

# Labour Department highly concerned about yesterday's fatal work accident

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a fatal work accident that happened at a construction site in Kai Tak yesterday afternoon (July 23), in which a male worker was working on the top of a mechanical device. The ground on which the device located suddenly subsided. He fell together with the device into the subsided ground and was certified dead later in the hospital. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victim's family.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and will issue suspension notices to the contractors concerned, suspending all construction works on the site. The contractors cannot resume the works 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 Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, 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 yesterday'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, reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent the 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 properly use personal protective

equipment provided to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.

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## **Service arrangement for Independent Checking Unit and Appeal Panel (Housing)**

To tie in with the Government's announcement that special work arrangements for government employees to provide emergency and essential services will be extended until August 2, a spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau said today (July 24) that the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) under the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) will continue to provide drop-in boxes to receive building control applications related to building plan submissions under the Buildings Ordinance and the specified forms and supporting documents required to be submitted under the Minor Works Control System, the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme and the Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme. Applicants can place their submissions in the drop-in boxes located at 8/F, Lung Cheung Office Block, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon, from 10am to 4pm during the period from Monday to Friday. The ICU will issue receipts/acknowledgements of the submissions in due course. Members of the public, when entering Lung Cheung Office Block and offices of ICU, shall wear masks at all times and comply with the infection control measures including temperature checks and crowd control arrangements.

For emergency reports and general enquiries, people may call 1823 or inform the ICU by email, fax or post:

Email: [icuebt@hd.gov.hk](mailto:icuebt@hd.gov.hk)

Mailing address: 8/F, Lung Cheung Office Block, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon

Fax: 3162 0069

Furthermore, appeal hearings on the termination of tenancy agreements scheduled from July 27 to July 30 will be rescheduled. The Secretariat of the Appeal Panel (Housing) will inform the parties concerned separately.

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## **Latest arrangements on Labour**

## Department public services

In light of the extension of the special work arrangement for government employees, the Labour Department (LD) today (July 24) announced that the LD will continue to provide emergency services and essential public services between July 27 and August 1.

All counter services of the department will be suspended. Two Occupational Health Clinics and Occupational Medicine Units will be closed. Those who have made service appointments will be individually informed of the alternative arrangements.

The LD encourages members of the public to make use of the department's online services and to file enquiries and requests for service by email at [enquiry@labour.gov.hk](mailto:enquiry@labour.gov.hk).

Job seekers can use the Interactive Employment Service Website ([www.jobs.gov.hk](http://www.jobs.gov.hk)) for job search purposes. The LD's Telephone Employment Service Centre, all Job Centres and industry-based Recruitment Centres also provide enquiry and employment services by telephone (telephone numbers are shown on [www.jobs.gov.hk/1/0/WebForm/information/en/our\\_service/info\\_jobcentres.aspx](http://www.jobs.gov.hk/1/0/WebForm/information/en/our_service/info_jobcentres.aspx)) during office hours from Monday to Friday (9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5.30pm).

Applicants for issue of licence or renewal of licence of employment agency may submit their applications to the office of the Employment Agencies Administration by post (Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon) or email ([ea-ee@labour.gov.hk](mailto:ea-ee@labour.gov.hk)).

For enquiries on employment rights and benefits, members of the public may make reference to "A Concise Guide to the Employment Ordinance" on the LD's website ([www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/ConciseGuide.htm](http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/ConciseGuide.htm)).

Due to the special work arrangement, the processing time of various enquiries and applications may take longer than usual.

The LD will review the situation in due course and make further announcements as appropriate.

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## Exchange Fund Position at end-June 2020

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (July 24) published the unaudited financial position of the Exchange Fund at end-June 2020.

