

For information
on 16 October 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

The Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address Policy Initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Purpose

This paper elaborates on the major new and on-going initiatives pertaining to the labour and manpower portfolio as set out in the 2018 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

Policy Priorities / New Initiatives

2. The Government accords high priority to promoting the employment of local workers and protecting the rights and benefits of workers. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Labour Department (LD) will continue to pursue suitable measures to improve protection and benefits for employees, provide diversified employment and recruitment services for job seekers and employers with different needs, and enhance the quality of our local workforce in the long run. LD will also continue to promote the awareness of occupational safety and health (OSH) to protect the well-being of workers. To deliver these objectives, we will take forward the new initiatives set out in paragraphs 3 to 22 below.

Abolition of Using Employers' Mandatory Contributions under the Mandatory Provident Fund System to Offset Severance Payment and Long Service Payment

3. The Government is determined to abolish the arrangement for “offsetting” severance payment (SP) and long service payment (LSP) with Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) benefits for the purpose of enhancing employees' retirement protection. This is also one of the current-term Government's priority tasks. Since July last year, the Government has been in active discussions with the business sector and the labour sector to explore viable options. In March this year, we put forth a “preliminary idea” to tackle the issue by providing enterprises with a two-tier subsidy scheme of 12 years, with the Government's total proposed financial commitment increased from the previous-term Government's \$7.9 billion to \$17.2 billion. We also proposed to require employers to set up designated saving accounts (DSAs) under their own

names by contributing 1% of their employees' monthly relevant income, so as to save up early to meet their potential SP or LSP expenses in future and to reduce the financial pressure in making the relevant payment. In response to the labour sector's concern, we proposed to restore the rate of calculating SP and LSP to two-thirds of the monthly wages of employees as opposed to half of the employees' monthly wages under the previous-term Government's package.

4. In the few months after the announcement of the above "preliminary idea", the Government had proactively met with key stakeholders, including major employers' associations and chambers, labour unions, political groups, Labour Advisory Board (LAB), etc. and listened to their views. We noted there were strong calls for enhancing assistance to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Having carefully considered the views of various parties, the Government has decided to significantly enhance the package to address the community's concerns. The "preliminary idea" has proposed that the Government will assist employers in setting up DSAs under their own name to prepare in advance for their potential SP or LSP expenses in future. Employers will contribute 1% of their employees' monthly relevant income to their DSAs until reaching 15% of the annual relevant income of all their employees. The Government will also provide employers with a two-tier subsidy, and the period of the second-tier subsidy will be substantially extended from the originally proposed 12 years to 25 years. The Government's total financial commitment is estimated to increase substantially from \$17.2 billion under the "preliminary idea" to \$29.3 billion. We believe that the arrangement as enhanced should go a long way in helping enterprises adapt to the policy change, particularly MSMEs and establishments which are more prone to large-scale retrenchments.

5. Besides, in order to address the concern expressed by labour groups that in certain extreme circumstances, individual employees might receive a smaller amount of aggregate benefits (SP/LSP entitlement together with the accrued benefits of the employers' mandatory contributions to their MPF accounts) than what they would otherwise receive under the current "offsetting" regime, the Government is also prepared to undertake to make up for any such shortfall.

6. The issue of MPF "offsetting" has been a bone of contention for a long time. Through active discussions in recent years, the community has reached a broad consensus on abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement. We consider that it is high time a decision is to be made to abolish the "offsetting" arrangement and accord employees with better retirement protection. Our target is to secure the passage of the enabling legislation by the Legislative Council (LegCo) by 2022 or earlier, and fully implement the abolition of "offsetting" arrangement two years later.

Improving Employment Benefits

Increasing Statutory Paternity Leave

7. The Government introduced into LegCo the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2018 on 20 June 2018 to increase statutory paternity leave under the Employment Ordinance (EO) from the existing three days to five days. The Bills Committee of LegCo has completed scrutiny of the Bill. We plan to resume the second reading debate of the Bill at the LegCo meeting on 24 October 2018.

