

Red flag hoisted at Stanley Main Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 8) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

LCQ2: Measures to promote the development of the tourism industry

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that a large number of members of the public travelled outside Hong Kong during the recent long Easter holidays, dealing a heavy blow to various sectors in Hong Kong. Moreover, the Financial Secretary has recently pointed out in his blog that while visitor arrivals exceeded 11 million in the first quarter of this year which provided support to the retail, catering and transportation sectors, changes in the consumption patterns of inbound visitors as well as some members of the public going north more frequently for spending have presented quite a number of challenges for the operations of small and medium enterprises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider organising in collaboration with trade associations of various sectors citywide consumption festivals to distribute discount coupons to members of the public meeting specified spending amount, or even directly hand out holiday consumption vouchers to encourage members of the public to stay and spend in Hong Kong;

(2) as it is learnt that members of the public and the business sector generally support raising the duty-free allowance of the Mainland visitors arriving in Hong Kong, whether the Government has put forward to the Central Government a specific timetable for such proposal; if it has not, of the reasons for that; and

(3) given that members of various sectors have suggested that the Government should spare no effort in striving for the Central Government's reinstatement of "multiple-entry" endorsements under the Individual Visit Endorsements for Shenzhen permanent residents visiting Hong Kong, extension of the period of stay for inbound visitors under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS), as well as inclusion of more second and third tier cities of the Mainland in IVS, so as to enhance the economic benefits of the series of mega events to be organised in Hong Kong and stimulate visitors' spending, whether the Government will consider such suggestions?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Shang Hailong, the reply is as follows:

(1) Riding on various mega events and activities in town, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) has been partnering with the trade to step up publicity and promotion, with a view to encouraging spending by locals and visitors and boosting consumption ambience. For instance, the HKTb extended the vibes of the "Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival" held in October to launch the "Taste Around Town" campaign in November last year in partnership with some 400 restaurants and bars to step up promotion on the wine and dine activities and catering offerings in various districts in town. From late last year to early this year, the HKTb also distributed 200 000 "Hong Kong Night Treats for Locals" dining vouchers, valued at HK\$100 each, to locals in support of the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" campaign to enhance the appeal of local businesses and sustain business opportunities for the dining sector. In addition, riding on the Labour Day Golden Week, the HKTb launched a dedicated "one-stop webpage for Golden Week offers and activities" to promote shopping, dining, attractions and hotel offers for visitors and locals with information on traffic arrangements, opening hours of major attractions, etc, to create a vivid ambience citywide to stimulate consumption in town.

While different government departments will join hands to promote economic development, the HKTb will continue to closely communicate and collaborate with the trade. The HKTb will disseminate information on spending deals, events and offers from merchants through its one-stop e-platform with a view to attracting visitors to explore the different spending experiences in town.

(2) and (3) Expanding visitor sources to attract more high value-added overnight visitors has all along been one of the key strategies for developing Hong Kong's tourism. Hong Kong's capacity to receive tourists has been enhanced following the completion and optimisation of various large-scale cross-boundary infrastructure, tourist facilities, hotels and public transportation networks in the past few years. The Government is confident in providing more tourists from different source markets with a variety of high-quality travel experiences.

The Government has been in close liaison with the relevant Mainland

authorities on the situation of Hong Kong and actively seeking policy initiatives to facilitate more high value-added Mainland visitors to experience Hong Kong's rich tourism resources in a more convenient and flexible way in a bid to promote the vibrant development of tourism-related industries.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government expressed sincere gratitude to the Central Government's support for expanding the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) to cover Xi'an and Qingdao, and thereby increasing the number of Mainland cities covered under IVS from 49 to 51 since March 6, 2024. In addition to leading the HKTB to visit Xi'an and Qingdao in mid-March to promote Hong Kong tourism, the HKTB has also immediately launched a series of publicity and promotional activities targeting the new visitor source markets. We will continue to work with the trade to link up and explore more high-quality travel itineraries and products and to improve service quality, with a view to providing visitors with a variety of high-quality travel experiences.

