

For information

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Manpower Deployment
by the Immigration Department**

Further to our earlier papers (LC Paper No. CB(2)41/07-08(02), CB(2)2284/06-07(02) and CB(2)1736/06-07(06)) which provide information and updates in respect of the manpower deployment of the Immigration Department (ImmD) and related matters, this paper provides, at the Panel's request, our response to the matters raised by the relevant immigration staff unions via their letters dated 24 September 2007 and 29 September 2007.

Manpower Deployment

2. ImmD aims to recruit about 500 staff for 2007-08. About 200 of them will be deployed by December 2007. The remaining will be taken on strength in the first half of 2008. In addition to an increase in uniformed establishment (about 18% from 2002 to 2007), ImmD has adopted a basket of measures to cope with its manpower needs. These include the use of new technologies, streamlining of clearance processes and flexible control point operations. They are detailed in our earlier papers.

3. ImmD will continue to take into account all foreseeable developments in its manpower planning. For any unforeseeable developments, ImmD will address the manpower needs by re-deployment of staff and re-prioritization of tasks. Any recurrent implications will be factored into ImmD's manpower plan.

4. ImmD will also continue to deploy tactical squads to cater for operational exigencies and allow more room for flexible staff re-deployment.

Shift Pattern for Control Point Staff

5. ImmD endeavors to devise a shift pattern that is conducive to staff's work and rest balance while at the same time being able to meet service needs in a cost-effective manner. In the process, ImmD will continue to involve the staff unions. For example, proposed changes would be put to focus groups or ad hoc meetings between management and staff representatives, including union officials,

for exchange of views before finalisation. Staff surveys are also conducted to gauge their views.

6. ImmD experimented various shift patterns ranging from '2-Days-on, 1-Day-off' to '7-Days-on, 1-Day-off' at control points in the past. It was found that the existing '4-Days-on, 1-Day-off' pattern could ensure an efficient service to the public while provide adequate rests for staff. In addition, to encourage healthy family lives, ImmD has inserted on a trial basis about 10 'Floating Leave' days a year into the '4-Days-on, 1-Day-off' shift patterns for some control points, with a view to providing opportunities of two consecutive leave days for the staff.

Leave Reserve

7. ImmD staff are entitled to leave, which varies between 14 and 40.5 days per year depending on their terms of appointment and length of service. To provide at least one continuous rest period during a year, staff are given annual roster leave of one to four weeks. Those who have vacation leave balance approaching the maximum accumulation limit will have their leave granted much more liberally. No rank and file staff have their leave forfeited.

8. Like the case of other Government departments, ImmD will flexibly redeploy staff, by means of doubling or acting arrangements, to cover staff on vacation leave. With the deployment of the 500 new recruits in phases starting from November 2007 and extension of service of retiring staff on a voluntary basis, it is expected that more staff could be released for leave.

Training Opportunities

9. ImmD has been providing diverse professional training to service staff in order to ensure that they are competent to meet challenges. In making available training opportunities for the staff, the Department has to ensure that the services will not be adversely affected. Staff attending training sessions will not accumulate unmanageable workloads through the Department's corresponding staff deployment and distribution of workload.

10. For 2006-07, the service staff of ImmD had attended 12,737 man-days of in-service training (not including induction training and training provided by the Civil Service Bureau) and each service staff was released for training for 2.6 days on average.

Resignation and Transfer

11. The reasons for individual staff to resign or transfer to other Government departments are numerous, ranging from personal reasons to the different terms and conditions for different jobs.

12. The number of ImmD service staff who resigned or who were transferred to other Government departments has remained insignificant relative to the establishment of the Department (about 1-2% each year) over the past five years. Some two-thirds of the staff who resigned or who were transferred had only a few years of services in ImmD. This is not unusual because some new recruits may find the working life in a new job, particularly given the unique nature and requirements for the disciplined service, not suitable to them. In any case, ImmD is mindful of the changes in the job market in recent years. With effect from 6 July 2007, the starting monthly salaries for Immigration Officers have been increased from \$20,535-22,840 to \$22,840-25,790 (depending on entry qualifications), and that for Immigrant Assistants have been increased from \$13,160 to \$13,555. Moreover, ImmD will explore means to enable job seekers to know more about its working environment.

Health of the Staff

13. ImmD is committed to maintaining a healthy workforce, and has been promoting a healthy lifestyle to staff, such as disseminating health-related information and organising sports, leisure and social activities. Counter staff at control points are normally given a 10 to 15 minutes break for every two hours of work. Furthermore, immigration counters at control points are being replaced/upgraded for greater occupational safety and comfort. ImmD has also been maintaining regular dialogues with the staff unions over various matters, including the working environment.

Security Bureau
November 2007