

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)634/19-20
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/MP

Panel on Manpower

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 17 December 2019, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon HO Kai-ming (Chairman)
Hon CHU Hoi-dick (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
- Members absent** : Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV
Mr Caspar TSUI Ying-wai, JP
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Jeff LEUNG Wing-yan, JP
Deputy Commissioner for Labour
(Occupational Safety and Health)

Mr WU Wai-hung, JP
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety)

Mr WAN Chi-ping
Chief Occupational Safety Officer (System and Support)
Labour Department

Item V

Mr Caspar TSUI Ying-wai, JP
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Charles HUI Pak-kwan, JP
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services)

Ms Catherine LAW Sui-fong
Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services) (Policy)
Labour Department

Mr Daniel FONG Siu-wai
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Manpower)

Mr LAM Chi-kwong
Senior Manager (Course Development)
Employees Retraining Board

Clerk in attendance : Miss Betty MA
Chief Council Secretary (2) 1

Staff in attendance : Ms Rita LAI
Senior Council Secretary (2) 1

Miss Lulu YEUNG
Clerical Assistant (2) 1

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I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)369/19-20)

The minutes of the policy briefing held on 8 November 2019 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)389/19-20(01))

2. Members noted the letter dated 11 December 2019 from Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggesting the Panel to discuss medical protection for foreign domestic helpers ("FDHs") had been issued since the last meeting. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that the Administration had conducted a survey relating to employment of FDHs and suggested that the Panel should discuss the related findings. The Chairman instructed the Secretariat to obtain relevant information from the Administration to facilitate members to decide whether the subject matter should be discussed at a future meeting.

Secretariat

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)371/19-20(01) and (02))

Regular meeting in January 2020

3. Members agreed that the following items proposed by the Administration be discussed at the next regular meeting at 4:30 pm on 21 January 2020:

- (a) Adjustment of the financial limits of the Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme; and
- (b) Development of a new disbursement information system for implementing the proposed extension of statutory maternity leave.

Mr LUK Chung-hung added that the Administration should be requested to provide an update on the legislative timetable in respect of the proposal of extending the statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks when item (b) was discussed.

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Regular meeting in February 2020

4. The Chairman advised that pursuant to the decision made at the last meeting, the Panel would receive public views on "Pilot rehabilitation programme for employees injured at work" at the regular meeting in February 2020. A general notice would be posted on the Legislative Council ("LegCo") website to invite views from interested parties in due course.

IV. Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in 2018 and the first half of 2019

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)371/19-20(03) and (04))

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("USLW") briefed members on Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in 2018 and the first half of 2019 as detailed in the Administration's paper.

6. Members noted an updated background brief entitled "Occupational safety performance in Hong Kong" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Occupational injuries and related counter measures

Construction industry

7. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed concern about the increase in the number of fatal cases among industrial accidents from seven in the first half of 2018 to 11 in the first half of 2019. Mr POON and Mr Andrew WAN were concerned that the figures of fatalities remained on the high side. Mr POON then asked about the specific enforcement work in place to regulate the occupational safety performance of the construction industry during the above period.

8. Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety) ("AC for L (OS)") responded that in 2018 and the first half of 2019, the Labour Department ("LD") conducted in-depth surprise inspections targeting work sites with high risk processes or poor safety performance. Apart from identifying unsafe operations, LD also focused on whether the duty holders of the work sites had established and implemented safe systems of work and whether there were any deficiencies in their safety

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management systems, with a view to urging relevant contractors to take immediate remedial measures and render systemic protection of workers' safety at work. During the period, suspension notices had been issued suspending work activities when there was imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury. Prosecutions had been initiated mainly against unsafe work-at-height and lifting operation as well as deficiencies in safety management systems.

9. Referring to the media report on a serious industrial accident which took place in Liantang in mid-October 2019 where a female worker was seriously injured, Mr POON Siu-ping expressed grave concern that the employer concerned had deliberately not reported the industrial accident to LD so as to cover it up and avoid paying higher premium for employees' compensation insurance in future. The Deputy Chairman expressed a similar concern that the decrease in the number of non-fatal cases of occupational injuries in the first half of 2019, as compared with that in 2018, was attributed to the fact that some employers did not report such cases in a bid to evade the responsibility of employees' compensation. Mr POON sought information on the number of prosecutions initiated against employers for not reporting to LD on industrial accidents in the past two years. Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health) ("DC for L (OSH)") said that he would provide the requisite information after the meeting and stressed that LD could get hold of information on industrial accidents from various channels and would conduct investigations as appropriate.