Proposal to Extend Statutory Maternity Leave by Legislation

8. The Government has completed the review on statutory maternity leave (ML) and proposes to extend statutory ML under EO from the current 10 weeks to 14 weeks. The Government is also willing to fund the cost for this extra ML pay by way of reimbursement to the employer. Under the Government's proposed arrangement, if an employee is entitled to ML pay under EO, the employer should first, together with the current 10 weeks' statutory ML pay, provide her with ML pay for the additional four weeks' ML, and apply to the Government afterwards for reimbursement of the additional statutory ML pay. The rate of the additional statutory ML pay shall be maintained at four-fifths of the employee's average daily wages¹, and be subject to a cap of \$36,822 (the cap may be adjusted from time to time). The cap of \$36,822 is equivalent to four-fifths of the wages of an employee with a monthly wage of \$50,000 in four weeks. Employees with a monthly wage of \$50,000 or below account for about 95% of employees in Hong Kong.

9. We also propose two technical amendments to EO, namely to update the definition of miscarriage² so that an employee who suffers a miscarriage at or after 24 weeks of pregnancy may be entitled to ML. We will also amend the wording of relevant provisions to reflect its legislative intent, with a view to ensuring that an employee who has attended medical examination in relation to her pregnancy or post confinement medical treatment would be entitled to sickness allowance if she is able to produce relevant documentary proof.

¹ The daily rate of ML pay is a sum equivalent to four-fifths of the average daily wages earned by an employee in the 12-month period preceding "the first day of the ML". If an employee is employed for less than 12 months, the calculation shall be based on the shorter period.

² According to EO, the current definition of miscarriage is "the expulsion of the products of conception which are incapable of survival after being born before 28 weeks of pregnancy".

10. We will brief LAB and LegCo Panel on Manpower on the proposal and seek their views.

Reviewing the Statutory Minimum Wage Rate

11. Since the implementation of Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) in May 2011, the socio-economic and employment situation of Hong Kong has remained broadly stable with the unemployment rate staying at a low level. Total employment has increased while the earnings of low-income workers have continued to improve. The increase of the SMW rate to \$34.5 per hour since May 2017 has been operating smoothly. Adopting an evidence-based approach, the Minimum Wage Commission (MWC) has completed a new round of review of the SMW rate and will submit a report on its recommendation to the Chief Executive in Council by the end of this month. The Government will carefully consider and follow up on the recommendation report of MWC.

Enhancing Protection of Employees

Strengthening the Protection of Rights and Benefits of Employees Injured at Work

12. The Government attaches great importance to the compensation and support for employees injured at work. Although the overall OSH condition of our workforce has been improving, there are still a considerable number of work injury cases every year. At present, injured workers can receive comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation services provided by the Hospital Authority. Some injured workers receive private rehabilitation services arranged by the insurance companies through the “Voluntary Rehabilitation Scheme”. In order to strengthen the protection of the rights and benefits of employees injured at work and suffered from occupational diseases, the Government is actively looking into new measures, including considering the provision of timely and coordinated treatment and rehabilitation services to injured workers in need through case management model and private medical services, with a view to speeding up their recovery and facilitating their early return to work, and maintaining the overall productivity of Hong Kong. LD will consider the views of different stakeholders when taking forward the initiative.

13. Moreover, LD will strengthen the case processing of employees' compensation claims by enhancing the “Claims Support Services” which involve dedicated follow-up, early intervention, proactive contact and arrangement of meetings with a view to facilitating the early settlement of work injury disputes between employers and employees. LD will also enhance the follow-up procedures for sick leave relating to work injury to speed up the case processing by strengthening the “Paper Medical Clearance” through early

screening of those cases that do not require assessment by the Employees' Compensation Assessment Board so that the employees will not be required to attend the follow-up procedures in person and LD will issue the "Certificate of Compensation Assessment" direct for settling the claims. In parallel, we will strengthen the investigation and prosecution efforts to combat violation of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance.

Enhancing the Protection of Non-skilled Employees Engaged by Government Service Contractors

14. To enhance the protection of the employment terms and conditions as well as labour benefits of non-skilled employees engaged by government service contractors, the inter-bureaux/departamental Working Group³ set up by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare has completed the review. The Government has accepted the Working Group's recommendations on the improvement measures in respect of government service contracts (excluding construction service contracts) that rely heavily on the deployment of non-skilled employees. These include increasing the technical weighting in marking schemes for tender assessment to not less than 50%, increasing the weighting for "wage level" as an assessment criterion to at least 25 marks out of 100 marks in the technical assessment, enhancing the employment benefits of non-skilled employees including entitlement to a contractual gratuity, statutory holiday pay upon employment for not less than one month and additional remuneration for working when Typhoon Warning Signal No. 8 or above is hoisted, and encouraging procuring departments to adopt a tenure of not less than three years for the service contracts where operational situations permit. The Working Group has started the preparatory work on implementation with a view to applying the improvement measures to service contracts tendered from 1 April 2019 onwards.

