

For discussion
on 18 October 2010

**Legislative Council
Panel on Public Service**

Policy Initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

The 2010/11 Policy Address and Agenda set out the Government's new and on-going initiatives. This paper elaborates on the initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB").

New Initiative

Strengthening national studies training

2. To keep pace with the development of closer ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") of CSB will strengthen national studies training for civil servants at various ranks. We aim to double the existing output on national studies training from 2011-12.

3. At present, national studies training take various forms, including training courses conducted by reputable institutions in the Mainland, thematic visits to the Mainland, local seminars, Mainland-Hong Kong civil service exchange programme, and a dedicated website on developments and information on the Mainland. A brief description of these activities is given below -

- (a) *Chinese Academy of Governance Programme*: This two-week programme has been organised since 1999 for directorate civil servants. It aims to deepen participants' understanding of the current policies and topical issues in the Mainland through lectures and talks by distinguished Mainland scholars and senior Central People's Government officials. As at June 2010, about 460 directorate civil servants have attended this programme;

- (b) *Tsinghua and Peking University Programmes*: The 17-day programmes have been organised since 1993 and 2004 respectively for senior civil servants (at point 45 of the Master Pay Scale (MPS) or equivalent and above). They provide participants with a comprehensive view of the political, social, economic, cultural and legal developments in the Mainland. As at June 2010, about 2 200 civil servants have attended the programmes;
- (c) *China Foreign Affairs University Programme*: The one-week programme has been organised since 2004 for senior civil servants whose work involve external affairs. As at June 2010, about 130 civil servants have attended the programme, including heads of our overseas Economic and Trade Offices;
- (d) *Sun Yat-sen University and Shenzhen Graduate School of Peking University Programmes*: These programmes have been organised since 2006 and 2007 respectively for middle-ranking civil servants (at MPS 34 to 44 or equivalent) to enable them to acquire a better understanding of the Mainland's systems and developments in the Pearl River Delta region. As at June 2010, around 950 civil servants have attended the programmes;
- (e) *Thematic Visits*: Familiarisation and theme-based visits are organised to selected Mainland provinces and cities. The themes of the more recent visits include "Economic Development in Guangxi" and "Planning and Development of the Coastal Regions of Jiangsu Province". As at June 2010, more than 1 160 civil servants have attended these programmes;
- (f) *Local Seminars on Subjects Related to National Studies*: We invite local and Mainland institutions to conduct seminars on the latest developments in the Mainland for civil servants from various ranks. Some recent examples are "Construction of High-speed Railways and its Contribution to Economic Development in the Mainland" by the Ministry of Railways and "60 Years of Economic Development in People's Republic of China" by the Vice President of Peking University. Since 2000, over 31 000 civil servants have attended these local seminars;
- (g) *Civil Service Exchange Programme*: Under the programme, civil servants of one side are attached to government departments of the other side for about four to eight weeks. So far, we have partnered with the authorities of Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Guangdong. Since 2002, about 230 Hong Kong and Mainland civil servants and

about 160 government entities and public organisations in Hong Kong and the Mainland have participated in the programme; and

- (h) *National Studies E-learning Portal*: We also promote civil servants' understanding of our nation and its developments through e-learning, publications and a variety of promotional activities. Established since 2002 and further enhanced in 2005, the e-learning portal provides topical articles on the Mainland, useful links and important speeches on key policies.

4. In the coming year, we will further strengthen national studies training for civil servants. For new recruits of degree or professional grades, we will incorporate a new module on national studies in their induction programme. For middle-ranking civil servants, we will increase the capacity of the national studies programmes at the Sun Yat-sen University and the Shenzhen Graduate School of Peking University. We will also organise for them thematic visits to the Mainland which are currently only offered to senior civil servants. For senior civil servants, we will work with the Chinese Academy of Governance to offer a new study-cum-visit programme for heads of departments and above. We also plan to organise more in-depth seminars on topical subjects for senior civil servants. Scholars, experts and officials from the Mainland and Hong Kong will be invited to be guest speakers. The current e-learning platform will be further enhanced with new on-line courses on national studies for civil servants at all levels.