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10. USLW advised that in addition to requiring duty holders concerned to notify LD of workplace accidents, LD launched a new online complaint platform for occupational safety and health ("OSH") in March 2019 to facilitate employees/the public using mobile electronic devices to report unsafe working conditions so that LD could conduct prompt follow-up actions. The Administration would continue to strengthen its publicity efforts in this regard.

11. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed grave concern about the considerable number of fatalities and injuries in the construction industry in recent years, in particular those relating to major infrastructure projects such as the construction of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao-Bridge and the Three-Runway System. Dr KWOK was concerned that the occurrence of such accidents was due to the need to catch up with works progress at the expense of safe work practices. Given that the majority of the construction projects involved were public works projects, Dr KWOK

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held a strong view that project contractors with poor safety performance records should be prohibited from bidding for public works projects for a specified period of time.

12. In response, USLW affirmed that there was an existing disciplinary mechanism to regulate contractors undertaking public works contracts. DC for L (OSH) added that the Development Bureau ("DevB") maintained a List of Approved Contractors for Public Works ("the List"). In case a contractor on the List had performed poorly or had been involved in serious incidents in any public or private sector works contracts, DevB could take disciplinary actions against it according to the provisions as stipulated in the Contractor Management Handbook, which included suspending the contractor from tendering public works contracts for a maximum of 12 months or even removing the contractor from the List depending on the level of severity. Mr SHIU Ka-fai appealed to the Administration to explain to the public the relevant mechanism in details.

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13. At Dr KWOK Ka-ki's request, the Administration agreed to provide information on the names of contractors which had been removed from the List in the past three years.

14. Mr LUK Chung-hung expressed concern about work safety of construction workers when undertaking maintenance works at external walls of buildings. With regard to the suggestions of some labour unions on design elements conducive to the safe maintenance of external walls of new buildings, in particular those relating to air-conditioner platforms, Mr LUK sought information on the progress on revising the relevant practice notes to the building industry as well as specific measures taken to reduce risks associated with works at external walls of existing buildings.

15. DC for L (OSH) responded that LD had set up a dedicated office in mid-2019 and was working full steam ahead with relevant professionals to study the external wall designs of some existing residential buildings, which were not conducive to the adoption of common work methods for maintenance work at external walls of these buildings, and identify possible problems so encountered. Given the considerable number of buildings involved, it would take time to complete the exercise. Subject to the study findings, LD would make recommendations on the identified problems as well as decide whether to make revisions to the relevant guidelines to the building industry as appropriate.

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Food and beverage services sector

16. The Deputy Chairman noted from Annex 6 of the Administration's paper that in the first half of 2019, there was an increase in the number of industrial accidents relating to "fall of person from height", "striking against fixed or stationary object", "striking against or struck by moving object" and "exposure to or contact with harmful substance" in the food and beverage services sector ("FBSS"), as opposed to a general reduction in other types of industrial accidents in the sector. He sought explanation in this regard.

17. In response, AC for L (OS) said that the Administration was highly concerned about an increase in industrial accidents for specific types of accidents and had analyzed the causes of the accidents. With regard to the major causes of the abovementioned four types of industrial accidents in FBSS, AC for L (OS) advised that while there were various causes of the accidents, the injuries of employees concerned were on the whole not serious. LD would strengthen its enforcement work including stepping up inspections targeting specific areas of work safety as well as work safety publicity and promotional efforts to enhance OSH awareness of employees.

18. Noting that there was a slight decrease in the number of industrial accidents in FBSS in the first half of 2019 as compared with that in the corresponding period in 2018, the Chairman was of the view that it might largely be attributable to the provision of subsidy under various sponsorship schemes for the purchase of personal protective equipment, such as cut resistant gloves and heat resistant gloves that conformed to relevant safety standards. He called on the Administration to continue working in such direction so as to further enhance the work safety standards of the catering industry.

