

For discussion
on 23 July 2024

Subcommittee to Study Population Policy and Initiatives

Government's Implementation of Population Policy

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the work of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government in implementing its population policy.

Background

2. Without rich natural resources, Hong Kong's success owes much to its manpower which provides impetus for the city's social and economic development. To promote the continued development of Hong Kong, we must vigorously nurture local talents and enhance the quality of our local workforce in order to build a rich talent pool. It is also imperative for Hong Kong, as a cosmopolitan city, to widely entice outside talents. In addition to economic development, our citizens also aspire for equal opportunities to develop and realise their full potential, and enjoy a liveable environment and a good quality of life.

Population Policy

3. The HKSAR Government has always attached importance to its population policy. A task force was set up as early as 2002 to deliberate on population policy formulation. It concluded that it was undesirable for Hong Kong to set targets for the population size and composition, and that sufficient flexibility should be built into the formulation and implementation of the population policy to respond to changing demographic conditions and market situations. The HKSAR Government subsequently reviewed the population policy in 2007 and 2012, and adjusted relevant policy initiatives or introduced

new initiatives in response to demographic changes and social situations. These initiatives covered education, cross-boundary elderly care, elderly services, appeal to outside talents, integration of new arrivals, medical services, etc.

4. The last population policy review was completed in early 2015. Subsequently, the HKSAR Government released a report titled “Population Policy - Strategies and Initiatives” (the Report) which outlined a variety of concrete initiatives as the action agenda (Annex 1). Since then, the Government’s work on the population policy has focused on taking forward and implementing the initiatives set out in the Report. All these initiatives have been fully implemented.

5. As sustained implementation is vital for the initiatives proposed in the Report to achieve results, the strategy of the current-term Government is to ensure their full implementation with monitoring of progress, review of effectiveness and timely adjustment. We continue to allocate resources to carry out the policy population initiatives announced in the Report, which have been subsumed under the portfolios of various bureaux as part of the ongoing policies. The relevant bureaux will from time to time review the implementation and effectiveness of the initiatives under their responsibilities, and make timely adjustments in the light of factors such as social and demographic changes. For example, in response to the pressing challenge of manpower shortage in different sectors arising from an ageing population and the post-epidemic decline in our workforce, the current-term Government has put forward decisive measures on manpower resources planning to proactively trawl for talents and enrich the local talent pool. These new measures have started to deliver results only months after their introduction in end-2023, with a marked increase in the numbers of talents applying for admission and successfully admitted to Hong Kong. In addition, the Government has launched sector-specific labour importation schemes in the residential care, construction and transport sectors, and proposed to enhance the Supplementary Labour Scheme for increasing the number of imported workers on an appropriate basis on the premise of ensuring the employment priority for local workers, thereby alleviating the manpower shortage in various sectors.

6. The population policy straddles a wide range of policy areas, including economic development, lands and planning, housing supply, education and training, labour and welfare, immigration policy, etc. As many bureaux are involved, inter-departmental steer and co-ordination are indispensable. At present, the population policy is followed up by the Human Resources Planning

Commission (HRPC). Established in April 2018, HRPC consolidates resources and efforts of the Government and various sectors to examine, review and holistically co-ordinate policies and measures on human resources, including issues pertaining to the population policy with a view to furthering the development of a high value-added and diversified economy in Hong Kong. The terms of reference of HRPC are at Annex 2. HRPC is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, with eight policy secretaries¹, the Government Economist, the Commissioner for Census and Statistics and the Chairmen of three major training and qualifications-related bodies as ex-officio members; and non-official members drawn from a diverse mix of experts and stakeholders from different fields and sectors.

7. Since its establishment, HRPC has looked into a number of issues to tackle our demographic challenges (such as nurturing local talents, manpower shortage, skills mismatch, and building up a talent pool). These cover areas such as the overall labour market and manpower situation in Hong Kong, analysis of the post-epidemic shrinkage in workforce, retraining services, education-related matters (such as the development of Hong Kong's self-financing post-secondary education sector, promotion of vocational and professional education and training, and enhancement measures on education and training), review of Hong Kong's talent attraction arrangements, strategies to address manpower shortage in individual industries (such as the maritime trade, the elderly care service sector, and the healthcare sector), youth entrepreneurship and employment in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, etc. During the deliberations of different issues, non-official members of HRPC had candid exchanges with representatives of relevant Government bureaux and departments (B/Ds). Their valuable advice on various issues facilitated B/Ds in formulating and refining their policies and measures. A press release on the topics discussed would be issued after each meeting to keep the public informed of HRPC's work. Furthermore, the Government would widely gauge public opinions through platforms such as the Legislative Council, relevant statutory bodies as well as other advisory boards and committees. Targeted measures would be devised to meet public aspirations and the development needs of Hong Kong.