Promoting Employment

Strengthening the Processing and Dissemination of Job Vacancy Information

15. LD will expedite the handling of job vacancies received from the private sector and enhance the dissemination of job vacancy information, with a view to providing more speedy and convenient recruitment and employment services for the employers and job seekers. Besides, we will enhance the functions and designs of the Interactive Employment Service website to provide better user experience to members of the public.

³ The Working Group members include LWB, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Housing Department, the Government Property Agency and LD.

Strengthening Employment Support for Ethnic Minority Job Seekers

16. LD has all along been providing dedicated services that cater to the employment needs of ethnic minority (EM) job seekers proactively. To further strengthen the employment support for EM job seekers, we will launch a pilot programme in conjunction with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide employment services for EM job seekers through a case management approach so as to utilise NGOs' community network, expertise in case management and experiences in serving EMs.

Protecting Foreign Domestic Helpers

17. Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) make significant contribution to the development of Hong Kong by assisting local families in undertaking household chores as well as taking care of their young and elderly family members, thereby unleashing the potential of our local workforce. The Government attaches great importance to safeguarding the rights of FDHs in Hong Kong and maintaining Hong Kong as an attractive place for them to work. LD will strengthen support and assistance to FDHs with a view to preventing them from being exploited. LD will also continue its extensive promotional and educational work, including briefings, exhibitions and thematic talks, etc., to increase FDHs' awareness of their employment rights and obligations, and continue to promote a harmonious relationship between employers and employees.

18. LD takes vigorous enforcement against the illegal conduct of employment agencies (EAs), including those who overcharge FDHs and other job seekers. We will step up enforcement and prosecution against unscrupulous EAs contravening the relevant legal requirements and the Code of Practice for EAs. In order to enhance the transparency of the track record of EAs and to help job seekers (including FDHs) and employers make better informed decisions when engaging EA services, LD consulted the public and stakeholders in August and September 2018 on our proposal to publish in a more systematic way⁴ the records of conviction of overcharging and unlicensed operation, revocation/refusal for renewal of licence and issue of written warnings to EAs on LD's dedicated online portal on EAs. Having considered the views received which were generally in support of the proposal, we have rolled out the initiative.

⁴ All along, LD has published information on EAs' conviction records of overcharging and unlicensed operation, as well as revocation/refusal for renewal of licence in the form of press releases. The information is also available online at LD's EA Portal.

Protecting Imported Workers

19. With the unemployment rate in Hong Kong this year edged down to its lowest level in more than 20 years, various sectors have experienced recruitment difficulty. On the premise of according employment priority to local workers, employers may apply for importation of workers at technician level or below under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) to relieve the manpower shortage. LD will strengthen its processing of the relevant applications. We will also strive to enhance imported workers' understanding of their employment rights and step up inspection with a view to ensuring employers' compliance with employment contracts, labour laws and requirements under SLS.

Safeguarding OSH

Strengthening Protection of Construction Workers' OSH

20. The construction industry has been booming in recent years. Although its workforce has been growing continuously as a result (from about 80 000 to about 120 000 in 2017 in the past five years), the accident rate per thousand workers has been declining to 32.9 in 2017. Notwithstanding that, as the number of fatal industrial accidents and the accident rate per thousand workers of the construction industry have long been the highest of all industries, LD has always been very concerned about the OSH situation of the construction industry. LD will continue to closely monitor the risk situation of the construction industry and formulate targeted initiatives in a timely manner to further enhance the OSH of construction workers. The main initiatives include –

- (a) conducting more in-depth surprise inspections of construction sites involving high risk processes or with poor safety performance to scrutinise the duty holders' safe systems of work and safety management systems; and
- (b) stepping up participation in site safety management committee meetings of public work projects to be apprised of the latest risk situations of the projects, give advice on work processes of higher risk and adjust the inspection strategy accordingly in a more focused manner.

Facilitating Employees to Report Unsafe Working Condition

21. Apart from law enforcement and inspections, LD considers that it is equally important to enhance the OSH awareness of workers and their attention to safe working environment. LD therefore encourages workers to be more vigilant to workplace safety and to lodge complaints about unsafe working environment in confidence, so that LD can conduct more targeted inspections. Through developing a new online platform, LD seeks to facilitate employees to use mobile electronic devices to report unsafe working condition so that LD can follow up promptly. The new online platform is expected to be launched in the first quarter of 2019.