The Government will continue to maintain communication with the relevant Mainland authorities and strive for policy initiatives that are conducive to Hong Kong's tourism development, including raising tax free threshold for shopping and increasing IVS cities.

Bun Scrambling Final to be held on Cheung Chau next Wednesday

The Bun Scrambling Final is the finale of the 2024 Bun Carnival, and will be staged at the soccer pitch of Pak Tai Temple Playground on Cheung Chau on the night of May 15 (Wednesday). A total of 12 finalists will vie for the championships in the men's and women's divisions.

Trophies will be awarded to the champion, first runner-up and second runner-up in the men's division and the champion in the women's division. The "Full Pockets of Lucky Buns" award will continue to be presented this year to commend the participant who gathers the most buns.

An opening ceremony to launch the Bun Scrambling Final will be held at 11.30pm on Wednesday. The final competition will start at midnight according to tradition. An invitation relay will be held immediately after the individual competition. The organisers, together with the Islands District Office, the Hong Kong Police Force (Police), the Transport Department (TD) and related government departments will implement the following crowd management measures to maintain public order.

Four spectator zones will be set up on the competition night at the

soccer pitch of Pak Tai Temple Playground, Cheung Chau, which can accommodate about 1 650 people. The distribution of free admission tickets will start at 10pm. Members of the public can queue up at Pak She First Lane, next to Cheung Chau Fire Station, and along Ping Chong Road for admission tickets. Each person can obtain one ticket on a first-come, first-served basis while tickets last. Spectators who have got their tickets should follow instructions from the Police and staff of the organisers for admission, which is expected to start from 10.30pm. Spectators should enter Zone 1 to Zone 4 in sequence.

Notices will be put up at Central Pier No. 5 informing the public of the schedule and arrangements of the event. Notices and enquiry counters will also be set up at Cheung Chau Ferry Pier and at the entrance of Pak Tai Temple Playground, Cheung Chau, where staff will address public enquiries.

The organisers will monitor the weather conditions on the night. The Bun Scrambling Final may be cancelled in case of inclement weather, such as thunderstorms, to ensure public safety. As stipulated in the prospectus, awards would then be determined based on the results of the selection contest. Since the Bun Scrambling Final is traditionally held at a specified period during the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, no replay of the competition would be rescheduled in such circumstances.

The Police will conduct crowd-control measures, and appeal to members of the public to follow instructions of police officers and staff of the organisers, and be patient in crowded places.

The TD will closely monitor the passenger demand for public transport services, and will keep close contact with ferry and bus companies to make necessary and appropriate arrangements.

To cope with the passenger demand for leaving Cheung Chau after the event, Sun Ferry will operate a special sailing from Cheung Chau to Central at 1.15am on May 16.

The bus companies will operate a special bus route No. 104R from Central Pier No. 5 to Mong Kok from about 1.10am to 2.30am on May 16.

In addition, overnight bus routes including Citybus route Nos. N8X (to Siu Sai Wan) and N90 (to South Horizons), Cross-Harbour Tunnel route Nos. N182 (to Kwong Yuen), N619 (to Shun Lee) and Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB) route Nos. N373 (to Fanling), N368 (to Yuen Long West) will be diverted via Central Pier No. 5 from their first departures on May 16. The diversion arrangement will last until about 2am (for route No. N8X) and about 2.50am (for remaining routes aforementioned) on the same day.

Citybus overnight bus route Nos. N930 (departure at 1.35am to Tsuen Wan Discovery Park), N952 (departure at 1.25am to Tuen Mun Chi Lok Fa Yuen), N962 (departures at 1.15am and 1.45am to Tuen Mun Lung Mun Oasis) and KMB overnight bus route No. N960 (departure at 1.25am to Tuen Mun Kin Sang Estate) will also be diverted via Central Pier No. 5.

A temporary bus stop of the routes concerned will be designated outside Central Pier No. 5 for passengers' convenience.

