

## **Exempting toll for franchised buses using government tunnels, Tsing Ma and Tsing Sha Control Areas**

The Road Tunnels (Government) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulation 2018, the Tsing Ma Control Area (Tolls, Fees and Charges) (Amendment) Regulation 2018 and the Tsing Sha Control Area (Tolls, Fees and Charges) (Amendment) Regulation 2018 were gazetted today (November 30) to exempt the toll for franchised buses using government tunnels as well as the Tsing Ma and Tsing Sha Control Areas.

The three Amendment Regulations seek to implement the proposed toll exemption for franchised buses using tolled government tunnels as well as the Tsing Ma and Tsing Sha Control Areas, announced by the Chief Executive in her Policy Address 2018, with a view to relieving fare increase pressure of franchised bus operators and benefiting the general public.

A government spokesman said, "Each franchised bus operator will set up its own dedicated fund account for keeping the toll saved. When the franchised bus operator applies for a fare increase and the Chief Executive-in-Council considers that there is a justifiable need to increase the fare, the franchised bus operator will be required to offset the increase by first using the balance in the fund. Hence, the magnitude of the fare increase shouldered by the passengers will be lowered, and the public can enjoy a more affordable yet efficient franchised bus service."

The three pieces of Amendment Regulations will be tabled at the Legislative Council for negative vetting on December 5, 2018. Upon completion of the procedures, the Amendment Regulations will come into operation on February 17, 2019.

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## **"Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" for July to September 2018 published**

The "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" for July to September 2018 is now available for download.

The report contains statistics on labour force, employment, unemployment and underemployment for the third quarter of 2018. It also contains detailed analyses of the characteristics of different categories of members of the

labour force, including their age, sex, educational attainment, employment status, occupation, industry, hours worked per week and monthly employment earnings. Information on reasons for leaving last job and duration of unemployment for the unemployed is also presented.

Users can download the report free of charge from the website of the Census and Statistics Department ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001)).

The summary of broad survey findings published in the report is shown in Table 1 attached. Enquiries about the contents of the report can be directed to the Household Statistics Analysis Section, Census and Statistics Department (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: [ghs@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:ghs@censtatd.gov.hk)).

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## **SWD hotline supports members of the public affected by Tsing Yi traffic accident**

Concerning the serious traffic accident which happened in Tsing Yi this morning (November 30), members of the public who are emotionally affected or in need of any assistance may call the Social Welfare Department's 24-hour hotline ([2343 2255](tel:23432255)).

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## **Suspected case tests negative for MERS-CoV**

The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health today (November 30) reported that the suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) pending results yesterday (November 29), upon preliminary testing, tested negative for MERS Coronavirus.

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## Three illegal workers jailed

Three Pakistani illegal workers, each holding a recognisance form, were jailed at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday (November 29).

Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators received a referral from the Hong Kong Police Force to further investigate an illegal employment case in October. Enforcement officers arrested three male Pakistani illegal workers, aged 25 to 29, who were found conveying goods in Tuen Mun. Upon identity checking, they produced for inspection recognisance forms issued by the ImmD, which prohibit them from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that they were non-refoulement claimants. An employer suspected of employing the illegal workers was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

The three illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. They pleaded guilty to the charges and were each sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are

trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase, and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.