Preventing the Health Risks of Standing at Work

22. Frequent standing at work may cause muscle ache and fatigue, and pressure on the legs. Legs under constant pressure are also related to various kinds of diseases. Therefore, LD has all along been concerned about the occupational health of employees whose work requires frequent standing, and has been working to enhance the OSH awareness of employers and employees through various channels. To further protect employees from the health risks arising from standing at work, LD will issue a new guidance note. Apart from the health hazards and preventive measures about standing at work, the new guidance note will also emphasize that employers must, so far as reasonably practicable, provide suitable chairs at the working location or for occasional resting. After the guidance note is published, LD will conduct extensive publicity and promotional visits, and take appropriate enforcement actions.

On-going Initiatives

23. Apart from the abovementioned policy priorities/ new initiatives, LWB and LD will continue to carry out the on-going initiatives set out in paragraphs 24 to 42 below to, among others, promote employment, provide vocational training, enhance employees' benefits, and promote OSH.

Promoting Employment

Enhancing Employment Programmes to Promote Employment of the Elderly, Young People and Persons with Disabilities

24. To encourage employers to hire the elderly, young people and persons with disabilities and provide them with on-the-job training, LD enhanced its three special employment programmes on 1 September 2018 as follows –

- (a) to reflect the new measures for promoting the employment of the elderly, the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged has been renamed as the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM). Under the programme, employers engaging elderly job seekers aged 60 or above who have left the workforce or are unemployed are offered a monthly on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per employee for a period of six to 12 months⁵. EPEM covers both full-time and part-time jobs;
- (b) the training allowance under the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP)⁶ has been raised to encourage employers to hire young people and provide them with quality on-the-job training. The maximum amount of monthly allowance payable to employers who engage young people and provide them with on-the-job training has been increased from \$3,000 to \$4,000 for a period of six to 12 months. Furthermore, to meet the needs of some youth, the scope of YETP has also been expanded to cover part-time on-the-job training; and
- (c) the work adaptation period under the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme has been extended from two months to three months. The ceiling of monthly allowance has also been raised from \$5,500 to \$7,000 during the three-month work adaptation period and from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the ensuing six months. With this enhancement, the maximum period within which allowance is payable is extended from eight to nine months, with maximum allowance payable to employers increased by \$16,000 to a total of \$51,000 for each person with disabilities with employment difficulties.

Enhancing Employment Support for Elderly Job Seekers

25. In addition to enhancing EPEM, LD will continue to implement a series of measures to strengthen employment support for elderly job seekers, such as holding experience sharing sessions on employing elderly persons, organising employment briefings for elderly job seekers, and staging large-scale thematic job fairs targeted at middle-aged and elderly job seekers. LD will also continue to organise district-based job fairs on part-time employment at job centres to meet the needs of some elderly persons who are more interested in

⁵ As for employers engaging unemployed job seekers aged 40 to 59 under EPEM, the maximum amount of on-the-job training allowance remains \$3,000 per month per employee for a period of three to six months.

⁶ YETP provides one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

taking up part-time jobs. Moreover, to promote the employment of elderly persons, LD will continue to, through various promotional activities, raise public awareness of the part played by elderly persons in the potential labour force and encourage employers to adopt friendly employment practices for the elderly.

Strengthening Employment Services for Job Seekers with Disabilities

26. LD provides personalised employment services to job seekers with disabilities fit for open employment and help them find suitable jobs. To strengthen the employment support for job seekers with disabilities, LD launched a two-year Pilot Scheme on Counselling Service for job seekers with disabilities on 1 September 2016, engaging a non-governmental welfare organisation to help job seekers in need of emotional counselling service. In view of the positive response, upon the completion of the two-year pilot, the counselling service has been regularised and named “Counselling Scheme for People with Disabilities” with effect from 1 September 2018. LD continues to offer professional psychological and emotional counselling to needy job seekers with disabilities registered with the Selective Placement Division. The counselling service is provided by registered social workers of NGO which has expertise and experience in this respect. It will serve to alleviate the emotional problems of job seekers with disabilities arising from the state of their disabilities or personal or family matters, so as to help them concentrate on job search and settle in their new jobs, thereby realising their potentials in employment.

Continuing to Provide Employment Support through the Higher Education Employment Information e-Platform

27. LD will continue to provide, through the Higher Education Employment Information e-Platform (HEEIP), employment support for job seekers with higher education, including Hong Kong students who are educated in tertiary institutions outside Hong Kong, the second generation of Hong Kong emigrants as well as persons from overseas with higher academic/ professional qualifications who are interested in working in Hong Kong. This e-platform seeks to enhance their understanding of the Hong Kong employment market and facilitate them to search and apply for suitable job openings.

