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LegCo Panel on Manpower

Minutes of meeting
held on Saturday, 9 October 1999 at 9:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** :
- Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
 - Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, JP
 - Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
 - Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
 - Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
 - Hon CHAN Yuen-han
 - Hon CHAN Wing-chan
 - Hon SIN Chung-kai
 - Hon SZETO Wah
- Members attending** :
- Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
 - Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, JP
 - Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
- Members absent** :
- Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon David CHU Yu-lin
 - Hon Michael HO Mun-ka
 - Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
 - Hon CHAN Kam-lam
 - Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

Public Officers : Mr Joseph W P WONG, GBS, JP
attending Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Philip K F CHOK, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Herman CHO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
and Manpower

Miss Erica NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
and Manpower

Mr Ivan LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
and Manpower

Mr Matthew K C CHEUNG, JP
Commissioner for Labour

Mr LEE Kai-fat, JP
Deputy Commissioner for Labour
(Occupational Safety and Health)

Clerk in : Mrs Sharon TONG
attendance Chief Assistant Secretary (2)1

Staff in : Mrs Justina LAM
attendance Assistant Secretary General 2

Mr Raymond LAM
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 5

Action

I. Briefing by Secretary for Education and Manpower on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) briefed Members on the progress of policy initiatives relating to manpower and labour in the past year and the new initiatives and targets for the coming year, as detailed in SEM's speaking note in the Appendix.

Admission of talents to work in Hong Kong

2. SEM informed Members that the scheme for "admission of professionals" had been changed to that of "admission of talents". Details of the scheme would be explained by the Secretary for Security (S for S) at her briefing on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999 on 16 October 1999. Representatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) would also attend the meeting.

3. Mr Andrew CHENG said that there was concern that the proposed admission of talents from the Mainland to work in Hong Kong would affect the job opportunities and salary levels of university graduates, as the wages of employees in the Mainland were generally much lower than those in Hong Kong. He enquired whether the Administration would consider introducing a minimum wage for these talents so that the scheme would not result in a suppression of local wages.

4. SEM responded that the scheme aimed at bringing in talents to enhance competitiveness of the economy and drive economic development. It should bring about an increase, rather than reduction, in job opportunities. As there was a demand throughout the world for talents, the admission of such persons to work in Hong Kong would not suppress the wage levels of local employees. The Chairman said that the Administration should draw up clear guidelines on the determination of wages for Mainland talents who worked in Hong Kong.

5. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern that the Administration's policy of allowing talents to work in Hong Kong would have a negative impact especially on job opportunities for the less skilled workers or persons with lower qualifications. He anticipated that jobs in Hong Kong would in the long term fall into two extremes, those for the well-educated and those for the less educated. However, there would not be adequate jobs of the latter category to absorb the less skilled workers and they would eventually be forced to leave Hong Kong and migrate to the Mainland.

6. SEM responded that the Administration was very concerned about the unemployment situation in Hong Kong. The number of retraining places had been substantially increased and a Youth Pre-employment Training Programme had been introduced. The Local Employment Service centres of the Labour

Action

Department (LD) had successfully assisted around 4 000 job seekers in finding jobs each month, and the Task Force on Employment had held 14 to 15 meetings to draw up measures to tackle unemployment. He assured Members that the Administration would continue its effort in the creation of jobs as well as provision of retraining and employment service. He added that there were always openings for security assistants, home helpers and chefs regardless of the state of economy. There were also jobs such as those in the construction industry which did not require a high level of education attainment, but only certain kinds of skills. He undertook to provide Members with information on the distribution of various jobs in the labour market, and the respective qualifications required. He added that according to latest statistics, the unemployment rate for persons aged between 40 and 49 had improved from 5.6% in March 1999 to 5% in July 1999, while the success rate for the youth in seeking employment had decreased from 30% to 20%.