Raising penalties of occupational safety and health legislation

19. Mr Andrew WAN recalled that the Panel was briefed in March 2019 on LD's preliminary amendment proposals to raise the penalties of the OSH legislation. It was pointed out that comparing to the penalties of the OSH legislation in other advanced countries/regions (such as the United States, Australia, and Ontario Province of Canada), the maximum fines of the OSH legislation in Hong Kong were far below those in most of these jurisdictions. Moreover, Mr WAN considered it unacceptable that the penalties of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance

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(Cap. 59) ("FIUO") and the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509) ("OSHO") had not been revised for over 20 years and the maximum fines ranging from \$2,000 to \$500,000 under the two Ordinances and their subsidiary regulations for duty holders, upon conviction, were too low. Mr WAN believed that the Judiciary would accordingly impose heavier penalties on OSH offences following the enactment of the relevant legislative proposals to impose heavier penalties on OSH offences. Referring to the subcontracting practice in the construction industry, Mr WAN further enquired whether legislative amendments would be introduced to address the legal liabilities issues of the principal contractors in industrial fatalities and accidents.

20. Dr KWOK Ka-ki noted with grave concern that the average fine for each summon was only about \$27,000 in 2018 in respect of fatal industrial accidents in the construction industry. He considered that the current penalties for duty holders contravening OSH legislation were too low to reflect the seriousness of the offences and the consequences of the accidents.

21. Mr POON Siu-ping considered it imperative to raise the penalties of OSH legislation so as to achieve greater deterrent effect for non-compliance with OSH requirements. Mr POON said that to his understanding, the employer representatives on the Labour Advisory Board ("LAB") had expressed grave concern over the proposal to pitch the maximum fine of contravening the general duty provisions in OSH legislation at 10% of the turnover of the convicted company or \$6 million, whichever was the greater. Mr POON was concerned about the Administration's determination in taking forward the proposal in face of opposition from the employer side. Mr LUK Chung-hung recalled that most members of the Panel were in support of the proposed amendment direction when the Panel was consulted in March 2019. Mr POON, Mr LUK and Mr Andrew WAN asked about the progress of the legislative amendment exercise and urged the Administration to expedite the relevant work.

22. Mr SHIU Ka-fai said that while consideration could be given to raising the penalties for OSH offences, some employers had expressed grave concern that the proposed penalty level was unreasonably high.

23. USLW and DC for L (OSH) acknowledged that the penalties of FIUO and OSO had not been revised for over 20 years, and the penalties were relatively low as compared with those of the OSH

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legislation in most of advanced countries/regions. With a view to raising the deterrent effect of penalties for OSH offences, in particular those involving mega projects, LD consulted key stakeholders on the preliminary legislative amendment proposals earlier in 2019, including the Panel and LAB as well as many key employer and employee organizations from the construction industry, etc. The Administration was studying and considering the views received for refining the legislative amendment proposals. It was expected that the legislative amendments would be complicated. Subject to the stakeholders' views and progress of law drafting, the Administration aimed to introduce a relevant bill within the current-term of the Government. As regards the legal liabilities under the subcontracting arrangements in the construction industry, both principal contractors and subcontractors of construction projects would be liable to prosecution if there was sufficient evidence to substantiate their non-compliance with the OSH legislation and safe work practices.

24. Mr SHIU Ka-fai held the view that LD should request the Department of Justice ("DoJ") to make appeals to the court's decision in respect of the penalties imposed by the court on OSH offences which were considered too low or disproportionate to the offences.

25. The Chairman held the view that applications for review of or appeal against the penalties of OSH offences should be dealt with by the Court of Appeal, such that the latter could set sentencing guidelines and consider imposing higher level of penalties for OSH offences. The Chairman sought information on the number of reviews or appeals to the court in respect of the conviction and the penalties for non-compliance with safety requirements under OSO and FIUO.

26. DC for L (OSH) responded that in determining the appropriate sentences, the court would consider the level of fines imposed on similar OSH offences in the past. From 2014 to 2019 (up to October), LD requested DoJ to consider filing review or appeal to the court in respect of 45 cases convicted of offences under OSO and FIUO on the amount of fine. DoJ filed review or appeal to the court on three cases with one case successfully reviewed. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide information on the reasons for DoJ's decision of not to accede to LD's request to consider filing applications for review or appeal to the court for the remaining 42 cases after the meeting.

