

Government announces appointments to Travel Industry Authority

The Government announced today (December 6) that the Chief Executive has appointed Mr Ma Ho-fai as the Chairperson of the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) and 28 persons as ordinary members of the TIA for a period of two years with effect from January 1, 2020. The appointments were made in accordance with section 1 in Schedule 9 to the Travel Industry Ordinance (TIO) (Chapter 634).

The TIA is a new statutory regulatory body of the travel industry established under the TIO. It is primarily responsible for the licensing and regulation of travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts.

On the appointments, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said, "The TIA will take up a range of challenging tasks in establishing itself as a new regulator of the travel industry in Hong Kong. Mr Ma has rich experience in public service. We are confident that under his leadership, the TIA will work closely with different stakeholders in setting up a new robust regulatory regime for the travel industry.

"Apart from the Chairperson and the Vice-chairperson (the Commissioner for Tourism), there are 28 ordinary members, namely 13 trade members and 15 non-trade members, in the TIA. The trade members comprise individuals who are engaged in inbound and outbound travel agent business, tourist guides and tour escorts, and members of the Board of Directors of the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), enabling the TIA to have representation from a broad spectrum of the trade.

"For the non-trade members, they come from various fields and can provide valuable advice to the TIA with their expertise and experience in the respective areas, including law, accountancy, finance, education, consumer affairs and general administration, thereby contributing to the setting up of a comprehensive and effective regulatory regime for the travel industry."

The following is the membership list of the TIA:

Chairperson: Mr Ma Ho-fai

Vice-chairperson: Commissioner for Tourism

Ordinary members: Trade members

Ms Lanny Leung Kong-lan
Mr Paul Leung Yiu-lam
Mr Martin Ma Yuk-man
Dr Priscilla Poon Chau-min
Mr Jason Shum Jiu-sang

Ms Catherine So Ka-woon
Mrs Ann Tang Yu Li-hua
Mr Tse Yun-sang
Mr Jason Wong Chun-tat
Mr Wong Ka-ngai
Ms Gianna Wong Mei-kiu
Mr Michael Wu Siu-ieng
Mr Yiu Pak-leung

Non-trade members

Ms Dilys Chau Suet-fung
Ms Kerry Ching Kim-wai
Mr Alex Fan Hoi-kit
Professor Cathy Hsu Hui-chun
Mr Chris Ip Ngo-tung
Mr Victor Lam Hoi-cheung
Mr Kevin Lam Sze-cay
Mr Johnny Leung Ka-kui
Mr Fred Li Wah-ming
Ms Elaine Liu Yuk-ling
Dr Barry Mak Lui-ming
Mr James Tong Wai-pong
Mr Wilfred Wong Kam-pui
Mr Adrian Wong Koon-man
Mr Charles Yang Chuen-liang

The Government expects that it will take about two years for the TIA, upon establishment, to complete all necessary preparation before taking over the licensing and trade regulatory functions from the Travel Agents Registry and the TIC respectively for the full implementation of the new regulatory regime.

Seventeen persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" and "Contribute" on December 4 and yesterday (December 5). A total of 11 suspected illegal workers and six suspected employers were arrested.

During the operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 14 target locations including a hotel, an industrial building, a shopping plaza, restaurants, a vegetable stall, a commercial building under renovation and residential flats under renovation. The suspected illegal workers comprised

seven men and four women, aged 28 to 53. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. In addition, two men and two women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards or Hong Kong identity cards related to another person. Meanwhile, three men and three women, aged 29 to 55, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The 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. 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.

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 screenings 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 threats 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 intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Research Grants Council to present public lecture on Theme-based Research Scheme on December 14

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) will present its fourth public lecture this year on December 14 (Saturday) at the Hong Kong Science Museum. The theme of the public lecture is "Theme-based Research Scheme".

The RGC has invited Professor Ronald Ma of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Professor Leo Poon of the School of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong to share the research findings of their Theme-based Research Scheme projects with the public. Details are as follows:

Time: 2.30pm to 4.30pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Science Museum

Language: Cantonese

Admission is free and on a first-come, first-served basis.

Modern lifestyles and obesity have made diabetes one of the most serious public health problems in the 21st century. Diabetes now affects more than 10 per cent of the population in China. This disease increases the risk of damage to different organs in the body, including the heart, kidneys, eyes and blood vessels. The scale of the diabetes epidemic and the severity of complications pose a huge challenge to the healthcare system. Professor Ma, in his talk "Theme-based Research Scheme – Diabetes: a global epidemic in need of novel solutions", will share with participants the latest research findings to combat this healthcare crisis and the novel ways to enhance the effectiveness of treatment.

Seasonal influenza viruses and animal influenza viruses (e.g. H7N9) affect Hong Kong people's daily lives. Other than being at risk of catching seasonal influenza every year, people also have to be on constant alert for avian influenza and even pandemics. The secondary attack rates of seasonal and pandemic influenza viruses can reach 15 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. Professor Poon, in his talk "Theme-based Research Scheme – The most unwanted influence: influenza", will share with the audience the origins

and ways of transmission of these viruses, as well as effective control measures and new possibilities for preventing infection.

The public lectures of the RGC aim at arousing public interest in local research developments. Since 2009, the RGC has invited numerous leading scholars to speak at these lectures. For enquiries, please call 2524 3987 or visit the University Grants Committee webpage (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/lectures/lectures.html).

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session after attending the meeting of the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways today (December 6):

Reporter: Can you tell us the latest surrounding the situation regarding the airline and looking forward, is it necessary for the Government to possibly step up to help the airline or help passengers that may be affected?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As I have mentioned earlier that the Hong Kong Airlines has responsibility to take care of its passengers in its best endeavour. Therefore, should any passenger feel aggrieved or feel it necessary, they should contact the Hong Kong Airlines for follow up.

Reporter: And the latest situation regarding the licence?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: The Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) has received the response from the Hong Kong Airlines and is now reviewing the submitted information. The ATLA will look into it or is in the process of looking into it and will announce its decision on December 7 or earlier.

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

Tung Chung Swimming Pool to reopen

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 6) that Tung Chung Swimming Pool in Islands District, closed earlier due to urgent maintenance works for the filtration plant, will be reopened at 1pm today.