

Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service to hold hearing to receive oral evidence from invited parties

The following is issued on behalf of the Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service:

The Independent Review Committee on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service will hold a hearing to receive oral evidence from nominated representatives of the New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited next Tuesday (June 19) from 10am to 5.30pm (with a break between 1pm and 2.30pm) at the Auditorium of the Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar. The Committee's rules of procedure for the receipt of oral evidence and notice to the public attending the hearing to receive oral evidence are available on the Committee's website (www.irc-bus.gov.hk/eng/press.html).

Having received and considered written submissions from various interested parties, and in order to obtain further information, the Committee is in the process of inviting specific interested parties to give oral evidence to the Committee through nominated representatives. Three hearings have been held so far to receive oral evidence from representatives of the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Transport Department and the New World First Bus Services Limited and Citybus Limited. A transcript of that evidence (and a translation in Chinese) is available on the Committee's website (www.irc-bus.gov.hk/eng/transcripts.html).

The Committee wishes to invite family members of the victims and passengers on board the bus involved in the fatal incident on Tai Po Road, and other recent serious incidents involving franchised bus services, to attend the hearing, and invites them to contact the Secretariat in advance of the hearing if they wish to attend. Except for seats reserved for such persons as well as the media and specifically identified interested parties, all available seats in the Auditorium of the Central Government Offices will be open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. A registration counter will open at 9.30am on June 19.

Enquiries regarding the hearings may be directed to the Secretariat of the Committee at 2867 5324.

Proposed guidelines for Rural Representative Election released for public consultation

The following is issued on behalf of the Electoral Affairs Commission:

The Electoral Affairs Commission today (June 12) released for public consultation the proposed guidelines on election-related activities in respect of the Rural Representative Election. The public consultation period will last for 30 days until July 11.

Speaking at a press conference today, the Commission Chairman, Mr Justice Barnabas Fung Wah, said, "The proposed guidelines were drawn up by the Commission for the rural ordinary election to be held in January next year and the rural by-elections to be held afterwards. They are prepared on the basis of the existing guidelines for the Rural Representative Election, with suitable alterations to reflect the amendments made to the relevant electoral legislation. The proposed guidelines also include elaboration on certain parts of the guidelines, with most of the amendments seeking to align the content with the other electoral guidelines."

A total of 1 484 Village Representatives, comprising 695 Resident Representatives and 789 Indigenous Inhabitant Representatives, will be returned for 709 villages in the next rural ordinary election. In addition, 39 and 17 Kaifong Representatives will be returned for the market towns (MTs) of Cheung Chau and Peng Chau respectively.

"One of the major amendments in the proposed guidelines is to set out clearly the residence requirement for registration as electors for existing villages (EVs) and MTs, and change in eligibility for registration upon change of the electors' principal residential address. An elector must be a resident of the village or MT for the three years immediately before applying to be registered. In addition, the elector must keep residing in the village or MT so registered. Otherwise, he/she is no longer eligible to remain registered as an elector. Even though his/her name is still on the valid final registers, the person concerned will commit an offence if he/she votes at the election," Mr Justice Fung said.

"In order to maintain the accuracy of the final registers, the electors should report to the Home Affairs Department any change of their principal residential address, especially for moving out of the EV or MT, in a timely manner in pursuance of their civic responsibilities," he said.

The proposed guidelines also specify the requirement to submit documentary evidence proving the principal residential address upon an application for change of that address by an elector for EVs or MTs. If the new principal residential address is within the boundary of the same village

or MT, the elector needs to submit address proof issued within the last three months. However, if the elector has moved to another EV or MT, he/she must submit documentary evidence proving that he/she has been a resident of that village or MT for at least three years immediately before making the application. The statutory deadline for electors to report on change of principal particulars has been advanced to June 16 in each year. The Electoral Registration Officer will also take checking measures as appropriate.

In addition, the proposed guidelines set out precisely the types of documents that an elector must produce, typically a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card, before a ballot paper can be issued to him/her.

In the proposed guidelines, candidates are reminded of the need of apportionment of expenses between election-related purposes and any other purposes. The deadlines for submitting the election return for all candidates in the same election have also been aligned. In addition, candidates are also reminded to adopt measures to safeguard the personal data of electors.

The proposed guidelines can be downloaded from the Commission's website (www.eac.gov.hk). They are also available at the Registration and Electoral Office and the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of District Offices.

Written representations can be sent to the Commission's Secretariat by post to 10/F, Harbour Centre, 25 Harbour Road, Wan Chai; by fax to 2511 1682; or by email to eacenv@reo.gov.hk before the deadline. Late submissions will not be considered.

A public forum will be held from 7pm to 8pm on June 21 at Lung Hang Estate Community Centre, Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin. Members of the public are invited to attend to express their views.

For enquiries, please call 2891 1001.

Property management company of Yuen Long Landmark convicted for illegal discharge of wastewater

Yuen Long Landmark at Castle Peak Road in Yuen Long discharged sub-standard wastewater and its property management company, Kai Shing Management Services Limited, was fined \$15,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (June 12) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO).