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Occupational safety and health

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27. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about OSH of the cleansing workers engaged under the service contracts of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") who were required to perform cleansing duties at areas contaminated by tear gas rounds or other chemicals after the public assemblies and protests in recent months. Dr CHEUNG was concerned whether these cleansing workers had been provided with appropriate personal protective equipment and how LD could monitor the situation. Dr CHEUNG further enquired whether additional resources had been allocated to address the possible harmful and long-term health impacts on the cleansing workers concerned who might have exposed to the hazardous residual materials at workplaces.

28. USLW advised that health information on tear gas had been uploaded to the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for general public's reference whereas FEHD had issued guidelines to its employees and cleansing service contractors, including the use of personal protective equipment for cleansing the residues of chemicals at workplaces under the management of FEHD as appropriate. In addition, officers of LD had conducted inspections to ensure cleansing service contractors' compliance with the guidelines. LD would further liaise with FEHD in respect of protection of occupational safety of the cleansing workers.

Other concerns

29. The Deputy Chairman expressed concern about the long-standing difficulties faced by family members of deceased workers who died in fatal industrial accidents in the handling of the deceased's estate and employees' compensation claims because of the prolonged legal proceedings for the Coroner's inquest and processing time for application for a certified copy of a death entry (commonly known as "death certificate"). With respect to Table 2 of the Administration's paper regarding fatal cases from 2014 to first half of 2019, the Deputy Chairman sought information on the number of cases for which death certificates had been issued. He further asked how the Administration would provide assistance to these family members of deceased workers.

30. DC for L (OSH) responded that he did not have the requisite information on the issuance of death certificates on hand. LD would conduct investigation into each fatal case at work and submit a report to the Coroner within the time bar. In the event that an inquest was

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required, the Coroner would, upon completion of the inquest, inform the Registrar of Deaths and the Immigration Department would thereafter issue the death certificate. DC for L (OSH) added that the Employees' Compensation Division of LD did not require the death certificate to assist family members of deceased workers concerned to seek compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282). LD would consider relaying the information of deceased workers who died in fatal industrial accidents to relevant bureaux/government departments as appropriate.

V. Initiatives for supporting employment
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)371/19-20(05) and (06))

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, USLW briefed members on the Government's initiatives for supporting employment, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

32. Members noted an updated background brief entitled "Employment support services of the Labour Department" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Employment support measures in face of economic downturn

33. Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Mr LUK Chung-hung and Mr Vincent CHENG noted with grave concern that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 3.2% in September - November 2019, i.e. 125 400 unemployed persons. In particular, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related segment (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors as a whole) as well as the food and beverage service activities sector rose to 5.2% and 6.2% respectively. In face of the economic downturn and in anticipation of further increase in the unemployment rate, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Mr POON and Mr CHENG asked whether the Administration would make reference to the introduction of a package of enhanced employment measures (including creation of some 30 000 short-term employment and training openings) after the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003 and implement similar support measures to assist employees to tide over the financial difficulties brought about by recent social incidents. More importantly, Mr CHENG said that the Labour and Welfare Bureau should liaise with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and introduce appropriate measures to boost the

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economy. Mr LUK said that the labour sector urged the Government to reject all applications for importing labour under the Supplementary Labour Scheme. Mr LEUNG appealed to the Government to make use of the huge fiscal reserve to create job opportunities for job seekers with employment difficulties and improve the remuneration package, especially those in the residential care services ("RCS") sector. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was of the view that as a relief measure, the working hours requirements under the Working Family Allowance Scheme should be further relaxed and the allowance should not be counted towards the household income in the provision of child allowance.

34. USLW responded that the Administration had launched four rounds of relief measures in recent months, which added up to more than \$25 billion, to support enterprises, safeguard jobs and relieve people's financial burden, to counter the challenging external and local economic environment. These included a number of the measures which would benefit grassroots families and enterprises, such as providing subsidy to students and reducing rental for Government venues. It was noteworthy that in accordance with the proposal in 2017 Policy Agenda, subsidized elderly service units had already been provided with additional resources to raise the salaries of their frontline care workers. USLW added that the Government announced in the 2019-2020 Budget that \$20 billion would be allocated to purchase properties over some three years for accommodating welfare facilities. The subsequent commencement of services might help create employment opportunities.

35. Expressing grave concern about the adverse impact of the social incidents in past few months on the economy and business environment, Mr SHIU Ka-fai sought information on the latest manpower demand in various trades and industries.

