

Update on latest MERS situation in United Arab Emirates

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 29) closely monitoring one additional case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the United Arab Emirates, and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit.

According to the WHO, the patient is a 78-year-old man with underlying illness residing in United Arab Emirates. He tested positive for MERS Coronavirus on May 14, who is now hospitalised and in a stable condition. The patient owns a camel farm and had daily contact with camels before onset. He also reported recent travel history to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Investigations into the source of infection are ongoing.

According to the latest information, 2 207 cases have been reported to the WHO (with at least 787 deaths).

"We will maintain close communication with the WHO and relevant health authorities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus," the spokesman said.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS page of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the WHO's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

Executive Council gives consent to increase tramway fares

The Chief Executive in Council today (May 29) has given consent to Hong

Kong Tramways Limited (HKT) to alter fares, in accordance with section 51 of the Tramway Ordinance (Cap. 107). The revised rates of fares (see table below) will come into force one month after publication in the Gazette (i.e. July 2, 2018).

	Existing fare	Revised fare (Change)
Person aged 12 or above	\$2.30	\$2.60 (+\$0.30)
Child (aged 3 to 11)	\$1.20	\$1.30 (+\$0.10)
Monthly ticket	\$200.00	\$220.00 (+\$20.00)

In addition, the fare for the elderly (aged 65 or above) will increase from \$1.10 to \$1.20. The fare for a tourist ticket will remain at \$34.

A Government spokesman said that the Government should ensure that HKT would have sound financial capability in providing economical, efficient and quality tram services at reasonable fares. In this connection, when assessing HKT's fare increase application, the Government has, in accordance with the established policy and mechanism, taken into account various factors, including the quality and quantity of service provided and the planned improvement projects of HKT; the changes in operating costs and revenue since HKT's last fare adjustment; HKT's forecasts of future costs, revenue, profit and return; and the likely public acceptability.

HKT submitted a fare increase application to the Transport Department in August 2017. The Government has consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Transport and the Transport Advisory Committee on HKT's fare increase proposal.

HKT has not adjusted its fares for the past seven years. Since the last fare adjustment in June 2011, given the competition from other public transport modes, its patronage has been decreasing and the fare revenue has also correspondingly dropped. The potential to further increase non-fare box revenue is rather limited. Although HKT made profits between 2011 and 2017, its profit after tax has been decreasing since 2014. HKT's profit after tax in 2016 and 2017 was \$37.6 million and about \$22.9 million respectively (the profit margin was 14.7 per cent and about 9 per cent respectively). Nevertheless, HKT has planned to invest about \$110 million in the next few years for implementing a series of service improvement projects which would enable the public to enjoy quality, efficient, cheap and environmentally friendly services. Without a fare increase, HKT estimated that its profit margin would drop to below 2.6 per cent from 2018 and beyond.

"HKT has been providing satisfactory services for many years. HKT has strived to enhance tram services in terms of safety, service level, passenger comfort and operational efficiency through implementing various improvement measures, and will continue to take forward a series of new projects in the

next few years to maintain the competitiveness and sustainability of tram service. The 12.6 per cent weighted average fare increase proposed by HKT is lower than the changes in the Composite Consumer Price Index and Median Monthly Household Income since HKT's last fare increase (21.5 per cent and 39.3 per cent respectively). Having regard to all relevant factors, the Government considered it necessary to increase tram fares, and that the increase level proposed by HKT is acceptable," the Government spokesman said.

Given that tram fares only have a tiny 0.01 per cent weighting in the Composite Consumer Price Index, the inflationary impact of the proposed fare increase is expected to be insignificant.

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 public hearing of the Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee today (May 29):

Reporter: What do you think of the MTR Chairman Frederick Ma's earlier comments that there is no need for the MTR to reveal more details about the construction of the XRL? What do you think of his comments? Do you think it is appropriate? And secondly, are you confident that the MTR Corporation can successfully roll out the XRL in September as scheduled, given the serious hiccups that have been found recently?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As far as I understand, so far the MTRC (MTR Corporation Limited) and the Government have been embracing openness and transparency as far as the incidents are concerned, particularly when the community and the media are interested and expressed a kind of worry. Therefore I would expect both the MTRC and the Government team will continue to embrace openness and transparency, so that the community and friends from the media are comfortable and confident about the opening of the XRL (the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link) in the future.

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

Hong Kong Monetary Authority Exchange

Fund Bills tender results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Hong Kong Monetary Authority Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: May 29, 2018
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q1822
Issue date	: May 30, 2018
Maturity date	: August 29, 2018
Amount applied	: HK\$91,426 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$43,142 MN
Average yield accepted	: 1.16 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 1.18 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 99 PCT
Average tender yield	: 1.23 PCT

Tender date	: May 29, 2018
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H1851
Issue date	: May 30, 2018
Maturity date	: November 28, 2018
Amount applied	: HK\$42,019 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$15,000 MN
Average yield accepted	: 1.46 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 1.50 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 73 PCT
Average tender yield	: 1.54 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning June 4, 2018 :

Tender date	: June 5, 2018
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q1823
Issue date	: June 6, 2018
Maturity date	: September 5, 2018
Tenor	: 91 Days

Amount on offer : HK\$48,632 MN

Tender date : June 5, 2018

Paper on offer : EF Bills

Issue number : H1852

Issue date : June 6, 2018

Maturity date : December 5, 2018

Tenor : 182 Days

Amount on offer : HK\$15,000 MN

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (May 29):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, does the report say that the Government is intending to, well, have an all-graduate teaching force in primary and secondary schools? So, does the Government have any timetable, and when is that going to happen? And if there is any rapid changes, would that affect the schools' management in some way or another? And the second question is about express rail. How would you assess the company's performance so far, in terms of transparency and do you think it's satisfactory that Mr Ma said something like that?

Chief Executive: On the XRL, I hope the public will appreciate that this is a major piece of infrastructure and in the course of commissioning there is a lot of preparatory work and testing work to be done, and so colleagues in the MTR Corporation are under extreme pressure to achieve that objective, and I want to assure you that we will work very closely, we means the Transport and Housing Bureau and also the two relevant departments – the Highways Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department. They will work very closely with the railway corporation to provide the needed information, the results of any investigation and to ensure that people have confidence in the operation of this railway.

About the all-graduate teacher objective, I understand that this is a long-standing aspiration of the teachers in Hong Kong. As you are aware, I attach a lot of importance to quality education in Hong Kong. At a recent public occasion, I said that the one single impression I had during my election campaign in interacting with the teachers is we should value Hong Kong's teachers more. So if our teachers have this common aspiration that they should be turned into graduate teacher positions, I would certainly

accord importance to addressing this aspiration. But for the time being, this matter, together with other issues, relating to the professional development of teachers, is being considered by a task force set up after we came to office on July 1. So I will await recommendations from this task force, but I can assure you that we are very determined to improve quality education in Hong Kong, and we have set aside a recurrent expenditure provision of \$3.4 billion every year, so we would have that capacity to meet the needed improvements in the education sector.

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