28. In collaboration with relevant bodies including career service centres and student associations of local and overseas universities, and Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas and on the Mainland, LD has promoted this dedicated employment information e-platform to graduates of local universities and persons with higher education residing outside Hong Kong. LD has also publicised this e-platform among employers and trade associations on a continuous basis to canvass suitable job vacancies. From its launch in late

December 2016 and up to August 2018, more than 45 000 job vacancies with an academic requirement of degree level or above were posted on HEEIP.

Promoting Family-friendly Employment Practices

29. The Government has been encouraging employers to adopt “employee-oriented” good human resource management and implement family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) with a view to helping employees keep a balance between their work and family commitments. LD will continue to encourage employers to, having regard to individual circumstances such as business characteristics and scale of enterprises, adopt practicable good human resource management policy and FFEPs that are suitable for enterprises through a wide range of publicity channels and various promotional activities. Relevant information will also be disseminated to the community.

Manpower Development

Encouraging Continuing Education

30. The Finance Committee of the LegCo approved in May 2018 the funding injection of \$10 billion into the Continuing Education Fund (CEF). A series of CEF enhancement measures, including the increase in subsidy ceiling and the expansion of the scope of CEF courses, will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2019 to encourage the public to pursue continuing learning.

Talent List

31. With a view to attract high-quality talents to support Hong Kong’s development as a high value-added and diversified economy, the first Talent List of Hong Kong, containing 11 professions, was promulgated on 28 August 2018. Through the Government’s overseas and Mainland Economic and Trade Offices, as well as the support of industry stakeholders, we would publicise the Talent List to attract targeted quality talents from around the world.

Addressing Labour Shortage of Individual Sectors

32. Individual sectors, particularly the elderly care service sector, have long been encountering human resources shortage and recruitment difficulties. However, with the extremely tight overall labour force and rapidly ageing population, the elderly care service sector experiences particularly acute shortage of manpower supply. The Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address proposed that on the premise that local workers’ priority for employment would

be safeguarded, consideration might be given to allowing greater flexibility for subsidised elderly service and rehabilitation service units to import carers. The Government has, through a number of measures, been helping the subsidised elderly care service sector to employ additional manpower. But given the increasing need for additional subsidised elderly care services, we will review the practical circumstances and determine when and how to implement the importation of carers.

Providing Vocational Training

Providing Retraining Courses and Support Services for Different Social Groups

33. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been providing training courses and support services for different social groups. The ERB will continue to develop courses and services targeting social groups with special needs (including mature persons, new arrivals, EMs, persons with disabilities, persons recovered from work injuries and ex-offenders) which cater for their needs. In particular, the ERB will enhance the provision of training and employment services for women, including extending its First-Hire-Then-Train Pilot Programme to cover more industries and launching the Tailor-made Course for Part-timers Pilot Programme, to cater for the family commitments of middle-aged women and homemakers, so as to help them rejoin the job market. ERB will also enhance training of EMs by expanding the range of dedicated language and industry-specific training courses and allowing more flexibility in the education attainment criteria for enrolment in dedicated courses.

Safeguarding Employees' Rights and Benefits

Formulating Sector-specific Working Hours Guidelines

34. LD is engaging its 11 industry-based tripartite committees (TCs)⁷ in formulating sector-specific working hours guidelines to provide guidance on suggested working hours arrangements, overtime compensation arrangements and good working hours management measures for employers' reference and adoption, with a view to improving employees' working hours arrangements. Depending on the progress of discussions by the respective TCs, LD plans to release the guidelines progressively between the first quarter of 2019 and the first half of 2020.

⁷ These TCs cover catering, cement and concrete, cleaning services, construction, elderly homes, hotel and tourism, logistics, printing, property management, retail and theatre.

Promoting OSH

Formulating Risk-based OSH Strategies

35. OSH strategies should evolve with the time and should be in keeping with the risk situation in order to generate the best impact. LD will keep OSH risks of different industries under review, and closely monitor their OSH performance as well as changing risk situations of different work processes, so as to adjust our OSH strategies, including adjusting the approach, focus and intensity of our work in a timely manner and formulating targeted promotion and education as well as enforcement efforts to enhance the overall OSH performance of Hong Kong.