¹The eight policy secretaries include Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development; Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs; Secretary for Education; Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury; Secretary for Health; Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry; Secretary for Labour and Welfare as well as Secretary for Security.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
July 2024**

Annex 1

The Report on “Population Policy - Strategies and Initiatives”

Population related policy measures and the relevant bureaux of the time

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
A. Adhering to a direction of sustainable development		
1	Updated the HK2030 Study published in 2007	Development Bureau
B. Extending working life		
2	In mid-2015, raised the retirement age for new recruits to the civilian grades to 65 and that for the disciplined services grades to 60, and formulated flexible measures for extending the service of serving civil servants	Civil Service Bureau
3	Encouraged other employers, in particular public and subvented organisations, to implement appropriate measures according to their own circumstances to extend the working life of their employees	All relevant bureaux
4	Proposed to suitably relax the upper age limit for Category B Security Personnel Permits	Security Bureau
5	The Education Bureau discussed with relevant educational bodies whether and if so how to extend to aided schools the revised policy on the extension of retirement age of new civil service recruits.	Education Bureau
C. Enhancing training and employment support for elderly people		
6	The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) focused on providing training for the elderly in the future and conducted a market research on elderly or retired persons and employers to understand elders’ views on continuing employment as well as employers’ opinions on hiring elderly or retired persons. ERB also explored suitable types of work for these people and launched training courses on a pilot basis.	Labour and Welfare Bureau
7	The Labour Department (LD) enhanced the employment support services for elderly job seekers and encouraged employers to build an elderly-friendly working environment through publicity.	Labour and Welfare Bureau
8	Continued to provide on-the-job training allowance of \$3,000 per month for employers for a period of three to six months	Labour and Welfare Bureau

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
	under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged; and extended the Programme to cover part-time jobs in the second half of 2015	
D. Helping women in fulfilling work and family commitments		
9	Provided in phases about 5 000 additional places of Extended Hours Service at aided child care centres and kindergartencum child care centres in districts with high demand from 2015-16 onwards so that more pre-primary children in need (aged below six) could continue to receive extended hours of service in the same service units being attended by them	Labour and Welfare Bureau
10	Provided about 100 additional aided long full-day child care places for children aged below three in 2017-18	Labour and Welfare Bureau
11	Invited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to establish work-based child care centres through the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses; and explored the feasibility of providing in the newly-built Government Complex in Tseung Kwan O, on a pilot basis, 100 NGO-operated child care places for staff members	Labour and Welfare Bureau
12	Provided resources for standalone child care centres and units providing Occasional Child Care Service and Extended Hours Service, so as to enhance supervisory and administrative support	Labour and Welfare Bureau
13	Commissioned a consultancy study in 2015-16 to advise on the long term development of child care services	Labour and Welfare Bureau
14	Launched a pilot project to help grandparents become well-trained child carers in a home setting	Labour and Welfare Bureau
15	Considered actively ways to encourage kindergartens to offer more whole-day services to support working parents and the feasibility of providing additional subsidies for families in need through the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education of the Education Bureau	Education Bureau
16	Made an annual provision of around \$240 million to support students in need in participating in after-school activities including after-school support on learning through schools and NGOs	Education Bureau
17	Provided a matching fund through the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage the business sector and	Labour and Welfare Bureau

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
	organisations to launch more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families	
18	ERB enhanced the training and employment services for women.	Labour and Welfare Bureau
19	Stepped up the promotion of family-friendly employment practices in the community through the Family Council. LD enhanced publicity and education efforts to encourage employers to adopt such practices.	Home Affairs Bureau (now Home and Youth Affairs Bureau) / Labour and Welfare Bureau
20	The Government set an example for other employers to follow by introducing more family-friendly employment practices (such as five-day week and five-day full-pay paternity leave for eligible employees).	Civil Service Bureau
E. Building an inclusive society		
21	ERB offered new courses and appropriate support services geared towards the needs of different social groups (new arrivals, ethnic minorities (EMs), etc.).	Labour and Welfare Bureau
22	Implemented a new scheme to provide subsidies for social enterprises and NGOs, offering a total of about 2 000 to 3 000 on-site training places for persons with disabilities and other groups in need, including the elderly and EMs; strengthened the support platforms for social enterprises and stepped up publicity and public education	Home Affairs Bureau (now Home and Youth Affairs Bureau)
23	Earmarked \$223 million for extending the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance for two years and engaged NGOs to provide employment assistance services for employable able-bodied recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance	Labour and Welfare Bureau
24	Organised inclusive job fairs and implemented a pilot project to engage EM trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme as Employment Services Ambassadors in the Job Centres and job fairs of LD	Labour and Welfare Bureau
25	Continued to implement appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities and EMs would have equal access, like other applicants, to job opportunities in the Government	Civil Service Bureau
26	Improved the employment opportunities of persons with	Labour and Welfare