Adm

7. Commissioner for Labour (C for L) said that LD had tried its best in providing employment service. It was disseminating labour market information to job seekers through various channels. Employers were also encouraged to provide more information on job vacancies. In the previous month, the Administration had identified 14 020 job vacancies, which was the highest figure for the past 16 months. In addition, it had successfully placed 4 221 persons in jobs, which was the highest figure for the past 14 months. He assured Members that LD would continue to strengthen its employment service. New measures on enhancing its Job Matching Service, especially on counselling service, would also be introduced in the following year to assist job seekers.

8. Miss Emily LAU said that to her knowledge, the Administration already had an established policy on the admission of professionals. She asked why special treatment was to be given to persons from the Mainland. She also enquired whether the criteria for admission of talents to work in Hong Kong would be the same regardless of a talent's race and nationality. SEM advised that the Pilot Scheme for professionals from the Mainland to work in Hong Kong ended nearly two years ago. He pointed out that at present there was no avenue for Mainland talents to come to Hong Kong to work, whereas the immigration policy on entry of employment of talents from other countries was relatively lenient. The proposed scheme only sought to ensure a fair treatment of talents from the Mainland and those from other countries. He added that the criteria for admission of talents to work in Hong Kong would be the same irrespective of where the talents came from.

9. Miss Emily LAU enquired whether there had been any transfer of technology and job opportunities generated by the admission of professionals from other places in the past, especially those engaged in the fields of environmental protection and sewage treatment, to work in Hong Kong. SEM undertook to liaise with the relevant bureaux and provide the information requested. The Chairman said that such information would facilitate Members'

Adm

Action

assessment of whether the proposed scheme would generate job opportunities and facilitate the transfer of technology.

10. Dr LUI Ming-wah expressed support for the proposed scheme. He considered that the proposed admission should not be confined to talents with masters or doctorate degrees. Persons with a university degree and experience relevant to a job should be considered eligible for admission under the scheme. He added that the scheme should be closely monitored so that it would not be abused and become a channel for people from the Mainland seeking permanent residency in Hong Kong.

Creation of more job opportunities

11. SEM informed Members that about 90 000 job opportunities had been created between June 1998 and September 1999 as a result of the Government's key initiatives, public works and infrastructural projects. The Administration estimated that another 65 000 new job opportunities would be created from new initiatives and projects in the next 15 months. This had not taken into account the employment opportunities brought about by new initiatives just announced in the 1999 Policy Address, especially those related to environmental protection. A survey indicated that about 1.5% of the working population of European Union were employed in jobs related to environmental protection. EMB would work with the Environmental Protection Department and relevant bureaux in estimating the job opportunities arising from environmental protection initiatives and provide such information to Members. He added that even though about 110 000 new jobs were available in the past two years, the unemployment rate was high because the labour force had increased by 270 000 in the same period.

Adm

12. Dr LUI Ming-wah said that the key to the creation of more jobs was the improvement of the business environment in Hong Kong. As legislation relating to employees compensation were enacted in the 1960s and 1970s, the Administration should appoint consultants to review such legislation. SEM responded that the compensation amounts under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282) (ECO) were reviewed biennially. Although there was currently no plan to carry out a comprehensive review on the ECO, such a review would be considered by the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) upon request.

Training and manpower requirements

13. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that Hong Kong was undergoing another economic restructuring. The current measures adopted by the Administration were inadequate for addressing the problems faced by more than 200 000 unemployed persons. Although the Administration was working to ensure a match between the training of Hong Kong's workforce and the needs of the local economy, the number of training places offered was far from sufficient. She expressed concern that there was a lack of co-ordination among different

Action

Adm

bureaux and departments. SEM noted Miss CHAN's concerns. SEM said that the Administration had just completed two consultancy studies on the manpower and training needs of the travel and tourism industry and the information technology sector. The results of the studies indicated that training in the industries would have to be strengthened. The Administration had also commissioned a consultancy study on the best overseas practices in manpower forecasting. He undertook to brief members on the findings when the study was completed.

14. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that there were concerns in many other countries that in a knowledge-based economy, workers aged over 40 would become unemployed when traditional industries were replaced by knowledge-based industries. Although the Administration had organized a large number of training and retraining courses, the graduates of such courses were finding it difficult to secure employment. She suggested that the issue should be examined in the consultancy study.

15. SEM responded that even in a knowledge-based economy like the United States, the unemployment rate was found to be low and there were still many jobs which did not require advanced skills and knowledge. The Administration considered it important to provide trainees with elementary training in languages and computer operation so as to facilitate the development of life-long learning attitude and ability. In the coming year, EMB would concentrate its efforts on youth pre-employment training and the training of persons aged over 40.

Self-learning ability

16. Miss Cyd HO enquired how the Administration could assist persons who had received very little education to develop self-learning ability. She also asked whether there were channels for employees of Form Three education standard to re-enter schools and receive subsidized education. SEM responded that a large number of courses were provided by the Open University, evening schools, Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Employees Retraining Board (ERB). All these institutions provided avenues for a person to further his studies. He added that a number of courses offered by ERB were provided free of charge.

Training of the youth

Youth Pre-employment Training

17. As regards Youth Pre-employment Training, Mr SIN Chung-kai said that as there would be strong demand for people with training in information technology (IT), tens of thousands of training places in IT training should be

Action

provided. The IT training provided under the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme was far from adequate both in terms of the number of training places and the duration of courses. As training would be required in the use of software and the assembling and repair of computers, a course duration of about one week was inadequate.

18. In response, SEM said that more than ten thousand training places were provided under the full-time and part-time IT-related training courses of VTC. The number of IT-related training places provided by local universities were also in the region of tens of thousands. In the year 1999-2000, ERB would provide a total of around 45 000 places in IT-related training. Recently, ERB had jointly developed with employers a tailor-made training course in IT. Most of the 35 graduates of the tailor-made training course were immediately employed after completion of the course. Mr SIN Chung-kai said that 35 training places were far from adequate. He reiterated that the Administration should allocate more resources for IT training and substantially increase the number of training places.

Training of apprentices

19. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concern that VTC would redeploy about half of its inspectors of apprentices to the Institute of Vocational Education in September 2000. She pointed out that such redeployment of staff would affect the training of apprentices. SEM said that the scale of training of apprentices was dependent on employers' need for apprentices. Due to the restructuring of Hong Kong's economy, the emphasis in training had been shifted towards generic skills like language skills and computer operation. Besides apprentice training, training places in other areas were provided by VTC to school leavers of Form Three standard. He undertook to provide a paper on the review of the Apprenticeship Scheme of VTC.

Adm

Employee rights and benefits

20. Referring to the progress on the nine initiatives undertaken in the past years on employee rights and benefits, Miss Cyd HO pointed out that four of the initiatives appeared to be very much behind schedule. She expressed particular concern that the results of the review on the system of settlement of compensation claims and work-related fatal accidents and the provisions in the Employment Ordinance on sickness benefits, layoffs, wages and reinstatement had still not yet been submitted to LAB. She asked why the review of these initiatives had been delayed when such protection was most needed by employees at a time of economic downturn.

21. SEM advised that the reviews had just been completed and the results would soon be provided to LAB and the Panel. C for L said that the results of the review would be submitted to the Committee on Labour Relations of LAB

Action

by the end of the month and to LAB before the end of the year, after which they would be submitted to the Panel for consideration. In this connection, the Chairman expressed concern about the Administration's practice of consulting issues with LAB first before the Panel.

22. As regards the system of settlement of compensation claims and work-related fatal accidents, C for L said that the provisions were complex and therefore more time had been spent on examination of the issues. The review on layoffs, wages and reinstatement took longer time than expected to complete owing to the need to update information on wages after the financial turmoil. Miss Cyd HO expressed dissatisfaction that the reviews had been delayed at a time when the relevant protection was most needed by employees.

