

CS calls on international organisations in Geneva (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung who is currently in Geneva, Switzerland, called on senior representatives of several international organisations to foster mutual understanding and keep them abreast of Hong Kong's latest development.

Today, (November 9, Geneva time), Mr Cheung called on the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Mr Guy Ryder, to brief him on Hong Kong's latest development in enhancing employees' benefits and support such as the proposals to abolish the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme, extend maternity leave period and strengthen protection for grassroot employees and employees injured at work.

Mr Cheung pointed out that the current-term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government was committed to enhancing employees' benefits. In the process, the Government will strike a balance between the interests of employers and employees. ILO is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognised labour rights.

On November 7 (Geneva time), Mr Cheung also met the Director of Member Services and Promotion Branch of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), Mr Graham Minton, and Head of the ISSA's Office of the Secretary General, Mr Jens Schremmer, to exchange views on setting up and managing an effective social security system.

He also outlined Hong Kong's support to the under-privileged, such as Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Higher Old Age Living Allowance and Working Family Allowance Scheme.

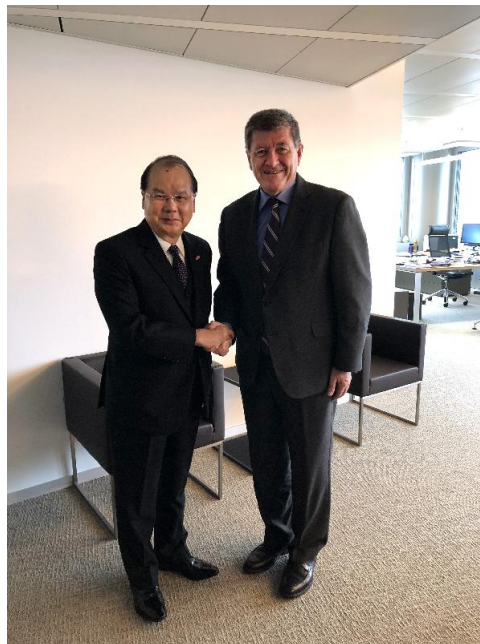
Mr Cheung pointed out that the HKSAR Government had all along been committed to improving people's livelihood and that social welfare expenditure rose 86 per cent over the past six years. He added that a range of initiatives had been announced in the Policy Address this year to support families and alleviate poverty.

Founded under the auspices of the ILO, the ISSA aims at promoting excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its members to develop dynamic social security systems and policies throughout the world.

Mr Cheung later called on the World Health Organization (WHO) and met its Assistant Director-General and Chef de Cabinet, Dr Bernhard Schwartländer. Mr Cheung stressed that the HKSAR Government would continue to maintain close liaison with the WHO in enhancing co-operation and exchanges on public health issues.

He pointed out that to meet the increasing demand for healthcare

services arising from an ageing population, the HKSAR Government had already planned ahead the necessary healthcare infrastructure and set aside a total of HK\$500 billion for these purposes. In tandem with the implementation of projects under the first 10-year hospital development plan, the Hospital Authority had been invited to commence planning for the second 10-year hospital development plan.



Transcript of remarks by STH and SCED on relevant issues of Hong Kong-

Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session on the relevant issues of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge this afternoon (November 9):

Reporter: On the booking service and also B5 line that you spoke about just now, are these already introduced earlier? And so what are the new steps going to be taken? How are you boosting these services? And do you have any estimate on how these measures can help divert the crowds in Tung Chung? And on Tung Chung, you mention earlier there are specific measures to reduce, to minimise the effect of queuing in the square? What exactly are the steps? And on Guangdong authorities, you have discussions with Guangdong authorities, aside from boosting advertisements and making it give orders asking local travel agencies to follow the law, are there any other steps taken by both sides of the governments to make sure that there won't be any illegal tours coming through the bridge?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: Let me first take the question regarding the B5 and B6 bus routes. The B5 bus route is basically going to the Sunny Bay whereby the passengers could transit over to the Mass Transit Railway. According to what we understand on Sunday last week, there were about 7 000 passengers going to the Sunny Bay. In respect of the bus route B6, there were roughly about 11 000 (passengers) going to Tung Chung, and roughly about 7 000 of them taking the Mass Transit (Railway) going to town. The remaining we would expect they were going over to the cable car (station), the southern Lantau and also Tai O. So, basically these passengers are having different routes to places staying around. For those who are taking the Mass Transit (Railway), they are basically taking a transfer. Therefore, if they know about the fare and the speed, then B5 would be a more preferred option to go to town.