The Exchange Fund recorded an investment income of HK\$101.4 billion in the second quarter of 2020, which largely offset the investment loss of HK\$112.0 billion in the first quarter. For the first half as a whole, the Exchange Fund recorded an investment loss of HK\$10.6 billion, which has not yet included the performance of the Long-Term Growth Portfolio (LTGP) for the second quarter. The main components were:

- gains on bonds of HK\$74.7 billion;
- losses on Hong Kong equities of HK\$19.6 billion;
- losses on other equities of HK\$15.4 billion;
- negative currency translation effect of HK\$24.4 billion on non-Hong Kong dollar assets (Note 1); and
- losses on other investments of HK\$25.9 billion (Note 2).

Fees on placements by the Fiscal Reserves and placements by HKSAR government funds and statutory bodies were HK\$18.6 billion (Note 3) and HK\$5.8 billion respectively in the first half of 2020, with the rate of fee payment at 3.7 per cent for 2020. After deducting all expenses and fees, the Accumulated Surplus of the Exchange Fund recorded a decrease of HK\$15.1 billion (Annexes 1 and 2).

Total assets of the Exchange Fund stood at HK\$4,195.3 billion at end-June 2020, a decrease of HK\$11.4 billion from the end of 2019.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "The outbreak of COVID-19 caused wild swings in financial markets in the first half of the year. Global equity markets experienced sharp corrections in the first quarter. The S&P 500 Index, for example, lost 30% within a short span of one month. With the easing of the COVID-19 situation in some places in the second quarter, coupled with monetary and fiscal stimulus measures introduced globally, major equity markets have rebounded significantly, though still below the levels at the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, bond prices went up as major central banks substantially cut their benchmark interest rates and re-launched quantitative easing programmes. This enabled the bond portfolio of the Exchange Fund to achieve a decent return. Overall, traditional asset classes including equities and bonds, which account for the bulk of the Exchange Fund's assets, managed to recoup the investment loss made in the first quarter."

He added, "Looking ahead, the investment environment in the second half of the year remains challenging. While many governments have begun to relax their anti-epidemic measures, the global economy is still very fragile, and the timing and speed of recovery remain highly uncertain. Geopolitical developments and the risk of resurgence of COVID-19 also add to uncertainties surrounding the markets.

This is an extraordinary time for the global economy, including Hong Kong. Against such backdrop, we will strive to preserve defensiveness and

liquidity when managing the Exchange Fund's investments, so as to enhance resilience against any market volatility while ensuring sufficient liquidity to maintain Hong Kong's monetary and financial stability."

Note 1: This is primarily the effect of translating foreign currency assets into Hong Kong dollar after deducting the portion for currency hedging.

Note 2: This is the valuation change of the LTGP held by investment holding subsidiaries of the Exchange Fund. This figure represents valuation changes up to the end of March 2020. Valuations of these investments from April to June are not yet available.

Note 3: This does not include the 2020 fee payment to the Future Fund because such amount will only be disclosed when the composite rate for 2020 is available.

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## **Post-office appointment for former politically appointed official Miss Pauline Yeung**

The Advisory Committee on Post-office Employment for Former Chief Executives and Politically Appointed Officials has advised on the proposed employment of Miss Pauline Yeung, former Political Assistant to the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, after her departure from the Government on May 26, 2020.

The Advisory Committee considers that, subject to the observance of certain restrictions it has advised, Miss Yeung's proposed employment would not give rise to any potential conflict of interest. The Advisory Committee also does not anticipate adverse public perception to arise from the proposed employment.

The Advisory Committee considers and advises on the post-office employment or appointments for former politically appointed officials. In considering each case, the Advisory Committee has regard to the information provided by the former politically appointed official concerned, the assessments by relevant government bureaux or offices, and the criteria for advice as stipulated in the guidance notes on post-office employment for politically appointed officials.

Details of the above-mentioned case are available at the Advisory Committee's website ([www.ceo.gov.hk/poo/eng/index.htm](http://www.ceo.gov.hk/poo/eng/index.htm)).

The membership of the Advisory Committee is as follows:

Professor Liu Pak-wai (Chairman)

Ms Susanna Chiu Lai-kuen

Mr Simon Ip Sik-on

Mrs Margaret Leung Ko May-yee

Mr Thomas Brian Stevenson