36. USLW and Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services) ("AC for L (ES)") advised that the demand for recruitment and employment services at LD's recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries from January to November 2019 sustained amidst the significant drop in the overall number of vacancies received by the department in recent months. At the request of the Chairman and Mr SHIU Ka-fai, the Administration agreed to provide after the meeting the respective numbers of job vacancies placed by employers at the three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, including the latest figures since June 2019.

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Strengthening retraining services and continuing education to facilitate employment

37. Noting that the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") would increase the maximum amount of monthly allowance under the "Love Upgrading Special Scheme" ("the Special Scheme") from \$4,000 to \$5,800 per trainee through legislative amendment, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the participants currently enrolled under the Special Scheme would be eligible for the increased monthly allowance with retrospective effect. He further asked whether the quota of 10 000 eligible employees would be further increased. Mr Vincent CHENG enquired whether the Special Scheme would specially target at employees engaged in the service sectors. The Chairman said that apart from setting up of an emergency relief fund for the unemployed persons, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions also called on the Administration to further increase the monthly allowance to \$14,000 per trainee. Mr LUK Chung-hung was of the view that the computation for the daily allowance under the Special Scheme should be based on 20 days, instead of 26 days, in a month.

38. USLW advised that the Administration entrusted ERB to swiftly launch the Special Scheme in October 2019, to assist those recently unemployed, be required to take no pay leave or under-employed ("affected employees") to upgrade their skills for self-enhancement and re-enter the employment market as early as possible. Separately, the Government would soon further expand the scope of courses under the Continuing Education Fund ("CEF") to benefit persons of different age groups by greatly increasing their choices and flexibility of continuing learning, with a view to further equipping themselves and enhancing their work capabilities and potentials. In addition, affected employees might consider switching to other types of work for which manpower was still in great demand, such as the RCS and information technology sectors.

39. Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Manpower) advised that the Administration would take note of members' various views when working with ERB on the legislative amendment in relation to maximum amount of monthly allowance. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the legislative timetable, USLW said that it was expected that the relevant legislative amendment would take effect in around July 2020.

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40. The Chairman called on the Administration to consider expanding the scope of CEF subsidy to cover examination fees for professional qualifications. USLW responded that the benchmark test/examination fee would be reimbursable if it was an integral part of a CEF course and the overall course fee.

Employment services of the Labour Department

41. Referring to Report No. 72 of the Director of Audit published in April 2019 ("the Report"), Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned that LD's employment services for various groups of job seekers had been unsatisfactory and were plagued with different problems in recent years. These included decrease in the number of participants, and low retention rates and short retention periods for job placements under different employment programmes.

42. Mr SHIU Ka-chun pointed out that although some 900 district-based job fairs were organized in the past three years, the number of placements secured was three to five cases on average only for each job fair. He cast doubt about the effectiveness of these job fairs and considered that a review should be conducted in this regard.

Employment support for elderly job seekers

43. Noting that some 40% of the participants under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged ("EPM") (which was renamed Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged ("EPEM") on 1 September 2018) left employment during April to September 2017 after an employment period of six months, Mr Andrew WAN cast doubt about the effectiveness of the programme. Mr WAN asked whether LD had studied the reasons for such termination of employment and sought information on the retention rates of EPEM in 2018 and 2019.

44. USLW responded that an increase of 19% in placement was recorded under EPEM from September to December 2018 as compared with that in the corresponding period in 2017. Notably, the low unemployment rate in the past few years had triggered high staff turnover when various industries were scrambling for labour. To stabilize employment under EPEM, LD planned to launch a pilot scheme in 2020 to encourage the elderly aged 60 or above to undergo and complete on-the-job training ("OJT") under EPEM through the provision of a retention allowance. Similar arrangements would be made for young

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people and persons with disabilities to undergo and complete OJT under LD's employment programmes.

45. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry, AC for L (ES) said that during the 12 months following the increase in the OJT allowance payable to employers for engaging eligible job seekers on 1 September 2018, 3 029 placements within the ambit of EPEM were recorded, representing an increase of 25.7% over the preceding 12 months. There were 535 cases involving job seekers aged 60 or above which was a significant increase of 106.6% over the preceding 12 months.

