

Transcript of remarks of press conference on announcing calendar of mega events in Hong Kong (second half of 2024)

The Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong, the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, and the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Mr Dane Cheng, held a press conference today announcing the calendar of mega events in Hong Kong (second half of 2024). Following is the transcript of remarks:

Reporter: Can you recap in English how will the mega events in the second half of this year attract more visitors to visit Hong Kong compared to the first half of this year? And also will the Government consider inviting any sport star or famous singer to come to Hong Kong to visit despite Messi's no-show earlier this year? Also, Mr Yeung has been in the film festival in France, witnessing that our movie "Kowloon Walled City" has actually gained a lot of support from the foreigners. So how will the Government consider incorporating this film into the mega events?

Deputy Financial Secretary: I will take the first and third questions, and Kevin will take the second one.

With regard to events, if you look at the number of events taking place in the first half of this year, it is actually more or less similar to the number of events taking place in the second half. But in terms of scale, we noticed that some of the events in the second half have a much larger capacity in terms of attracting visitors. Therefore, we believe that the number of visitors coming to Hong Kong for those mega events will be more than those in the first half. But in terms of the spread of the different categories of events, the distribution in the first half and second half is more or less similar. So that's the first question.

The third question with regard to the set used in the movie "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In", discussions are taking place. The set has been dismantled, but it is still there. They have been keeping it in rather good conditions. Discussions are ongoing as to whether they can let us have some part of the set, and it will be put up for display at a suitable location in Hong Kong. Once those discussions conclude, we will let you know. The second question I will refer to Kevin.

Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism: It is always our intention to attract mega events, be it sports events or concerts or other entertainment, it is always our target to attract these mega events to come to Hong Kong, so as to provide entertainment for local residents as well as to attract tourists. In attracting these events, if there are some very famous sports

stars or singers, of course it will also raise the profile of these events and may also attract some of their fans to come along. No matter what happened in the past, it will not stop us from trying to bid for more events to come to Hong Kong.

For the football game in which Messi did not play, as we explained on many occasions, the organiser as well as the football player should come out to explain why he did not play. I do not believe that it is a very common phenomenon that some of the stars or players do not play when they have promised to appear in those games. We are still trying very hard to attract more events to come to Hong Kong.

Reporter: So far, how do you review the performance of mega events on retail sales, visitor arrivals and GDP etc? And also, actually what is the parameter of mega events? Because it seems now everything falls into this category, and how do you define it? And the last question is, do you have any KPIs for yourself?

Deputy Financial Secretary: In terms of numbers, I will repeat it in English. This year's mega events will attract about 1.7 million visitors. They will bring to Hong Kong, in terms of the amount of money they spend in Hong Kong, about HK\$7.2 billion, and value-added of about HK\$4.3 billion to the Hong Kong economy. Looking at the benefits from mega events, it is important that we do not just look at the figures. The figures are very positive. They show us that what we have been doing are worth our efforts. But I think for these mega events, they are also important to reflect Hong Kong's status as an international city.

In my first press conference (on promoting mega event economy in January this year), I said very clearly that one of the values of these events is that they attract people to come to Hong Kong so that they can see with their own eyes what has been happening in Hong Kong, how vibrant we are, how proactive we are, how friendly our people are, and how safe our streets are. Those values cannot be measured simply in monetary terms, and also these events make life in Hong Kong much more enjoyable. Do not forget that the mega events are not just for visitors. The mega events are there for our own people, for Hong Kong people as well, and if you look at the participation for most of the events, actually the majority of participants are Hong Kong people.

In terms of KPIs (key performance indicators), again I said in the first press conference that we are looking to have some KPIs regarding the number of mega events that will take place in Hong Kong in a certain time period. But if I just use the current figures, it will not be that fair, because those events have already been arranged. And I said that we are looking forward to having some concrete KPIs in 2025. So in a year's time, when we have more experience about the operation of our mega events, their arrangement and setup, we will have those KPIs.

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

Hong Kong resident employer and illegal worker jailed

A Hong Kong resident employer and a Pakistani illegal worker were jailed at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts today (May 21).

During an anti-illegal worker operation conducted by the Immigration Department (ImmD) on December 13 in 2023, one Pakistani male, aged 50, was arrested for working as an odd job worker in Tuen Mun. Upon identity checking, he was confirmed to be a holder of a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant. In addition, he was also suspected of using and in possession of a Hong Kong identity card relating to another person, and making false representation to Immigration officers. The Hong Kong resident employer of the illegal workers was also arrested. The employer was a Hong Kong resident, male, aged 48. He was also suspected of transferring an identity card to another person without reasonable excuse.