Importation of labour

23. Referring to page 7 of the booklet entitled "Investing in Our Human Capital"(the booklet), Mr CHAN Wing-chan asked why the importation of labour was raised at a time of high unemployment. SEM clarified that the statement only explained the basic principles in respect of the mechanism for the existing Supplementary Labour Scheme. He assured Members that there was no change in the principles and policies regarding the importation of labour. As many jobs would be created by the construction of major infrastructural projects, the Administration was working with the construction industry and training bodies on ways to strengthen training so that local workers would be equipped with the skills required of job vacancies arising from such infrastructural projects. Large number of training places would be provided by the Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA) in the coming year. The levy of CITA on construction projects would be increased to provide adequate financial support for CITA's expanding activities. He added that as very few local people were interested in working in the pig raising and fish farming industries, importation of labour was inevitable for filling the job vacancies of these industries. C for L added that as at the end of August 1999, there were only 2 857 imported workers in Hong Kong, accounting for a very small percentage of the labour force in Hong Kong.

On-the-Job Training Scheme

24. Mr Kenneth TING enquired about the number of organizations participating in the On-the-Job Training Scheme of ERB, the number of trainees and the total expenditure on re-training allowance. He considered that more resources should be provided for on-the-job training. SEM undertook to provide the requested information after the meeting. He added that an important area of work of ERB in the coming year would be to develop tailor-made training courses jointly with local industries.

Adm

Review of working hours of the workforce

Action

25. Referring to page 23 of the Chinese version of the booklet, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan questioned why the review on the working hours of the workforce had developed into a review of rest breaks. He considered that the issue was not just about rest breaks. It also concerned excessively long working hours. He requested the Administration to provide the results of the review to Members. C for L explained that the issue of rest break was closely related to working hours. Indeed, rest breaks had an important and direct bearing on occupational safety and health. The Administration considered it more appropriate to adopt a step-by-step approach and therefore review on rest break was undertaken as a first step. The Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) of LAB was reviewing the issue. Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health) added that the feasibility of two proposals on rest breaks was expected to be considered by COSH before the end of the year.

Indicators of changes in unemployment situation

26. The Chairman pointed out that despite various measures adopted by the Administration in creating jobs and tackling unemployment, there seemed to be no clear evidence of an improvement in the unemployment situation. He requested the Administration to provide figures and statistics illustrating that improvement had in fact been made. SEM said that it was indeed difficult to measure the impact of government's initiatives to tackle unemployment due to several reasons. Firstly, the Administration's major infrastructural works and projects accounted for only a small portion of Hong Kong's economic activities and that the majority of the job opportunities was provided by the private sector. The impact of government's measures must therefore to a certain extent, be limited. Secondly, while the Administration could gather information on the number of jobs created as a result of government initiatives, information on the number of jobs deleted was unavailable. Thirdly, the performance of unemployment rate was affected by many factors, and most of them were outside the government's control. For instance, the supply of the labour force had been increasing at a rate faster than the increase in total employment. In conclusion, he said that while the unemployment rate had not shown a marked decrease, it had nevertheless stabilized during the most recent periods, which was a good sign.

II. Dates of subsequent meetings

27. The Chairman reminded Members that S for S would give a briefing on the Admission of Talents Scheme at her briefing on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999 on 16 October 1999. Members noted that the next regular meeting of the Panel would be held on 28 October 1999 at 2:30 pm.

Action

28. The meeting ended at 11:15 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat
14 December 1999

Speaking Note for Joseph W.P. Wong,
Secretary for Education and Manpower Bureau
At the briefing on 1999 Policy Address
Held on 9 October 1999 (Saturday)

Manpower and Labour Policy

Manpower is Hong Kong's most treasured asset. The objective of the SAR Government's manpower and labour policy is to ensure that we have a dynamic, well-motivated, adaptable and continuously upgraded workforce contributing to the economic competitiveness of individuals and Hong Kong as a whole.