5. In the long run, we will institutionalise the participation in national studies by making it part and parcel of the development plans for senior civil servants, in particular those at the directorate level. We will request departments to incorporate national studies as a key element in their annual training and development plans for different levels of staff.

On-going Initiatives

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

6. In keeping with the “big market – small government” and prudent management of public resources principles, we will continue to work with individual bureaux and departments to control the size of their establishment and

to enhance efficiency through measures such as internal deployment, streamlining, re-engineering, etc. At the same time, we will ensure that they have the necessary manpower to implement new policy initiatives and deliver services to the public. Since 2007-08, the civil service establishment has grown by around 1% each year. We estimate that the civil service establishment at end-March 2011 will stand at around 166 630, compared with around 164 500 at end-March 2010.

7. We are mindful of the need to inject new talents into the civil service and to forestall succession problem in the longer term. Open recruitment to fill vacancies in most civil service grades has been and will continue to be undertaken by heads of departments and heads of grades. In 2009-10, around 6 000 new recruits joined the civil service. For selected grades with existing/anticipated surplus staff or are in a state of obsolescence, or where new intakes generally come from in-service recruitment, open recruitment may be conducted with approval from CSB.

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

8. Aside from national studies training discussed in paragraphs 2 to 5 above, we are committed to providing civil servants at different ranks with training and development opportunities in order to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge. For example, various management training programmes are provided to civil servants at middle and senior levels. And training on job skills and personal effectiveness are provided to junior civil servants to enhance their capability to take on new job assignments with competence and confidence. We will continue with these efforts in the coming year.

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

10. We will continue to enhance the quality and variety of the e-learning resources available at the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (“CLC Plus”) website to

facilitate the pursuit of continuous learning among civil servants. There is now a collection of about 1 900 e-learning resources, which include web courses, articles, video clips, CSTDI library collection information, learning tips, e-books and publications, guidelines and best practices as well as course reference materials.

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

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

(d) Continuing with the development of an effective arrangement for implementing both upward and downward pay adjustments in future, as part and parcel of the improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism

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

13. The staff sides of the four central consultative councils are consulted on the annual salary revision, as well as any salary revision following the regular starting salaries and pay level surveys. Mechanisms have been established for the annual salary revision (namely through enactment of one-off legislation for downward pay adjustment and approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for upward pay adjustment) and any salary revision arising from the regular starting salaries survey (namely through approval of the

Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for both upward or downward pay adjustment). We are consulting with the staff sides on the adjustment mechanism to be adopted for any salary revision arising from the regular pay level survey.

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

14. In keeping with our policy to encourage meritorious performance at the individual level through proper recognition, we introduced in 2004 the “Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme”. A total of 72 civil servants from 33 bureaux/departments will receive commendations at a presentation ceremony to be held in November 2010.

15. To recognize meritorious performance at the department and team level, we introduced the biennial “Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme” since 1999. The Scheme aims to recognise departments and teams that are committed to continuous improvement and strive to provide high quality customer-oriented services to the public. Awards are granted at team, departmental and inter-departmental levels. The Scheme was last completed in September 2009 with a total of 50 nominations from 25 participating departments selected for award at the prize presentation ceremony. The best practices distilled have been widely publicised. The Scheme will be launched again in November 2010.

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

16. Arising from a judgment handed down by the Court of Final Appeal in March 2009 which ruled that explicit prohibition of legal representation for defaulters at disciplinary hearings conducted under the Police (Discipline) Regulations (Cap. 232A) was unconstitutional, null and void, we are working with the relevant Disciplined Services Departments, the Department of Justice and the relevant staff sides on the necessary amendments to the subsidiary

Regulations on discipline under the disciplined services legislation¹ (“DSL”) and other improvements to the disciplinary proceedings under the DSL. We will continue to keep the civil service disciplinary system under review to ensure that it meets the principles of natural justice and needs of present day circumstances.

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

Way Forward

18. We will continue to take forward the above initiatives in close consultation with departmental management and staff. We will seek Members’ views or keep Members informed as appropriate. We are committed to maintaining a civil service with high standards of integrity, efficiency and performance in order to contribute to the effective governance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Civil Service Bureau
October 2010

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

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