

SHA expresses deep sorrow over passing of Mr Kenneth To

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, today (March 19) was deeply saddened and expressed his sorrow over the passing of Hong Kong swimming athlete Mr Kenneth To. He extended his condolences to Mr To's family.

Mr Lau said, "Representing Hong Kong, Mr To had repeatedly achieved extraordinary results in multiple swimming events and was the holder of a number of Hong Kong records. His achievements were remarkable and Mr To's passing at such a young age is a great loss to Hong Kong sports. He will be remembered fondly."

Exchange Fund Bills Tender Results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills Tender Results

Tender date	: March 19, 2019
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q1912
Issue date	: March 20, 2019
Maturity date	: June 19, 2019
Amount applied	: HK\$92,550 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$43,128 MN
Average yield accepted	: 1.50 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 1.52 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 92 PCT
Average tender yield	: 1.56 PCT

Tender date	: March 19, 2019
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H1941
Issue date	: March 20, 2019
Maturity date	: September 18, 2019
Amount applied	: HK\$29,950 MN

Amount allotted : HK\$11,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.54 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.56 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 88 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.70 PCT

Tender date : March 19, 2019
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y1987
Issue date : March 20, 2019
Maturity date : March 18, 2020
Amount applied : HK\$25,581 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$1,300 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.54 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.55 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 3 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.60 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning March 25:

Tender date : March 26, 2019
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q1913
Issue date : March 27, 2019
Maturity date : June 26, 2019
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$43,056 MN

Tender date : March 26, 2019
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H1942
Issue date : March 27, 2019
Maturity date : September 25, 2019
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$11,000 MN

Additional office for Legal Advice Scheme for Unrepresented Litigants on Civil Procedures to commence operation tomorrow at Wanchai Tower

The additional office for the Legal Advice Scheme for Unrepresented Litigants on Civil Procedures (Procedural Advice Scheme), located at Wanchai Tower, will commence operation tomorrow (March 20).

The Procedural Advice Scheme provides free legal advice on civil procedural matters to unrepresented litigants who satisfy the income eligibility limit and have not engaged lawyers nor been granted legal aid, and are parties to civil legal proceedings (including commencement of proceedings) in the Lands Tribunal, Family Court, District Court or the courts above. Since its launch in 2013, the Scheme has conducted over 13 000 advice sessions for about 4 200 eligible litigants.

The additional office at Wanchai Tower can meet increasing service needs and provide more accessible service to litigants involved in District Court and Family Court cases. The current office at High Court Building will continue to provide service to litigants in need. The addresses and opening hours of the two offices are as follows:

Office	Address	Opening Hours
Wan Chai office	Room 437, 4/F, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai	Monday to Friday: 8.45am to 1pm and 2pm to 6pm
Admiralty office	Room LG217, LG 2/F, High Court Building, 38 Queensway, Hong Kong	Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays: Closed

All applications must be submitted in person at the Scheme Office. Also, applicants who are parties or wish to join as parties to civil proceedings must provide relevant and recent court documents.

For details, please call 2259 5017 or visit the dedicated webpage of the Procedural Advice Scheme at www.admwing.gov.hk/eng/public_service/paso.htm.

HA appeals for public understanding for surge in demand

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Latest statistics indicated that demand for public hospital services is still on the high side amid the current winter surge in public hospitals. The spokesperson for Hospital Authority (HA) today (19 March) appealed to members of the public for their understanding on the longer waiting time at the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments and the crowdedness in wards, and to co-operate with the hospitals for transfer or discharge arrangements.

The HA Chief Manager (Cluster Performance), Dr Ian Cheung said that although the seasonal influenza activity has steadily decreased according to the latest surveillance data by the Centre of Health Protection, the A&E attendances suddenly surged in the past two days. "The A&E attendances surged to 7 038 on Monday, a record high of this winter, alongside over 1 100 admissions to medical wards."

"As the occupancies of medical wards have already been saturated in various hospitals, some patients may need to wait in the A&E Departments for some time before admission. I appeal for patients and their family members' understanding while awaiting admission and being monitored by A&E staff. Meanwhile, the healthcare staff in the A&E Departments have to accord priority to treat patients with severe conditions and monitor patients waiting for admission. This has led to longer waiting time for semi-urgent and non-urgent patients. Non-urgent patients are advised to consider seeking consultation at general out-patient clinics or private doctors."

In addition, over 1,800 beds have already been added to cope with the demand surge and the medical wards in various hospitals are very crowded. Dr Cheung appealed for patients' co-operation with healthcare staff in transfer and discharge arrangements according to their clinical conditions, so that the wards can vacate the hospital beds for other patients in need.

Lastly, Dr Cheung would like to express his gratitude once again to all frontline staff for their commitment and dedication in taking care of the patients.

HA continues to release the key service statistics of the A&E Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Details are in the appended table.

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (March 19):

Reporter: Previously you said you hope our new MTR leaders can restore public confidence in the company, but public confidence was again shaken yesterday. Are you very disappointed about it, and is there anything the Government can do about the situation? And many business leaders have raised concern about the proposed changes to the extradition laws. Are you worried that Hong Kong's business environment will be undermined by it?

Chief Executive: First of all, on the performance of the Mass Transit Railway corporation (MTRC), I think to be fair, we have to acknowledge that the Mass Transit Railway corporation has been providing reliable and efficient service to Hong Kong people for almost four decades, and this is now a very huge railway network that will require a lot of attention and continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure its continued safety and efficient operation. Earlier on, as a result of the platform problem in the Hung Hom Station Extension of the Shatin-Central Link, I have already appointed an independent Commission of Inquiry (CoI), and as you remember I received an interim report from the Chairman of the CoI, and I hope to be able to release this interim report. Of course, the interim report does flag up issues of concern in project management. We will have to deal with this in a very robust manner in order to restore public confidence in the way that we build Hong Kong's railways, especially railways which are very sought-after by the Hong Kong community.

The incident that has happened yesterday, we have not had the results of the investigation, but apparently it was related to the testing. Fortunately, it was still the testing of the new signal system which has yet to be put in place. So, if problems did arise in the testing, then we still have this opportunity and time to rectify it before putting it in service. I have to say, and I want to reiterate, that public safety is of primary concern, so we will not rush to open the Shatin-Central Link or to put in place this new signal system until we are assured of the safety.

As far as how MTRC under its new leadership, i.e. the new Chairman and the new Chief Executive Officer, will do to restore public confidence and address the problems flagged up by the CoI as well as this investigation on the new signal system, the Government will perform its role in monitoring, regulating, but in a way also trying to work with them in concert, so that we can together help to sustain the good performance of the MTRC that has been serving the community so well over the past 40 years.

Second question about the proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance, the amendments are intended to pursue judicial justice in criminal cases and also to protect public, because if there are serious criminal crime offenders who have absconded and come to Hong Kong, they are a threat to public safety. So we have reviewed the existing legislation and acknowledged that there is a loophole, and the intention of these amendments is to plug the loophole. But you will ask me, with over 21 years after reunification, why now? It's because, one is – I have said this many times – we have been confronted with many problems since reunification and it is my governance style that we should try to find a solution to these problems. Sometimes the solution may be well received, sometimes it may create some anxiety and concerns, and that's why it is our job to explain why we are doing this. The second factor in the timing is because we have a case right in front of us which has caused a lot of public anxiety, a lot of anger, especially amongst the parents of the deceased. So we need to do this expeditiously in order to have the legal framework and the authority to deal with that particular case.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)