To handle possible emergency rescue needs, St John Hospital would arrange corresponding manpower to respond to an emergency. The Government Flying Service will send a search and rescue team to provide assistance if necessary.

SITI to visit Beijing

The Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, will depart for a visit to Beijing this afternoon (May 8).

During his stay in Beijing, Professor Sun will call on the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the People's Government of Beijing Municipality.

Professor Sun will return to Hong Kong on May 10. During his absence, the Under Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Ms Lillian Cheong, will be the Acting Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry.

LCQ5: Compensating employees for online "invisible overtime"

Following is a question by the Hon Kingsley Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It is learnt that online working is increasingly common as a new mode of working, and many employees have even been asked to work during non-office hours (e.g. attending meetings and replying to emails/messages) using communication tools. On the other hand, the Supreme People's Court, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions jointly published typical cases involving disputes over non-payment of wages early this year. It has been reported that the Court ruled that the online work performed by the employee concerned during non-office hours was overtime work on the grounds that the employee had "performed substantial work" and that the work in question was "obvious

occupation of rest time", and exercised discretion in determining the overtime compensation for the employee's online "invisible overtime", taking into account factors such as the frequency and duration of the employee's overtime work, and the employee's wage standards and work contents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has conducted studies on (i) the adoption of online working as a new mode of working in various local trades and industries, and (ii) the form of compensation offered by employers to employees who perform online invisible overtime work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider improving the labour legislation to establish a definition for online invisible overtime and the criteria for calculating the relevant compensation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as many civil servants have relayed that they are often asked to perform online invisible overtime work during non-office hours without receiving any compensation, whether the Government will set an example as a good employer and take the lead in counting invisible overtime involving the performance of substantial work and obvious occupation of rest time as official overtime, and in granting time off in lieu or an overtime allowance to the civil servants concerned; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

All along, the Government has been reviewing the labour legislation from time to time to progressively improve employees' rights and benefits, taking into account the interests of employees and the affordability of employers. In consultation with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), our consolidated reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Employment Ordinance (EO) stipulates that an employer must, before an employment begins, inform the employee of the conditions of employment including wages, wage period and length of notice required to terminate the contract, etc. Pursuant to the Minimum Wage Ordinance (MWO), the hours worked for computing the minimum wage include the time when the employee is in attendance at a place of employment in accordance with the contract of employment or with the agreement or at the direction of the employer, and a place of employment means any place at which the employee is in attendance for the purpose of doing work or receiving training in accordance with the contract of employment or with the agreement or at the direction of the employer.

On the premise of not contravening the EO and MWO, employers and employees may draw up the terms and conditions of employment including working hours and compensation arrangements for overtime work.

The modes of operation of various industries and enterprises, the job

nature and responsibilities of employees as well as the terms set out in employment contracts and the like may bring about different requirements or agreements on employees' online work outside normal working hours. The Labour Department (LD) encourages employers to adopt good human resource management practices through different channels including the human resources managers' clubs and the industry-based tripartite committees. The good practices include advising employers to draw up reasonable and fair terms in employment contracts, and reminding them to fully consult and agree with their employees on working hours, compensation arrangements for overtime work, when working remotely using telecommunications equipment like internet and telephone.

The LD will continue to discuss relevant subjects at the human resources managers' clubs and the industry-based tripartite committees, and keep in view of the development and experience of other places in the handling of online work of employees outside normal working hours, and promote good employment practices to safeguard the rights and benefits of employees.

(3) The CSB expresses that according to the Civil Service Regulations, overtime work is work undertaken over and beyond a civil servant's conditioned hours. Under the prevailing policy, overtime work may be undertaken only when it is unavoidable and should be kept to the minimum. Overtime should normally be compensated by time off in lieu. Where this is, or is likely to be, impracticable within one month of the date on which overtime is worked, overtime allowance may be paid to eligible officers. The bureaux and departments will, within the confines of the prevailing policy, make appropriate arrangement and compensation for civil servants' overtime work.