

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 at the lobby of the West Wing of the Central Government Offices this afternoon (July 18):

Reporter: Why do the MTR and the Government think that there is no need to demolish any parts of the flawed Hung Hom Station and rather the MTR decided to just use strengthening works to amend the flaws? Secondly, can you explain why the Government decides to open sooner than planned the mentioned parts of the section of Shatin to Central Link? Why not include other remaining stations?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I must emphasise here that the acceptance of the reports by the Government is a very serious matter because the reports would have been agreed by our expert team who has tens of years of experience in structural and building works. Having scrutinised reports submitted by the MTRCL, the expert team had come to a conclusion that the facts, observation and judgement within the reports are actually valid, and there are scientific and factual justifications for that, so that's the reason why we accepted the reports in the first place. The second place is why we consider not necessary to demolish it rather than reinforce it, right? As I have just mentioned, the reports were compiled by the MTRCL with their independent professionals, their own professional staff, and also scrutinised by the Government expert team and also our Highways Department colleagues, therefore, the vetting and scrutinisation has been done very rigorously. If there is any need for anything to be done, it won't be left out in anyway. Therefore we are satisfied that by completion of these appropriate measures, we would be in a position to satisfy the necessary code of practice of the Buildings Department, as well as the contract requirements of the Shatin to Central Link project.

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

Fatal traffic accident in Pat Heung

Police are investigating a fatal traffic accident in Pat Heung today (July 18) in which a 65-year-old man died.

At about 2.20pm, a medium goods vehicle (MGV) driven by a 32-year-old man and a bus driven by the 65-year-old man were travelling in sequence along Tsing Long Highway towards Yuen Long. When reaching near Tai Lam Tunnel Bus Interchange, the two vehicles reportedly collided.

The 65-year-old bus driver was trapped inside the compartment, and was rescued by firemen. He was rushed to Pok Oi Hospital in unconscious state and was certified dead at 3.04pm. The 32-year-old MGV driver, six male bus passengers and six female bus passengers, aged between nine and 78, were injured. They were sent to Pok Oi Hospital and Tuen Mun Hospital for medical treatment in conscious state.

Investigation will be conducted by the Special Investigation Team of Traffic, New Territories North.

Anyone who witnessed the accident or has any information to offer is urged to contact the investigating officers on 3661 3819.

Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident that happened today

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about the work accident that happened at a construction site in Tai Po today (July 18), in which an excavator toppled during operation and pressed against the male operator. The excavator operator was seriously injured and was certified dead later in the hospital. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and has expressed its deepest sympathy to the victim's family.

A LD's spokesman said, "We commenced immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors suspending the use of excavators on the site. The contractors cannot resume the work process until LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risk have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete 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 Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, safe plant and safe systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and 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 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.

Immigration Department clarifies rumours on Internet

The Immigration Department (ImmD) is aware that there have been rumours on online discussion forums relating to alleged inadequacy of an arrangement on identity cards by ImmD recently. ImmD would like to reiterate that the arrangement aims to provide convenience for residents who have just been granted the right of abode. To avoid hassles for these residents in visiting ImmD offices again to apply for a permanent identity card after acquiring their right of abode through scheduled appointments, ImmD implemented this arrangement to allow them to apply for a permanent identity card at the Registration of Persons Offices immediately after acquiring the right of abode. ImmD would like to reiterate that such an arrangement would not affect the provision of normal identity card service to other residents. Furthermore, ImmD would like to clarify that it is absolutely untrue that a daily quota of 150 is reserved for One-way Permit holders and a daily quota of 150 is reserved for talents and professionals as mentioned in the forums, as there is no such arrangement.

Alert response level of Ebola

preparedness and response plan activated

The Government today (July 18) announced the activation of the Alert Response Level in accordance with the Preparedness and Response Plan for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) following the World Health Organization (WHO)'s declaration of the EVD outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The WHO yesterday (July 17) declared the EVD outbreak in the DRC as a PHEIC. Since the start of the EVD outbreak in the DRC in August last year, there have been 2 522 confirmed or probable cases including 1 698 deaths (as of July 16). At least 136 cases affected health workers including 40 deaths. The intensity of the epidemiological situation is fluctuating, with about 80 new cases reported weekly. A confirmed case of EVD was reported in Goma of the DRC on July 14. Goma is a city of 2 million inhabitants close to the Rwandan border. According to the WHO, the risk remains very high at national and regional levels but still low at the global level.

"In view of the PHEIC declared and current epidemiological situation, the Alert Response Level, the lowest level under its three-tier EVD Plan, is activated by the Government. We will issue letters to doctors and hospitals to inform them of the latest situation, and will also closely monitor overseas developments and the WHO's recommendations," a spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said.

The EVD Plan sets out the Government's preparedness and response plan in case of an outbreak of EVD. A three-tier response level is adopted in the plan. Three response levels, namely Alert, Serious and Emergency, are based on the risk assessment of the EVD that may affect Hong Kong and its health impact on the community.

"Viral haemorrhagic fever (including EVD) has been a notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong since July 2008. Suspected or confirmed cases of EVD must be promptly reported to the CHP for investigation, control and surveillance. Locally, there has been no confirmed EVD case to date," the spokesman said.

Prevention and control measures against EVD have been put in place locally, including:

- Temperature screening for inbound travellers has been in place at all boundary control points. Suspected cases of EVD will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for the Ebola virus;
- Strengthened surveillance of patients with EVD symptoms who have a travel history to the DRC within 21 days before onset; and

- Publicity and health education on EVD will be strengthened at all boundary control points.

There is currently no registered vaccine for EVD in Hong Kong. The public should avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas, and observe good personal and environmental hygiene during travel:

- Always use liquid soap or alcohol-based hand rub to clean hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth;
- Avoid close contact with feverish or sick patients, and contact with blood or body fluids of patients, including items which may have come into contact with patients' blood or body fluids;
- Avoid contact with animals; and
- Cook food thoroughly before consumption.

The EVD Plan and more information on the disease are available on the CHP's EVD page (www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/34199.html). The public can also visit the page of CHP's Travel Health Service (www.travelhealth.gov.hk/english/outbreaknews/outbreaknews.html) for relevant travel health advice.