The illegal worker was charged at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts today with one count of taking employment while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force; one count of using and being in possession of a Hong Kong identity card relating to another person and one count of making false representation to Immigration officers. After trial, he was sentenced to a total of 26 months and 14 days' imprisonment. The Hong Kong resident employer was also charged at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts today with one count of being an employer of a person who was not lawfully employable as he did not take all practicable steps to ascertain whether the applicant was lawfully employable prior to employment and one count of transferring an identity card to another person without reasonable excuse. After trial, he was sentenced to a total of 24 months and 14 days' 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. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment. It was also an offence to transfer an identity card to another person. Offenders were liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty was a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for 10 years.

The ImmD spokesman also warned that, under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration Officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty will be a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years.

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.

Government to step up enforcement and support for buildings not complying with fire safety directions

A Government spokesman said today (May 21) that the Government continues to follow up on the fire incident at New Lucky House and the non-compliance issues with the Fire Safety Directions (Directions) revealed therein. Overall, the Government will provide active support to building owners who

are willing to comply with the Directions and will assist them to complete the fire safety improvement works as soon as possible. If owners ignore the Directions or make poor progress without reasonable excuse, the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Buildings Department (BD) will initiate procedures for instigating prosecution.

The Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) (the Ordinance) stipulates that composite and domestic buildings constructed on or before March 1, 1987, or with building plans first submitted to the BD for approval on or before that day, must be enhanced to meet modern fire protection requirements. The FSD and the BD are responsible for enforcing the Ordinance (Note), including issuing Directions to owners and/or occupiers specifying the fire safety improvement works required to be carried out. Directions issued by the FSD focus on fire service installations and equipment including a fire hydrant/hose reel system and a sprinkler system, while Directions issued by the BD focus on building construction including a fire-rated door and a fixed light of fire escape.

Although the buildings subject to the control of the Ordinance were constructed in accordance with applicable construction and fire safety standards prevailing at the time they were built, and these buildings may not be subject to imminent fire risks, the objective of the Ordinance is to enhance the fire safety standards of targeted old buildings, so as to provide better protection for residents and users.

The Government will step up its efforts to follow up to ensure owners and/or occupiers comply with the Directions as soon as possible. The Security Bureau (SB) and the FSD have joined the collaboration platform on building inspection and maintenance set up last year by the Development Bureau (DEVB). Other members include the DEVB, the BD, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). The collaboration platform has formulated strategies against the non-compliance of Directions. Major actions are set out below:

Stepping up prosecution

At present, there are about 9 000 buildings with expired Directions and which have not yet complied with Directions. Excluding some thousands of buildings which have applied for government subsidies as mentioned in the following paragraph, the two departments will prioritise handling of over 2 000 buildings without active progress from the remaining buildings that have not yet complied with the Directions. The prioritisation mainly takes into account factors such as those with a higher building age (e.g. the BD will focus on handling buildings aged 50 years or above), those without fire service installations and equipment, buildings with a single-staircase design, buildings with more guest houses or unauthorised subdivided flats, or with large scale illegal structures (e.g. unauthorised rooftop structures), etc. For these 2 000-plus buildings, the BD and the FSD, upon the issuance of warning letters or the expiry of the Directions respectively, will instigate prosecutions against owners of buildings lacking progress without reasonable excuse starting from the second quarter of this year. The two departments, together with the HAD, will offer assistance to owners as needed, such as

deploying staff to attend meetings of owners' corporations and explaining the requirements of the Ordinance, as well as proactively liaising with the project consultants or registered fire service installation contractors engaged by the owners to offer appropriate assistance and advice.

Strengthening support for subsidised buildings

Under the \$5.5 billion Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme funded by the Government and implemented by the URA, a total of about 3 000 applications have been issued with Approval-in-Principle Letters in the first two rounds. The URA is processing around 1 300 applications received in the third round that meet the basic requirements, and will start issuing Approval-in-Principle Letters to applicants starting from the end of this month. The URA will continue to support the subsidised buildings and strengthen monitoring of their fire safety improvement works progress, including urging building owners who have not yet appointed consultants to expedite the course of actions, tightening the applications for deadline extensions for those lacking progress without a reasonable excuse, and revoking the approval of subsidies for cases that fail to meet the progress requirements despite reminders.