2. In the past year, we were committed to implementing a total of 72 initiatives which we have pledged to undertake in 1998 and before. I am very happy to report to Members of the Legislative Council that we have completed 34 of them while 36 are proceeding on schedule. These initiatives cover a wide range of areas, including identifying needs and reviewing policies and standards, fostering a skilled and dynamic workforce, promoting good employer/employee relations, enforcing employee rights and benefits, delivering an efficient employment service, and promoting and regulating safety and health at work. As for the remaining two initiatives, one is behind schedule while one is under review.

3. In the coming year, the Bureau is committed to implement 40 initiatives to meet the policy objectives of manpower and labour policies. This Bureau's foremost tasks are to continue to tackle unemployment, protect the rights and benefits of employees, strengthen training and retraining as well as enhance occupational safety and health

standards. Details are set out in the “Policy Objective for Education and Manpower Bureau”. Let me explain the key areas.

I. Easing Unemployment

4. Being caught in an economic downturn, Hong Kong’s unemployment rate has been on the rise over the past year. Deeply concerned about this problem, the Government has initiated and coordinated over 30 measures to tackle unemployment through the efforts of the Task Force on Employment chaired by the Financial Secretary. It has, among other things, advanced government projects, strengthened employment services, enhanced vocational training and employees’ retraining and tightened measures to combat illegal employment. Our objective is to enhance job opportunities for local workers by providing a comprehensive, effective and broadly based employment service.

Creating Job Opportunities

5. The series of measures have achieved initial results. With gradual improvements in the economy, the labour market as well as unemployment rate have stabilized in recent months.

6. According to our estimates, about 90 000 job opportunities have been created between June 1998 and September 1999 as a result of the Government’s key initiatives, public works and infrastructural projects. We estimate that 65 000 more new job opportunities will arise from these initiatives and projects in the next 15 months. This has not taken into account the employment opportunities brought about by new initiatives just announced in the 1999 Policy Address, in particular those concerning environmental protection.

Strengthening of Employment Services

7. Last year, the Labour Department has implemented a number of reforms, introduced new technology, new concepts and new services. It managed to find more vacancies for job-seekers, thereby greatly improved its employment services and helped more job-seekers find jobs. The Labour Department has in the past year registered a total of 130 000 job vacancies and helped over 40 000 people to successfully secure a job. A year on year comparison showed that the number of job referrals arranged by the Labour Department has increased by 87% and the number of placements 28%.

8. The Labour Department will continue to introduce new initiatives in various aspects to provide more effective employment services. These initiatives include revamping the Job Matching Programme, adding into it elements of group counselling and core skills training, revamping the Careers Advisory Service, strengthening the collection and dissemination of career and education information on the web, and creating a special webpage for the construction industry in the website of the Interactive Employment Services.

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme

9. We are deeply concerned about the high unemployment rate of young people. We have, therefore, launched a major and comprehensive Youth Pre-employment Training Programme specially designed for young people aged between 15 and 19. The Programme aims to address the difficulties encountered by young people without any working experience when they seek employment by providing short-term innovative training and workplace attachment opportunities in private

organizations, voluntary agencies and Government departments.

10. The extensive and favourable response to this Programme reflects the community's concern and care for, as well as expectation of our young generation. Over 50 training bodies and more than 500 organizations and private sector employers will support the Programme by providing 25 000 training places and over 11 000 attachment places in six months. The Programme is also well-received by the young people. Since the commencement of application, a total of 18 000 applications have been received. The first batch of courses commenced from September 20. Feedback from the trainers showed that most of the trainees are motivated and take great interest in the courses. Their attendance rate is very high on the whole. We are glad to learn that trainees showed significant improvements in their interpersonal skills and confidence after completed the training. Trainees also generally considered the courses practical and useful to their future employment.

11. Upon completion of the Programme, we will conduct a review to examine how best to equip school leavers with pre-employment training before they enter the labour market.

