and speeches by government officials, etc. To tie in with the enhanced training on Basic Law in the civil service, we will continue to enrich the resources on the portal, and develop web courses on the Basic Law by phases to enhance self-learning by civil servants, to supplement classroom training and to help civil servants refresh their knowledge on the Basic Law.

(iii) **Thematic Seminars, Publications and Promotional Activities**

22. In the past, we have centrally organized seminars on specific topics of the Basic Law for different levels of civil servants, and helped departments organize seminars on specific Basic Law topics relevant to their needs. The themes of the centrally organized seminars covered a wide variety of subjects such as "Human Rights and the Basic Law", "China's Constitution and the Basic Law" and "Implementation of the 'One Country Two Systems' Principle". The themes of the seminars for departments covered such areas as "Human Rights" and "Right of Abode", etc. In the past seven years, around 11,000 participants attended these seminars. We will continue to provide centrally organized and departmental Basic Law seminars in the coming years.

23. To enhance the general awareness of and sustain interest in the Basic Law amongst all civil servants, especially frontline staff, we regularly organize promotional activities. Such activities take the forms of quiz, desktop tips and exhibition related to the Basic Law, etc, and disseminate the fundamental concepts of the Basic Law as well as the relevance of the Basic Law to civil servants' work and daily life. In addition, we regularly publish a "Basic Law Bulletin" jointly with the Department of Justice and the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, and provide a "Basic Law Corner" in the Civil Service Newsletter which is circulated to all civil servants.

Way Forward

24. We are committed to enhancing civil servants' knowledge and understanding of the Mainland, and their specific knowledge on the Basic Law on an on-going basis. In addition to what we have outlined above, we will continue to monitor closely the feedback on and effectiveness of our programmes and activities, and seek to improve them.

Civil Service Bureau
February 2008