

For discussion
on 17 October 2011

**Legislative Council
Panel on Public Service**

Policy Initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

The 2011-12 Policy Address and Agenda set out the Government's new and on-going initiatives. This paper elaborates on the initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB").

New Initiative

Provision of paternity leave to civil servants

2. Paragraph 95 of the Policy Address states that "[m]any developed countries provide paid paternity leave for employees to promote child-bearing and family-friendly practices. The Government will take the lead in promoting this good practice, beginning with a study into the provision of paid paternity leave for civil servants. In considering whether to make it a statutory requirement for all employers, we will have to carefully consider the actual circumstances in Hong Kong."

3. Accordingly, we have commenced giving active consideration to the provision of paid paternity leave for civil servants, including but not limited to how to ensure the effective operation of the Government; and what should be the quantum of paid paternity leave, eligibility criteria, the mode of leave-taking, etc. We will consult concerned stakeholders, such as departmental management, civil servants, staff sides of the four central consultative councils, advisory bodies on pay and conditions of service of civil servants, the Legislative Council, etc. We will take into full account views expressed during the consultation process in the formulation of our recommendations.

On-going Initiatives

(a) Continuing to control the size of the civil service by providing the necessary management tools to assist bureaux and departments to make more effective use of manpower resources and enhance efficiency, while at the same time giving due consideration to the need for additional manpower resources for delivering new and improved services

4. In keeping with the “big market – small government” and prudent management of public resources principles, we will continue to work with individual bureaux and departments to control the size of their establishment and to enhance efficiency through measures such as internal deployment, streamlining, re-engineering, etc. At the same time, we will ensure that they have the necessary manpower to implement new policy initiatives and deliver quality services to the public. Since 2007-08, the civil service establishment has grown by around 1% each year. We estimate that the civil service establishment at end-March 2012 will stand at around 168 250, compared with around 165 080 at end-March 2011.

5. We are mindful of the need to inject new talents into the civil service and to forestall succession problem in the longer term. Open recruitment to fill vacancies in most civil service grades has been and will continue to be undertaken by heads of departments and heads of grades. In 2010-11 and in the first five months of 2011-12, around 5 470 and 3 310 new recruits joined the civil service respectively.

(b) Continuing to provide civil servants with training and development opportunities, enhance the variety and content of the training materials on our e-learning portal, and promote wider use of e-learning, as part of our endeavours to fortify a culture of continuous learning in the civil service

6. We are committed to providing civil servants at different ranks with training and development opportunities, thereby equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to serve the public. Various management training programmes are provided to civil servants at middle and senior levels, while training on job skills and personal effectiveness are provided to junior civil servants to enhance their capability to take on new job assignments with competence and confidence. We have also enhanced the quality and variety of the e-learning resources available at the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (“CLC Plus”) website to facilitate the pursuit of continuous learning among civil servants. We will continue with these efforts in the coming year.

7. To keep pace with the development of closer ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, we have strengthened national studies training for civil servants at various ranks by doubling the output from 2011-12. For new recruits of degree or professional grades, we have incorporated a new module on national studies in their induction programme. For middle-ranking civil servants, we have increased the capacity of the national studies programmes and thematic visits to the Mainland. For senior civil servants, we have worked with the Chinese Academy of Governance in offering a new study-cum-visit programme for senior directorate officers.

8. To support bureaux/departments in their succession management, we have put in place structured programmes, locally and overseas, on leadership, public policy, management and the Basic Law for civil servants at the directorate and senior levels. Career postings and deployment of promising departmental civil servants to work at policy bureaux are arranged to help widen their exposure and perspectives.

(c) Continuing to implement an action plan which will ensure that the Basic Law forms an integral part of training for civil servants, and that the training is provided in a systematic and planned manner which takes into account the needs of civil servants of different levels and work nature

9. To enhance knowledge of the Basic Law among civil servants, we have, since 2008-09, launched an action plan which includes introductory courses for new appointees, intermediate and advanced courses for middle and senior civil servants and a web course for civil servants of all levels. We have also organised different activities to sustain the interest of civil servants, in particular junior and frontline civil servants, in the learning of the Basic Law. In the coming year, we will continue to implement the action plan and closely monitor it to ensure that the various courses organised can meet the needs of civil servants of different levels.