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
	<p>disabilities through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhancing the follow-up service provided by LD for job seekers with disabilities after placement by extending the service period from three to six months; - exploring the implementation of a pilot project under the Lotteries Fund for trained ex-mentally ill persons to serve as peer supporters to provide support and encouragement for other persons in rehabilitation; and - continuing to promote the Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme to encourage more employers to provide internship and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities 	Bureau
F. Enhancing the quality of our home-grown talents		
27	Considered the report submitted in mid-2015 by the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education and the proposals therein for the promotion of vocational education	Education Bureau
28	Provided an additional 2 120 subsidised places to young people to pursue degree education	Education Bureau
29	Implemented a Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme so that students in need pursuing studies under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions might receive grant during their study period	Education Bureau
G. Attracting overseas talents		
30	Relaxed the stay arrangements under the General Employment Policy (GEP), the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, and the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS)	Security Bureau ²
31	Adjusted the General Points Test under QMAS	Security Bureau ²
32	Studied the feasibility of drawing up a talent list in the light of overseas practices	Labour and Welfare Bureau
33	Listed out clearly the factors for consideration when processing applications to enter Hong Kong for investment	Security Bureau ²

² Upon re-organisation of the Government structure in July 2022, the policy matters on the admission of talents and professionals under the purview of the Security Bureau have been transferred to the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
	under the GEP and suspended the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme	
34	Implemented a pilot scheme to attract the second generation of Chinese Hong Kong permanent residents who have emigrated overseas to return to Hong Kong	Security Bureau ²
35	Reviewed the implementation of the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates	Security Bureau ² and Education Bureau
36	Stepped up the promotion of admission schemes by the overseas Economic and Trade Offices and Mainland offices of the Government	Commerce and Economic Development Bureau/ Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
37	Continued to discuss with the Medical Council of Hong Kong to refine the arrangements for the licensing examination for medical practitioners, and considered increasing the number of publicly-funded degree places in medicine, dentistry and other health disciplines	Food and Health Bureau (now Health Bureau)
H. Importation of labour		
38	Established a Construction Industry Recruitment Centre to provide career counselling services, on-the-spot job interviews and job fairs for local construction workers	Development Bureau/ Labour and Welfare Bureau
39	Optimised the use and development of local workforce through training; and continued to organise large-scale, district-based and thematic job fairs regularly in collaboration with employers from different sectors and through the two recruitment centres specific for the retail and catering sectors	Labour and Welfare Bureau
40	Earmarked \$100 million to support the Construction Industry Council in introducing new training initiatives	Development Bureau
41	Launched further enhancement measures to the Supplementary Labour Scheme having regard to the unique characteristics of the construction industry, liaised closely with stakeholders in the construction industry and the labour sector on the arrangements and reviewed their effectiveness in a timely manner	Development Bureau/ Labour and Welfare Bureau
I. Providing better support for young people to start a family		
42	Reviewed the child allowance under salaries tax in 2015-16	Financial Services

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
		and the Treasury Bureau
43	Continued to encourage young married couples to live with or near their elderly parents through the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme	Transport and Housing Bureau ³
44	Studied ways to implement 15-year free education through the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education and submitted a report on its study to the Government	Education Bureau
45	Implemented the newly enacted legislation on paternity leave and reviewed the arrangement a year after its implementation	Labour and Welfare Bureau
46	Stepped up the effort to promote the family core values of “Love and Care”, “Respect and Responsibility” and “Communication and Harmony” as well as the positive messages and values on family formation through the Family Council	Home Affairs Bureau (now Home and Youth Affairs Bureau)
47	Considered enhancing collaboration among hospitals in various clusters through the Hospital Authority to improve the waiting time for assisted reproductive technology services	Food and Health Bureau (now Health Bureau)
48	Strengthened the promotion of breastfeeding and encouraged the provision of more breastfeeding facilities in the community through the Committee on Promotion of Breastfeeding under the Food and Health Bureau	Food and Health Bureau (now Health Bureau)
J. Active ageing		
49	Extended the \$2 public transport fare concession scheme to green minibuses	Labour and Welfare Bureau
50	Continued the support for elder academies in terms of finance, curriculum development, training for trainers and district network	Labour and Welfare Bureau
51	Merged the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project with the Opportunities for the Elderly Project in 2016	Labour and Welfare Bureau
52	Consolidated the experience gained in implementing the Guangdong Scheme to consider the feasibility of extending the Scheme to cover Old Age Living Allowance	Labour and Welfare Bureau
53	Took forward over 200 projects to install barrier-free facilities	Transport and

³ Upon re-organisation of the Government structure in July 2022, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) was split into two policy bureaux, namely the Transport and Logistics Bureau (TLB) and the Housing Bureau (HB). HB focuses on handling housing matters.

	Population related policy measures	Relevant bureaux of the time
	under the Universal Accessibility Programme; and installed 13 additional lifts in another eight estates in 2017	Housing Bureau ⁴

⁴ Upon re-organisation of the Government structure in July 2022, THB was split into two policy bureaux, namely TLB and HB. The Universal Accessibility Programme is under the purview of TLB.

Annex 2

Human Resources Planning Commission
Terms of Reference

1. To explore, devise and co-ordinate strategies and measures to enhance the quality, quantity and competencies of our workforce at various levels as a matter of priority to support and drive Hong Kong's diversified economic developments and meet rapidly changing social needs;
2. To monitor, review and examine the regimes of training and employment support and services to fully unleash the potential of the local workforce, admission of talents and manpower from outside Hong Kong and identify issues requiring action;
3. To follow up and refine the Government's overall population policy; and
4. To engage stakeholders and experts from outside the Government in furthering the work of the Commission.