As regard to the queuing arrangement at Tung Chung, we are making lines so that people could line up in an orderly manner. We will arrange more staff (from the operator) to help the passengers pay (the fare) and speed up the boarding because we will allow two buses to board at the same time. That would help shorten the queue and minimise the kind of impact upon the local community.

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I just said that soon after (learning) the alleged contravention of travel agents requirements in Hong Kong, we have got in touch with the provincial authority, which is the Department of Culture and Tourism (of Guangdong Province), conveying to them our concern. The provincial authority has informed us that they have issued instructions and guidelines to all the travel agencies operating such tours to Hong Kong, reminding them that there are rules and regulations concerning the conduct of tourist guides business in Hong Kong. We don't want them to contravene these laws. If tourist groups are coming in groups through the

assistance of travel agents, the preferred and recommended arrangements are that there are Hong Kong agents at the receiving end, as that would help to better organise and manage the groups, including with better planning of their sightseeing routes and transport arrangements on both coming in and returning to their home places.

The Travel Industry Council is also taking initiatives in contacting its Mainland counterparts to better dovetail their services, so as to ensure better services. All in all, the two governments and the travel businesses of both ends of the bridge are in contact and working together to ease the pressure in Hong Kong, particularly in Tung Chung. Thank you.

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

Logistics company and its director convicted for engaging in commercial practice involving misleading omission

A logistics company and its male director were each fined \$2,500 today (November 9) at West Kowloon Magistrates' Court for engaging in commercial practice involving misleading omission, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that a logistics company was suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices in the sale of removal services.

Investigation revealed that the company offered a set of unclear quotations and charged for extra items in the subsequent course of provision of service.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure services at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in relation to a consumer in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information and as a result causes, or is likely to cause, an average consumer to make a transactional decision that the consumer would not have made otherwise commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Meetings of Legislative Council and its Committees

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) and its Committees will hold 19 open meetings during the week from November 12 to 16 in the LegCo Complex. Details of the meetings are available in the meeting schedule attached.

The information in the meeting schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the "LegCo Calendar" on the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk) for the latest details of meetings.

Members of the public are welcome to observe open meetings of LegCo and its Committees. Interested individuals and groups are advised to make advance booking of seats by calling the LegCo Secretariat at 3919 3399 during office hours. Members of the public can also listen to or watch all open meetings via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website.

EMSD prosecutes lift contractor regarding Paris Court lift incident

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (November 9) brought prosecutions against Eugene Engineering Company Limited (EECL), its general manager and one maintenance manager, in connection with a lift incident that led to the death of a woman at Paris Court in Sheung Shui Town Centre in the New Territories in May. The EECL was the registered lift contractor responsible for maintenance works on the lift concerned.

The in-depth investigation by the EMSD revealed that the EECL and related personnel failed to carry out their statutory duties under the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance (Cap 618) (the Ordinance) and the Lifts and Escalators (General) Regulation (Cap 618A) (the Regulation). After seeking legal advice from the Department of Justice, the EMSD has decided to bring prosecutions against them with the following charges:

Eugene Engineering Company Limited:

(i) contravention of sections 16(1)(a) and 16(2) of the Ordinance, i.e. failing to ensure that the lift works were carried out properly; and

(ii) contravention of sections 4(1) and 4(4) of the Regulation, i.e. failing to notify in the specified form the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services of the subcontracting of the works not later than seven days before the first commencement day.

General Manager:

(i) contravention of sections 141(1), 16(1)(a) and 16(2) of the Ordinance, i.e. failing to ensure that the lift works were carried out properly, which was committed with the consent or connivance, or to be attributable to the neglect or omission on the part of General Manager of a registered lift contractor; and

(ii) contravention of section 141(1) of the Ordinance, and sections 4(1) and 4(4) of the Regulation, i.e. failing to notify in the specified form the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services of the subcontracting of the works not later than seven days before the first commencement day, which was committed with the consent or connivance, or to be attributable to the neglect or omission on the part of General Manager of a registered lift contractor.

Maintenance Manager:

– contravention of sections 141(1), 16(1)(a) and 16(2) of the Ordinance, i.e. failing to ensure that the lift works were carried out properly, which was committed with the consent or connivance, or to be attributable to the neglect or omission on the part of Maintenance Manager of a registered lift contractor.

Summonses have been served to the above defendants. The case will be heard in Fanling Magistrates' Courts on December 10.