Enhancing public education

The FSD and the BD will hold district briefings through the Central Platform on Building Management of the district offices regularly to explain the details of compliance with the Directions. The HAD will proactively invite the owners' corporations and owners who have not yet complied with the Directions to attend the briefings, with the FSD and the BD setting up dedicated counters to provide face-to-face advice and assistance to building owners. A briefing in Tsuen Wan District will be held this Thursday (May 23). Information on future district briefings is available on the HAD's website (www.buildingmt.gov.hk/en/Support_Services/2_22.html).

Government's continuous and multifaceted support

The Government will closely monitor the progress and effectiveness of the abovementioned actions, while keeping under review the strategies for follow-up work. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to adopt a multipronged approach to improve fire safety standards. The FSD Building Improvement Support Centre, established in December last year, provides one-stop support services to owners and occupiers of old buildings for complying with the requirements of the Ordinance. Targeted information and assistance are available for owners and occupiers from the receipt of the Directions to the completion of works and compliance with the Ordinance. Owners and occupiers may call 2272 9112 or visit the FSD Building Improvement Support Centre for enquiries about compliance with the Directions. Details are available on the FSD's website (www.hkfsd.gov.hk/eng/fire_protection/fs_bisc.html).

Expediting amendment of the Ordinance

In order to further enhance the fire safety standards of old buildings,

the SB is expediting the relevant work on amending the Ordinance to empower the FSD and the BD to carry out fire safety improvement works for owners who have failed to comply with the requirements of the Ordinance, and to recover the relevant fees from them upon completion of the defaulted works. The Government will step up its efforts in taking forward the relevant work and will strive to submit the proposed amendment bill to the Legislative Council for scrutiny in July.

The Government reminds private building owners to make repairs in a timely manner and properly maintain their building. It is the owner's responsibility to carry out necessary fire safety improvement works in accordance with the requirements under the Ordinance, so as to enhance the fire safety standards of the buildings.

Note: The FSD and the BD will each issue Directions to owners and/or occupiers according to the fire safety measures of the buildings regulated under the Ordinance, specifying the requirements on fire safety measures.

Civil Service College and Peking University's joint programme holds lecture on "Artificial General Intelligence: Frontiers, Trends, Paradigm, and Strategy" (with photos)

The Civil Service College (CSC), in collaboration with the Institute for Hong Kong and Macau Studies, Peking University, launched an in-depth programme on "one country, two systems" and contemporary China. As part of the programme, a lecture on the topic of "Artificial General Intelligence: Frontiers, Trends, Paradigm, and Strategy" was delivered by the Dean of the School of Intelligence Science and Technology of Peking University, Professor Zhu Songchun, at the CSC today (May 21).

Addressing the lecture, the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, said that the development of "new quality productive forces" will open up deeper and broader development space for Hong Kong. With its unique advantages of strong support of the motherland and close connections with the world under the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong integrates closely with the international community. Coupled with its high standards in scientific research, the city attracts a wealth of research and professional talent, contributing to the country's high-quality development. Civil servants of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government should embrace Hong Kong's role in developing "new quality productive forces", and

stay abreast of the innovation and technology development strategy of the country. They should also actively promote the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and complement the implementation of the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint, thereby enhancing Hong Kong's overall competitiveness and injecting impetus into its development.

Around 70 civil servants at the rank of Directorate Pay Scale Point 1 and 2 attended the programme. In addition, about 130 politically appointed officials and other directorate officers enrolled and sat in on the lecture via video conferencing.

The programme was organised to further strengthen training for senior officials and directorate civil servants. It consists of 12 monthly lectures covering a wide range of topics, such as the Communist Party of China and contemporary China, socialism with Chinese characteristics, the theory and practice of "one country, two systems", as well as developments in contemporary Chinese society, economy, national defence, technology, and more. Distinguished scholars from the Mainland will deliver the programme and engage in in-depth discussions with participants.



Appeal for information on missing man in Mong Kok (with photo)

Police today (May 21) appealed to the public for information on a man who went missing in Mong Kok.

Sze Kim-leung, aged 45, went missing after he was last seen at MTR Mong Kok Station on February 16 morning. His family made a report to Police yesterday (May 20).

He is about 1.7 metres tall, 70 kilograms in weight and of fat build. He has a round face with yellow complexion and short black hair. He was last seen wearing a pair of black-rimmed glasses.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing man or may have seen him is urged to contact the Regional Missing Persons Unit of Kowloon West on 3661 8038 or 9020 6542 or email to rmpu-kw@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.