46. Mr LUK Chung-hung noted with concern that while the average number of eligible placements for EPEM was 2 660 per year in the period from 2014 to 2018, the average number of eligible placements with preliminary applications submitted was only 565 in each year. AC for L (ES) responded that LD had actively invited employers of eligible placement cases to apply for the OJT allowance under EPEM. It was, however, noted that some employers did not apply for the OJT allowance due to various reasons, for instance, they chose to absorb the training costs by their own resources.

Employment support for young people

47. With respect to increasing the quota under "Career Kick-start" ("CKS") from 100 to 200 for each phase as one of the enhancement measures of the Youth Employment and Training Programme ("YETP") to assist young people in entering the labour market, Mr Andrew WAN queried whether such limited quota could meet the demand.

48. AC for L (ES) advised that CKS aimed to provide young people with special employment difficulties more opportunities to undergo 12-month OJT in non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") and receive support. In anticipation of the worsening of youth employment, LD would increase the quota under CKS from 100 to 200 for each phase and the subsidy payable to participating NGOs from \$8,300/month to \$9,000/month per trainee starting from the new phase in December 2019 so as to provide more resources for NGOs to nurture these young people.

49. Mr SHIU Ka-chun noted with concern from the Report that more than 50% of YETP's pre-employment training courses were cancelled in the programme years from 2015 to 2018 due to insufficient enrolment, and 40% of them were core courses. Moreover, in the programme years

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from 2013 to 2018, less than 50% of the YETP trainees had enrolled in OJT. Having regard to the relatively high unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24, Mr SHIU sought explanation for the decreasing number of trainees of YETP. Mr SHIU was also concerned about the utilization of the Youth Employment Start services in 2018 and the participation rate of the training activities so organized.

50. USLW and AC for L (ES) said that the drop in enrolment in YETP was attributed to the shrinking of the target group of participants i.e. there was a continuous decline in the number of young persons aged 15 to 24 in recent years. Despite the drop in enrolment, the proportion of the target group of young people joining YETP was maintained at around 30% in recent years. In addition, given the overall unemployment rate staying at a low level in recent years, there were more job opportunities and young people could secure employment on their own more easily. Increased education and training channels for secondary school leavers also affected the demand for YETP across the years. To tackle the high class cancellation rate, AC for L (ES) said that the training bodies had been given more flexibility in adjusting downwards the number of trainees required for commencement of classes so that more training classes could be held as scheduled.

51. Mr LUK Chung-hung held the view that the age limit of the target service group of YETP should be relaxed. AC for L (ES) advised that noting that young people with no working experience would encounter great difficulty in securing their first job, YETP was designed to provide tailor-made and comprehensive training and employment support services for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below. For other job seekers, LD had implemented the Work Trial Scheme, under which there was no age limit of participants, to enhance the employability of those who had difficulties in finding jobs.

[The Chairman directed that the meeting would be extended by 15 minutes.]

Employment support for ethnic minority job seekers

52. Mr Andrew WAN asked how the pilot programme to be launched in 2020 would help strengthen the existing employment support services for ethnic minority ("EM") job seekers.

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53. AC for L (ES) advised that at present, LD provided employment support services for EM job seekers through its own staff. To strengthen the employment support for EM job seekers, LD would launch a pilot programme in 2020 in conjunction with NGOs to provide one-stop employment services for EM job seekers through a case management approach so as to utilize NGOs' community network, expertise in case management and experiences in serving EMs. In providing support in job search, the commissioned NGOs would provide pre-employment counselling, job matching services and post-placement follow-up services for EMs and their employers. LD would invite tenders for provision of the relevant employment services.

Employment support for persons with disabilities

54. Referring to the Report, Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed grave concern about the low retention rates and short retention periods for job placements under the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme ("WOPS") for job seekers with disabilities from 2013 to 2017. Casting doubt about the effectiveness of WOPS, Dr CHEUNG said that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the scheme with a view to effectively making use of the resources.

55. USLW said that one of the reasons that contributed to the low retention rate of participants under WOPS was that some of the participants with high qualifications might feel their abilities had not been put to full use if they stayed in the same posts and so would try to switch to other jobs. As mentioned above, LD would introduce enhancement measures to encourage persons with disabilities to undergo and complete OJT under WOPS through the provision of a retention allowance, thereby stabilizing employment.

56. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:43 pm.