II. Protecting the Rights and Benefits of Employees

Studies on Manpower Demand

12. To protect the long term benefits of employees, we have to study the future manpower demand as a basis for drawing up long term training plans. For overall manpower planning, we have earlier this year commissioned a consultancy study on the best overseas practices in manpower forecasting. After studying the practices of close to 10 selected

economies and assessed their effectiveness, the consultant will make recommendations on how the existing manpower forecasting of Hong Kong could be improved. The consultancy report will be completed by end of the year. Our main task in the next stage will be to examine, on the basis of their findings, whether a manpower forecasting model suited to Hong Kong could be developed.

13. Apart from the above, the consultancy reports on the manpower and training needs of the travel and tourism industry as well as the information technology industry have also been completed. Steps are being taken by the relevant departments and organizations to take forward the recommendations.

Promoting Good Employer / Employee Relations

14. In the coming year, we will step up our efforts in encouraging direct dialogue between employers and employees on employment matters at the trade/industry level. For example, we will strengthen the understanding and communication between employers' and employees' organisations by forming new tripartite committees. We will also present awards to establishments that have outstanding performance in implementing good people management practices; compile a guide on employees' rights and benefits under labour laws; and strengthen promotional efforts for better communication between employers and employees of small and medium sized enterprises and better understanding of the Employment Ordinance.

Improve Employees' Rights and Benefits

15. After consulting the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower,

we have already announced that with effect from 1 January 2000, employment contracts of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) will prohibit their performance of driving duties. We have completed the review on the employment conditions of live-in domestic helpers and are in the process of consultation. We will give careful considerations to the views gathered before deciding on the way forward. We have also completed the reviews on the provisions on wages, sickness benefits, lay-offs and reinstatement under the Employment Ordinance and will consult the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) shortly. After considering the views of the LAB, we will consult Members of the LegCo Panel.

16. With respect to employees compensation, we have completed the consultancy review on the Employees Compensation Assistance Scheme. The review report indicates that the most serious problem of the Scheme is the acute imbalance between income and expenditure. Income from employees' compensation insurance levy has been on the downward trend in recent years whereas the amount of compensation determined by the court in respect of common law damages has been increasing, rendering the Employees Compensation Assistance Fund Board in the red for the past three years. We will consult the organizations concerned, including the LegCo Panel on Manpower, on the recommendations of the consultancy report. We plan to introduce the bill into the Legislative Council in the current session so as to implement the recommendations to ensure the continuous and effective operation of the Scheme.

III. Training and Retraining

Vocational Training and Employees Retraining

17. In the coming year, we will continue to invest in quality training and retraining for our workforce. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Employment Retraining Board (ERB) will spend a total of about \$ 2.5 billion on training and retraining in 1999-2000, providing over 210 000 training places.

18. In the current academic year that has just begun, the VTC has launched two new courses, namely the Foundation Diploma Course and the Certificate in Vocational Studies Course, providing a total of 4 160 training places for Secondary 3 and Secondary 5 leavers. Contents of these courses include training in language and communication, information technology application and employment-related skills. They will help equip young people for employment or further studies.

19. At the same time, ERB will increase its training capacity by 23% in the 1999-2000 financial year, enabling some 95 000 people to benefit from retraining programmes. ERB courses are market-driven. To cater for market needs, ERB will increase the training capacity for tailor-made programmes designed to meet the specific needs of employers. It will also launch new programmes in areas which are in great demand in the labour market such as security / property management and home help / health care. Sustained efforts are also made to introduce different types of new courses such as those for information technology technical assistants, Chinese medicine dispensers, etc. One of ERB's major commitments in the coming year will be to increase the proportion of full-time courses from 30% to nearly 50% of the total

training capacity, so as to cater for the needs of the unemployed.