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) enforcement team carried

out a blitz inspection last December and found that turbid wastewater was being discharged from the grease trap of Yuen Long Landmark. The EPD officers then collected a wastewater sample for analysis and the result showed that the oil and grease in the wastewater exceeded the WPCO licence limit by nearly one fold. After evidence gathering, the EPD initiated prosecution against the licensee, Kai Shing Management Services Limited, in accordance with the WPCO.

An EPD spokesman reminded all wastewater discharge licensees, including property management companies, that they must properly repair and maintain wastewater treatment facilities and strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence to prevent environmental pollution. The spokesman said that when waste oil and grease are discharged to the sewers, they will accumulate inside the sewer pipes and lead to blockage of public sewers downstream, which can adversely affect the normal operation of the Government's sewage treatment plants.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater which exceeds the standard of the discharge licence into communal sewers commits an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Total number of reported drug abusers declined but drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still warrant attention

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) reviewed the local drug situation in the first quarter of 2018 at its quarterly meeting today (June 12). The total number of reported drug abusers declined compared to the same period in 2017. However, hidden drug abuse and drug abuse among young adults still call for attention.

According to the latest figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), the total number of reported drug abusers in the first quarter of 2018 decreased by 6 per cent (from 2,357 to 2,209) as compared to the same period last year, while the number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 decreased by 29 per cent (from 154 to 110).

The number of newly reported drug abusers decreased by 23 per cent (from 414 to 320). Over half (51 per cent) were young adults aged between 21 and 35.

The latest CRDA figures also revealed that the median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was 5.3 years in the first quarter of 2018, while the figure for 2017 was 4.3 years, indicating that hidden drug abuse remains a concern.

In the first quarter of 2018, the total number of reported narcotic analgesic abusers increased by 13 per cent (from 1,323 to 1,494) when compared to the same period in 2017. The vast majority were heroin abusers (1,493). The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (PSAs) declined by 28 per cent (from 1,307 to 946) when compared to the same period in 2017. Among the newly reported cases, the number of PSAs (at 267) was substantially higher than that of narcotic analgesic abusers (at 51), suggesting the continued prevalence of psychotropic substance abuse.

Methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused, with the number of reported abusers having dropped by 41 per cent (from 573 to 337) as compared to the same period in 2017. Other major types of psychotropic substances recording a lower number of reported abusers included triazolam/midazolam/zopiclone (from 283 to 251), cocaine (from 236 to 213), ketamine (from 250 to 110), cannabis (from 109 to 93), cough medicine (from 79 to 58) and nimetazepam (from 10 to seven).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Ben Cheung, said, "Despite the drop of the total number of reported drug abusers, over half of the newly reported drug abusers were young adults, indicating the need for continued attention to the drug abuse problem of this age group. As PSAs may not display obvious withdrawal symptoms, they may not be easily identified. Members of the public should therefore have an awareness of hidden drug abuse, and encourage those in need to seek help. Young persons should make wise choices, knowing how to say no to drugs and pursue a healthy lifestyle. Persons with drug problems can seek help through the 24-hour hotline 186 186 or the instant messaging service 98 186 186 of the Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau."

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Manda Chan, said, "With the summer holidays approaching, ACAN and the ND will step up anti-drug promotions, including the launch of new television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest on the harms of 'Ice' and cocaine abuse, and encouraging early help seeking. Advertisements will also be placed on public transportation networks, in entertainment venues, and on popular websites, mobile applications and social media platforms.

"Youngsters are encouraged to make good use of the summer holidays to participate in healthy activities. Don't take drugs out of curiosity or peer pressure. Don't be used by criminals to engage in drug trafficking. Drug trafficking is a serious offence with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million."

The CRDA figures for the first quarter of 2018 are available on the ND's website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/index.htm).

2018-19 civil service pay adjustment

The Civil Service Bureau announced today (June 12) that the Chief Executive-in-Council (CE-in-Council) has decided that civil service pay for 2018-19 should be adjusted as follows, taking retrospective effect from April 1 this year:

(a) a pay increase of 4.06 per cent for civil servants in the upper salary band and the directorate (equal to the net pay trend indicator (PTI) for the upper salary band), subject to the pay points referred to in (i) and (ii) below, the dollar values of which should be as specified:

(i) Master Pay Scale 34 at \$70,590; and

(ii) General Disciplined Services (Officer) Pay Scale (GDS(0)) 20 and Police Pay Scale (PPS) 36 at \$70,470, and GDS(0) 21 and PPS 37 at \$70,970; and

(b) a pay increase of 4.51 per cent for civil servants in the lower and middle salary bands (equal to the net PTI for the middle salary band).

In arriving at this decision, the CE-in-Council has thoroughly considered the staff side's response to the pay offers and all the relevant factors under the established annual civil service pay adjustment mechanism, including:

- * the net PTIs;
- * the state of Hong Kong's economy;
- * changes in the cost of living;
- * the Government's fiscal position;
- * the pay claims of the staff side; and
- * civil service morale.

The Government will submit the 2018-19 civil service pay adjustment proposal to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for consideration as soon as possible.