(d) Continuing with the regular conduct of pay trend surveys, starting salaries surveys and pay level surveys in accordance with the improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism so as to maintain broad comparability between civil service pay and private sector pay

10. The Government's civil service pay policy is to offer remuneration sufficient to attract, retain and motivate staff of suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service; and such remuneration is to be regarded as fair by both civil servants and the public they serve by maintaining broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. Civil service

pay is compared with private sector pay on a regular basis through the conduct of three types of survey: (i) a pay level survey every six years to ascertain whether civil service pay is broadly comparable with private sector pay; (ii) a starting salaries survey every three years to ascertain whether the starting pay specified for different entry ranks in the civil service requiring different qualifications is comparable with the starting pay of private sector jobs requiring similar qualifications; and (iii) a pay trend survey every year to ascertain the average year-on-year movements in private sector pay.

11. The staff sides of the four central consultative councils are consulted on the annual civil service salary revision, as well as any salary revision following the starting salaries and pay level surveys. There are established mechanisms for the implementation of the annual salary revision (namely through enactment of one-off legislation for downward pay adjustment and approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for upward pay adjustment) and any salary revision arising from the starting salaries survey (namely through approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for both upward or downward adjustment on starting salaries). We are considering the way forward for the coming pay level survey and will consult the staff sides on the adjustment mechanism in due course.

(e) Continuing to maintain and enhance morale of the civil service, and encourage fuller use of various commendation schemes to recognise and motivate exemplary performance

12. In keeping with our policy to encourage meritorious performance at the individual level through proper recognition, we introduced in 2004 the annual “Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme”. A total of 77 civil servants from 32 bureaux/departments will receive commendations at a presentation ceremony to be held in November 2011.

13. To recognise meritorious performance at the department and team levels, we have introduced the biennial “Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme” since 1999. The Scheme aims to recognise departments and teams that are committed to continuous improvement and strive to provide high quality customer-oriented services to the public. Awards are granted at team, departmental and inter-departmental levels. This year 45 nominations from 29 participating departments were selected for award and the prize presentation ceremony was held in September 2011. The best practices of the winning departments have been widely publicised. The Scheme will be launched again in 2013.

- (f) Continuing to maintain a vigorous, effective and efficient disciplinary system against misconduct in the civil service; and continuing to monitor closely the removal of under-performers under the established procedures while sustaining efforts to further improve efficiency and productivity in the civil service

14. The Court of Final Appeal (“CFA”) has earlier ruled that explicit prohibition of legal representation for defaulters at disciplinary hearings conducted under the Police (Discipline) Regulations (Cap. 232A) was unconstitutional, null and void. After consulting this Panel and the relevant staff sides, we are now working with the relevant Disciplined Services Departments and the Department of Justice on the drafting of the necessary amendments to the subsidiary regulations on discipline under the disciplined services legislations (“DSL”) ¹ arising from the CFA judgement and to bring about other improvements to the disciplinary proceedings. We will continue to keep the civil service disciplinary system under review to ensure that it meets the principles of natural justice and the needs of present day circumstances.

15. We will continue to monitor closely the implementation and effectiveness of the established procedures to remove persistent under-performers under section 12 of the Public Service (Administration) Order². We will also keep up our efforts in promoting a performance-based culture in the civil service that is conducive to improving efficiency and productivity in the civil service.

Way Forward

16. We will continue to take forward the above initiatives in close consultation with departmental management and staff. We will seek Members’ views or keep Members informed as appropriate. We are committed to maintaining a civil service with high standards of integrity, efficiency and

¹ The DSL refers to the Customs and Excise Service Ordinance (Cap. 342), the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95), the Government Flying Service Ordinance (Cap. 322), the Immigration Service Ordinance (Cap. 331), the Police Force Ordinance (Cap. 232) and the Prisons Ordinance (Cap. 234) and include, where appropriate, the regulations/orders made under such Ordinances. For the purposes of this paper, the DSL also includes the Traffic Wardens (Discipline) Regulations (Cap. 374J).

² The Public Service (Administration) Order is an Executive Order made by the Chief Executive under Article 48 (4) of the Basic Law. Under section 12 of the Order, an officer may be required to retire in the public interest on grounds of persistent sub-standard performance.

performance in order to contribute to the effective governance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Civil Service Bureau
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