

No evidence talent abused schemes to give birth in Hong Kong: labour chief

Chris Sun urges people to treat newly arrived talent with respect, as they have gone through stringent vetting procedures

Hong Kong's labour chief has dismissed suggestions that newly arrived talent are exploiting admission schemes to give birth in the city, saying no evidence or data supports such claims.

He called on society to treat the professionals with respect, as they had gone through stringent vetting procedures.

"Based on the numbers of newborns in the past two years, as well as our exchanges with different organisations, we did not see such things happening," Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun Yuk-han told lawmakers on Wednesday, dismissing their concerns that some non-resident workers were exploiting admission schemes to give birth in the city.

"And based on our observation, talents who have not yet secured employment remain interested in long-term development in Hong Kong, and we have not discovered any cases of people using development in Hong Kong as a pretext while actually intending to give birth," Sun added.

Sun said that incoming workers made up only a small share of the population and therefore posed no strain on public resources.

Since 2022, more than 240,000 individuals have arrived in Hong Kong through various schemes.

Among them, more than 90,000 were from the Top Talent Pass, the latest admission scheme, which allows entry without securing any employment in advance.

Sun said that the Immigration Department has rigorous and effective checks to review each application under the schemes.

But he also said the government would continue to monitor the settlement trends of incoming talent, including the number of births among new arrivals, to enable better resource planning.

If any abuse of the talent admission schemes was discovered, the government would take appropriate action, he said.

Lawmaker Paul Tse Wai-chun questioned why Sun could be so certain there were no cases of misuse when there was no objective data available.

“The core concern appears to be whether the talent admission schemes might become the newest version of the ‘double non-permanent resident babies phenomenon’,” Tse said, referring to babies born in Hong Kong to parents who are both non-permanent residents.

Hong Kong faced an influx of mainland mothers-to-be between 2001 and 2012, who were accused of taking up resources for Hong Kong parents at the time.

Under Hong Kong law, babies born locally gain the automatic right of abode.

A ban in place since 2013 forbids pregnant mainland Chinese women without Hong Kong resident husbands from giving birth in public hospitals.

In response, Sun asked not to equate talent with “double non-permanent resident babies” cases, stressing that those accepted under every talent scheme met education and income requirements.

“They should be given full respect,” he said. “And we haven’t seen the rapid rise in birth rates that occurred during the ‘double non’ era.”

Advertisement

Based on broader macro data, these concerns haven’t materialised,” he added.

Lawmaker Simon Hoey Lee asked if authorities had mechanisms to prevent such situations.

He suggested establishing a system requiring incoming talents and their dependents to sign declarations confirming their intention to settle in Hong Kong when booking maternity services.

Sun responded that there are no plans to implement different restrictions or requirements for maternity booking services based on the ways people obtain Hong Kong resident status.