Increasing Penalties of OSH Legislation to Strengthen Deterrent Effect

36. The current sentencings of OSH offences are on the low side and cannot reflect the seriousness of the contraventions. In this connection, LD is now reviewing the penalties of OSH legislation in full swing with a view to enhancing their deterrent effect and further safeguarding the OSH of employees. LD has proposed to suitably raise the maximum fine levels and imprisonment terms. LD has also proposed to take out prosecutions as indictable offences for very serious cases, to peg the fines of these offences with the turnover of the convicted companies and to raise the maximum imprisonment terms. In addition, LD has proposed to extend the time limit for issuing summonses from six months to one year to allow LD more time to conduct more in-depth investigations on very serious cases. LD is studying the details of the legislative amendments and will consult relevant stakeholders in the process. Depending on stakeholders' views and the progress of law drafting, we aim to table the amendment bill within the 2019-2020 legislative session.

Enhancing the Promotion of OSH Complaint Channels

37. To enhance the promotion of current complaint channels to employees, especially construction workers, so as to further improve the unsafe working conditions, LD produced and widely distributed an OSH promotion poster in Chinese, English and six EM languages (Indonesian, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu) at the end of last year. LD also produced and distributed card holders printed with the complaint hotline to employees early this year. LD plans to produce new TV and Radio Announcements in the Public Interests (APIs) concerning the OSH complaint hotline and the above-mentioned new online platform early next year to further promote the work safety culture.

Enhancing Work-at-height Safety

38. “Fall of person from height” is the most common cause of fatal industrial accidents, and most of them occur in the construction industry. LD is therefore particularly concerned about work-at-height safety in the construction industry and has been focusing on this area of work through inspection and enforcement, publicity and promotion, as well as education and training. For inspection and enforcement, LD will continue to pay particular attention to work-at-height safety during regular inspections and special enforcement operations. Immediate enforcement actions will be taken against breaches of work safety legislation, including issuance of suspension notices (SNs)/improvement notices (INs) and taking out prosecutions. Besides, following the revision of the guideline in June this year to require proper wearing of safety helmets with chin straps, related enforcement action has commenced to reduce workers’ risk of head injury in case of fall.

39. In respect of promotion and publicity, LD will continue to engage workers’ unions, trade associations and other stakeholders of the construction industry to promote work-at-height safety through different channels, including promoting the various sponsorship schemes targeted at small and medium enterprises (SMEs). LD in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) and the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies will continue to promote the “Pilot Partnership Scheme on Promotion of Light-duty Working Platforms by Property Management Companies”. Under the Scheme, step platforms and hop-up platforms are made available for use by contractors/ workers of renovation and repair works carried out in residential estates or buildings to conduct work above ground. In addition, LD is producing a series of animation videos on “Work Safety Alert” to re-enact accidents in a vivid and easy-to-comprehend manner, and to highlight the correct preventive measures, so as to heighten the impact of our promotion and avoid recurrence of similar accidents.

40. On the education front, LD, together with the Construction Industry Council and OSHC, has reviewed and enhanced the “Green Card” course to strengthen workers’ understanding on common risks (including the risk of falling from height) and their abilities to eliminate such risks. LD will continue to monitor the quality of these courses through surprise and covert inspections.

Launching Large-scale OSH Promotional Programmes

41. The construction industry and catering services have always recorded the highest numbers of industrial accidents. LD therefore organises large-scale promotion and publicity activities aiming at these two industries. LD will continue to collaborate with OSHC, trade associations, workers unions and other

stakeholder groups to organise “Safety Award Scheme” for the construction and catering industries. The Schemes aim to enhance the safety awareness of the relevant personnel of the industries and to recognise and reward enterprises, management, workers and etc. with good safety performance.

Youth Development

Continuing to Promote the Working Holiday Scheme

42. To provide our youth the opportunity to learn about the culture and development of other countries so as to broaden their horizons, Hong Kong has established bilateral Working Holiday Schemes (WHSs) with 13 economies⁸. WHS has all along been very popular among our young people, with more than 88 000 Hong Kong youngsters participated to date. We will continue to establish more WHS arrangements with suitable economies and promote WHS proactively, so that more Hong Kong young people can have the opportunity to enrich their global exposure.

Conclusion

43. The Government will continue working closely with employers and employees as well as different sectors of the community in implementing the various labour and manpower initiatives outlined above.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
October 2018

⁸ The partner economies include New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Canada, Korea, France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Hungary, Sweden and the Netherlands.