Manpower Training for the Construction Industry

20. To meet the manpower needs of the construction industry and promote trade tests, the Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA) will further expand the capacity of its full-time training courses and increase the number of trade tests. CITA plans to increase the capacity of full-time training courses from 6 183 in the 1998-1999 training year to 7 657 in the 1999-2000 training year. Since we launched the Intermediate Trade Test for the Construction Industry in 1998, about 6 200 people have passed the test administered by CITA. Subject to availability of resources, CITA plans to increase the capacity of the Intermediate Trade Test to 8 000 each year. CITA has also launched a subsidy scheme at the end of last year to provide subsidies to employers who recruit CITA graduates on a long term basis as a bid to promote this practice in the construction industry.

21. We have just gazetted the Industrial Training (Construction Industry) (Amendment) Bill 1999 last week to provide a clearly-defined legal basis for CITA to conduct trade tests and implement the subsidy scheme. These two measures are crucial in raising the skill level of construction workers and promoting long term employment in the construction industry. To enable CITA to have sufficient resources to carry out the above tasks, after the Bill is passed by the Legislative Council, we will move a resolution to raise the construction levy from 0.25% to 0.4%.

22. In order to meet the manpower demand arising from the infrastructural projects coming on stream next year, the Bureau will hold

regular meetings with the Working Group on Training and Retraining for the Construction Industry, which comprises members from employer associations, trade unions, training bodies and Government departments concerned, to assess the manpower demand and supply in the next few years and discuss measures to strengthen training and retraining of the construction industry to meet future demands.

Chinese Cuisine Training Institute

23. One of the key projects in the coming year is the establishment of a Chinese Cuisine Training Institute. The Government is working vigorously with the Vocational Training Council to make preparations for the Institute, which is expected to come into operation by end 2000. The Institute will provide systematic practical training in Chinese cuisine and introduce a trade testing system to put in place a clear professional development and promotion ladder for members of the trade. In the long-term, the establishment of the Institute will facilitate the development of Hong Kong into a regional centre of excellence in Chinese cuisine training.

IV. Promote safety and health at work

24. In the coming year, we will continue to introduce new and amendment legislation to enhance occupational safety and health in Hong Kong. We have already submitted the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Medical Examinations) Regulation and Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Loadshifting Machinery) Regulation and they are being examined by respective LegCo sub-committees. We hope for an early passage of these regulations.

25. We plan to introduce five pieces of legislation on occupational safety and health in the 1999-2000 legislative session. They include :

- (i) the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Management) Regulation, to provide for safety management system in designated factories and industrial undertakings, employing 50 and 100 or more employees;
- (ii) the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill, to change the calculation of the 6-month time bar on prosecuting proprietors of notifiable work places for failure to meet the notification requirement. The time limit is to be calculated from the date of discovering or knowing of the existence of such work places;
- (iii) a new regulation under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, to protect the safety and health of habitual users of display screen equipment and stipulates the required standard;
- (iv) a new regulation under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, to ensure that employees are provided with suitable personal protective equipment and given adequate and appropriate information, instruction and training on the use of such equipment;
- (v) amending the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) Regulation, to enhance the powers and training of safety officers and to extend the

coverage to the container-handling industry.

26. On the other hand, we will also step up enforcement actions and strengthen promotional and publicity activities. We will form an Integrated Services Group comprising professional officers from occupational health and safety services to undertake promotional and enforcement inspections to chain, complex and large organisations. The Labour Department will also create a new safety icon, in co-operation with the Occupational Safety and Health Council, to provide a focus on work safety and health. It will, in addition, provide small and medium size enterprises with a practical guide and a do-it-yourself kit to promote the concepts of occupational safety and health and to help develop suitable safety management systems.

Conclusion

27. Our work in the areas of easing unemployment, fostering a skilled workforce and protecting the rights and benefits of employees is of utmost importance, especially under the current economic situation. The Education and Manpower Bureau, the Labour Department and various training bodies will spare no efforts to meet the targets we have set in the coming year.