

Hospital Authority response statement on meeting with Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

In response to media enquiries on the meeting with representatives of the Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff (AHKNS) this morning, the spokesperson for the Hospital Authority (HA) made the following reply today (March 14):

The HA has all along been very concerned about the heavy workload that front-line nurses are facing. The HA met with representatives of the AHKNS this morning and explained the measures taken to relieve the workload of front-line nurses. The measures include recruiting more nurses apart from the existing establishment, increasing promotion posting, significantly increasing the training places for sponsored enrolled nurses to undertake registered nurses conversion programmes, employing more part-time nurses in the short term and offering an additional incremental salary point for nurses who have attained the requirements as specialty nurses.

In the year 2018-19, the HA has already recruited over 2 400 nurses, exceeding the original target of 2 230. In addition, the recruitment target of the next year, which is set to be 2 270, is expected to be exceeded. The HA will continue to recruit full-time nurses after replenishing wastage and manpower for new services. Additional manpower will hopefully relieve front-line workload.

Furthermore, the HA will increase promotion posts to retain staff in the year 2019-20. To enhance senior coverage at night, 350 posts of Advance Practice Nurse will be added. Ten positions for Nurse Consultants will also be added. With regard to clerical support, 200 additional ward clerks will be recruited to enhance clerical support and coverage. The HA will continue to employ part-time nurses to alleviate the work pressure of front-line nurses in the interim.

With additional funding support from the Government, the HA will offer an additional incremental salary point to registered nurses who have attained the requirements as specialty nurses to encourage professional development of nursing care, with details to be announced soon.

Regarding the proposal raised by the AHKNS on a salary review of nursing staff such as the enrolled nurse salary and on resumption of a previous pay scale, the HA will cautiously study the impact of the proposal with the Government, in particular the financial feasibility. In addition, the HA will significantly increase the training places by 50 per cent for sponsored enrolled nurses to undertake registered nurses conversion programmes.

Given the diverse views with regard to shift arrangements for nurses, the HA will continue to liaise with them to arrive at a consensus.

The HA expresses gratitude to the AHKNS for its suggestions raised at the meeting and will maintain close communication with nursing staff groups.

Secretary for Food and Health reviews Fire Services passing-out parade (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, reviewed the 185th Fire Services passing-out parade for 25 station officers, 61 firemen and 44 ambulancemen at the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy today (March 14).

Speaking at the Parade, Professor Chan commended the Fire Services Department (FSD) for continuously striving for excellence, improving the efficiency and quality of service, and receiving great support from the public. The FSD introduced a new system for provision of post-dispatch advice (PDA) in October last year, providing immediate assistance to emergency ambulance service callers. After dispatching personnel, the Fire Services Communications Centre provides callers with appropriate advice with the aid of a computer system prior to the arrival of ambulance crews, so that the callers can handle patients according to the PDA and help stabilise their conditions.

Professor Chan added that, in addition to carrying out disaster relief work, the FSD continues to increase its efforts to promote disaster prevention and enhance public awareness of emergency preparedness. The FSD also encourages the public to get prepared so as to strengthen their response capability in the event of emergencies or contingencies, through publicity work and public education.

Professor Chan also presented the Best Recruit awards at the parade and watched a demonstration of firefighting and rescue techniques by the graduates.

The 130 graduates will be posted to various fire stations and ambulance depots.



Opening-up investigation in second stage of holistic assessment strategy for Hung Hom Station Extension under Shatin to Central Link Project

â€‹The Government received a proposal on March 8 from the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) for the enhanced Phased Array Ultrasonic Test (PAUT). After discussions with the Government, the MTRCL submitted the final proposal on March 13. The Government accepted the proposal today (March 14), and the opening-up investigation in the second stage of the holistic assessment strategy for Hung Hom Station Extension under Shatin to Central Link (SCL) Project continues.

According to the holistic assessment strategy of the MTRCL regarding the platform slabs and diaphragm walls of the Hung Hom Station Extension under the SCL Project accepted by the Government on December 5, 2018, the MTRCL proceeded to commence the relevant work on December 10, 2018. The purposes of opening up the concrete are:

1. Physical investigations will be carried out at locations with gaps in the construction documentation, so as to verify the as-constructed condition of the connections between the platform slabs and diaphragm walls; and
2. In view of the allegations on the cutting-short of steel bars, the MTRCL needs to open up certain connections between the platform slabs and diaphragm walls for detailed inspection, and to conduct non-destructive tests (PAUT) to determine the embedded length of the threaded steel bar inside the coupler.

The opening up works of the holistic assessment strategy stage 2 started on December 10, 2018 and are still in progress. A large deviation was observed between the embedded length measured using PAUT up to January 29, 2019, as well as the direct measurement after cutting the rebar with the coupler connected. The Government immediately requested the MTRCL to investigate the root causes of such a deviation.

The MTRCL and its technical team have conducted a detailed investigation of the incident, and carried out an in-depth study and enhanced the PAUT in order to improve its accuracy and reliability. The MTRCL also conducted validation on the enhanced PAUT. During the investigation and validation process, the Expert Adviser Team of the Transport and Housing Bureau, the expert team from the University of Hong Kong, the Highways Department and the Buildings Department provided comments to the MTRCL.

The enhanced PAUT has been repeatedly trialed and validated in laboratories and on-site by the MTRCL. The results of validation reveal that, compared with the enhanced PAUT results, all the direct measurements of the embedded length of the threaded steel bar inside the coupler fall within the 3 millimetres' allowable tolerance of PAUT results. In view of the above results, the Government accepted the proposal from the MTRCL to continue with the use of the non-destructive test in the stage 2 investigation with a view to minimising damage to the structure.

The Government acknowledged that the MTRCL would resume testing on March 15 using the enhanced PAUT on the exposed (including previously tested and yet-to-be-tested) couplers. The Government will continue to closely monitor the investigation works. The on-site test results will be verified by the laboratory the next day, and the verified test results will be announced in a timely manner on the Highways Department's website for the SCL project for public reference (www.hyd.gov.hk/en/road_and_railway/railway_projects/scl/index.html).

Cancellation of LegCo subcommittee

meeting

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The first meeting of the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Three Proposed Resolutions under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282), the Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma (Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 360) and the Occupational Deafness (Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 469) originally scheduled for tomorrow (March 15) at 8.30am has been cancelled.

CHP investigates influenza A outbreak at primary school in Wan Chai

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (March 14) investigating an influenza A outbreak at a primary school in Wan Chai, and again reminded the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene against influenza.

The outbreak involves 23 boys aged 6 to 11 who have developed fever, cough and sore throat since February 20. All of them sought medical attention but none required hospitalisation. All patients are in a stable condition. The respiratory specimen of one student tested positive for influenza A upon laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and advised the school to adopt necessary infection control measures against respiratory tract infections. The school has been placed under medical surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that students with fever, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should seek medical advice and avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Schools should also measure and record students' body temperature properly."

Schools are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"The latest surveillance data showed that the local influenza activity has continued to decrease from the peak level in January but remained above the baseline threshold. We urge the community to continue heightening its vigilance against seasonal influenza. As young children are particularly

affected in this influenza season, we appeal to parents who have not yet arranged vaccination for their children in this season to do so as soon as possible to strengthen their personal protection," the spokesman said.

Apart from children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are also urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. Medical advice should be sought promptly if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).