

SLW visits Labour Department (with photos)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, visited the Labour Department (LD) Headquarters this afternoon (September 6) to take a closer look at its work.

Accompanied by the Commissioner for Labour, Mr Carlson Chan, he first met with the directorate staff to get an update on the LD's work and challenges. He said that with colleagues' professional and proactive attitude, various policy initiatives on improving employees' welfare as well as occupational safety and health have been moving forward. He encouraged colleagues to maintain a good partnership with employee and employer stakeholders to respond to the new trends of the labour market.

Dr Law then proceeded to the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) Division and was updated on the work of the Division in overseeing the implementation of the SMW and providing secretariat support for the Minimum Wage Commission (MWC). In accordance with the Minimum Wage Ordinance, the MWC is conducting a new round of review on the SMW rate, and will submit a report on its recommendation to the Chief Executive in Council by end-October.

He also went to the Labour Inspection Division (LID) and was briefed on inspections of workplaces in various trades conducted by labour inspectors and investigations into cases of suspected breaches of labour laws for prosecution of law-infringing employers. In addition to district offices, three Special Enforcement Teams in the LID are tasked with monitoring government service contractors' compliance with relevant labour legislation and terms of the employment contract to safeguard the rights of non-skilled workers, conduct labour inspections relating to the Supplementary Labour Scheme to protect imported workers, and inspect construction sites.

He also visited the Occupational Health Service and was introduced to its daily work by occupational hygienists, including the use of different instruments to assess the hazards affecting employees' health in the workplace, such as detecting toxic gases, asbestos and thermal stress. He expressed concern about the safety of workers working in confined spaces, such as manholes, underground sewers and tunnels. He reminded persons in charge of construction works to carry out risk assessment in advance, while workers should take all safety precautions.

Noting that a number of fatal industrial accidents which occurred in recent years involved workers falling from height, Dr Law also visited the Safety Promotion Division to hear about the LD's stepped up education and publicity on safety for working at height.

