

MD announcement

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

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

The Marine Department today (February 21) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported. Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the VTC at Tel: 2233 7801.

Buildings Department highly concerned about collapse of scaffold at construction site in Kai Tak today

The Buildings Department (BD) was highly concerned about the incident involving the collapse of a scaffold at a construction site in Kai Tak this afternoon (February 20), causing the death of two workers and injuring three workers. The BD was saddened and expressed its deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and the injured.

A spokesman for the BD emphasised that it is the responsibility of contractors to ensure the structural safety and stability of bamboo scaffolds, including the design, erection, maintenance and dismantling of the scaffolds.

A preliminary investigation by the BD found that a scaffold of about 15m by 8m fell to the ground from the external wall on the 19th floor of a building under construction.

The BD will conduct a comprehensive investigation into the cause of the incident including whether the scaffold, as temporary works, complied with the Buildings Ordinance (BO), and whether the registered contractor and any related persons have properly discharged their responsibilities. If anyone is found in contravention of the BO, the BD will follow up seriously, including instigating prosecution and referring to the Contractors Disciplinary Board for disciplinary proceedings.

According to section 40(2B)(a) of the BO, any person directly concerned with any building works who carries out or has carried out, or authorizes or permits or has authorized or permitted such works to be carried out, in such manner that it causes injury to any person or damage to any property; shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine of \$1,000,000 and to imprisonment for 3 years.

The BD reminded again contractors and building professionals to properly supervise the carrying out of building works in accordance with the BO and its subsidiary regulations, and the Code of Practice for Site Supervision to ensure safety of the building and the public during construction works.

Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident that happened in Kai Tak today

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a fatal work accident that happened at a construction site in Kai Tak this afternoon (February 20), in which a bamboo scaffold mounted on the external wall of a building suddenly collapsed. As a result, two female workers died and three workers were injured. The LD is saddened by the deaths and injuries of the workers in the accident and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victims' families and the injured workers.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors concerned, suspending the erection, alteration, dismantling and use of bamboo scaffolds on the external walls of the building at the construction site. The contractors cannot resume the work process until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risks have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete the investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the relevant provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years on conviction on indictment; or \$3 million and imprisonment for six months on summary conviction.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and by email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, and reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.

HKSAR Government strongly condemns and opposes deliberate smearing and irresponsible statement by "Hong Kong Watch" and other organisations on Basic Law Article 23 legislation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (February 20) firmly opposed and strongly condemned a joint statement made by "Hong Kong Watch" and other organisations on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The joint statement smacks of deliberate smears and is no further from the truth. The HKSAR Government must refute and set the record straight."

"Regarding the measures concerning enforcement powers, procedural matters and arrangements on the serving of sentences of convicted persons as mentioned in the consultation document on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation, similar provisions are also present in legislation such as the National Security Act 2023 and the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 of the United Kingdom. It is fully justified for the HKSAR to put forward measures that could be considered, having regard to the relevant laws of foreign countries, as well as the shortcomings as revealed from experiences gained from handling cases concerning offence endangering national security. Those organisations completely disregarded relevant laws of the countries in which they are situated and made skewed remarks that the HKSAR Government's legislative proposals on the Basic Law Article 23 undermined human rights, exposing their sheer hypocrisy and double standards," the spokesman pointed out.

"Remarks on the offences relating to 'seditious intention' in the joint statement, which alleged that offences relating to 'seditious intention' would criminalise peaceful criticisms against the government, are clearly wrong and amounted to scaremongering. It intentionally ignored paragraph 4.8 of the consultation document, which proposed circumstances that do not constitute 'seditious intention'. Making reasonable and genuine criticisms of government policies based on objective facts, pointing out issues or offering views for improvement will not violate offences relating to sedition intention."

The joint statement also appeals to foreign chambers of commerce and international companies based in Hong Kong to re-evaluate risks, and even requests them to impose so-called "sanctions" on officials handling the Basic Law Article 23 legislation. It totally disrespects the constitutional duty of the HKSAR and blatantly tramples on the legislative process of the HKSAR. Such practice interferes through intimidation in the affairs of Hong Kong that are purely China's internal affairs. It not only violates the international law and basic norms that govern international relations, but also allegedly constitutes the offence of "collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security" under Article 29 of the National Security Law.

"What the joint statement advocates squarely reflects the ongoing national security threats which anti-China and destabilising forces pose. The HKSAR Government will complete the legislative exercise as early as possible to plug the relevant national security loopholes, and in the process, it will listen to the constructive suggestions from various sectors and give full and prudent consideration to the Basic Law, and the relevant provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong," the spokesman stressed.

[HKETO Jakarta celebrates Year of the Dragon in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Jakarta (HKETO Jakarta) hosted a Chinese New Year dinner in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, today (February 20) to welcome the Year of the Dragon. Some 350 guests from the local government, business, academic, cultural and media sectors attended.

In her welcoming speech, the Director-General of the HKETO Jakarta, Miss Libera Cheng, said the bilateral trade in goods between Hong Kong and Malaysia grew by 7 per cent year on year to reach US\$28.1 billion in 2022. In the same year, Hong Kong and Malaysia were each other's ninth largest trading partners, manifesting the close economic and trade ties in both directions.

"The Chief Executive led a high-level business and profession delegation to visit Malaysia in July last year. On top of the 11 memoranda of understanding and agreements signed with Malaysian entities, the Malaysian Government also announced an extension of the visa-free entry period for holders of the HKSAR passport to the country to 90 days, substantially strengthening Hong Kong's tourism, cultural and economic ties with Malaysia as a Belt and Road country."

"Malaysia has long been supportive of Hong Kong's accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and is set to assume chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year. Hong Kong will maintain close communication with Malaysia and other ASEAN member states to strive for joining RCEP as soon as possible, with a view to contributing to this largest free trade agreement in the world," she added.

Miss Cheng also pointed out that in line with the various measures announced under the latest Policy Address, the HKETO Jakarta will organise a variety of cultural and arts events across Malaysia and enhance bilateral exchanges in such areas as education and youth to further bolster people-to-people ties. In addition, the Information Services Department will stage the "Immersive Hong Kong" roving exhibition in Kuala Lumpur from March 3 to 10 to showcase the strengths and opportunities of Hong Kong as Asia world's city to the local community through fascinating art-tech installations.

Dignitaries joining the dinner included the Deputy Minister of Finance of Malaysia, Ms Lim Hui Ying; the Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia, Mr Ouyang Yujing; the Director of Malaysia of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Ms Hoh Jee Eng; and senior representatives from major business chambers in Malaysia.

To encourage Malaysian tourists to visit Hong Kong, the HKETO Jakarta collaborated with the Hong Kong Tourism Board to set up a thematic booth at the venue, and solicited the support of the Airport Authority Hong Kong and

airlines to give out round-trip air tickets between Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur through a lucky draw session.

The HKETO Jakarta will be hosting events in Kota Kinabalu and Penang, Malaysia, this Thursday (February 22) and next Tuesday (February 27) respectively to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

