

Employment Support Scheme receives nearly 430 000 applications

A Government spokesman said today (June 15) that at the close of applications for the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) last night (June 14), the Government had received a total of 428 659 applications, including 168 799 applications from employers and 259 860 applications from self-employed persons (SEPs).

The spokesman said, "The public at large have responded well to the ESS. Employers are generally of the view that the scheme meets their needs. The application process through the online portal has been simple and smooth and the information required has not been burdensome. It is believed that the wage subsidy can help employers and employees get through hard times and the policy objective of safeguarding employment is being achieved.

"We have disbursed a total of around \$4.8 billion to the first batch of 25 500 employers, which is estimated to benefit more than 200 000 employees. Ninety-eight per cent of the employers receiving wage subsidies are micro or small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 50 employees. All employers receiving wage subsidies have undertaken not to make redundancies during the subsidy period (i.e. June to August) when submitting applications and to spend all the wage subsidies on paying wages to the employees."

In addition, the first batch of 24 000 SEP applicants have received a one-off lump sum subsidy of \$7,500 each into their assigned bank accounts. The total sum of the subsidy involved is about \$180 million.

The Government is expeditiously processing the remaining applications, striving to start disbursing the second batch of wage subsidies and one-off subsidies within this week. Details will be announced later.

The ESS Secretariat has notified successful applicants of the results of their applications via SMS and email in batches and arranged to deposit the wage subsidies into the applicants' assigned bank accounts. Applicants can log in to the ESS portal to check the amount of subsidy granted and the committed head count for the months of June to August 2020.

The spokesman reminded that the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) information (including the MPF scheme name or the MPF scheme registration or participation number) submitted by some applicants is not consistent with the relevant records as maintained by the MPF trustees. The ESS Secretariat or the processing agent has sent emails to these applicants to follow up. The relevant applicants should respond to the emails before the specified deadline, so that the ESS Secretariat or the processing agent can further process and approve the relevant applications.

"In addition, quite a number of individual applicants who have applied

for the one-off lump-sum subsidy of \$7,500 are in fact not eligible. Under the ESS, the applicant must have enrolled himself or herself in an MPF Scheme as an SEP and the relevant SEP MPF account should have been set up on or before March 31, 2020 (i.e. it cannot be backdated to that date or any earlier date), and had not been terminated as of March 31, 2020. Applicants who have set up MPF accounts as an employee (including employees who have ceased employment) are not eligible to apply for the one-off subsidy for SEPs," the spokesman said.

"The Government will review the experience and arrangement of the first tranche of the ESS and will later announce details of the second tranche of the ESS, with payment to be made in September this year for paying the wages of September to November 2020," the spokesman said.

Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

A 38-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for 14 days by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (June 15) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at home for 14 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he left the place of quarantine without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer and was stopped by staff of the Immigration Department at Shenzhen Bay Control Point on March 7. He was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for 14 days.

A spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and that the Government will not tolerate such actions. The spokesman reiterated that compliance with quarantine orders is of paramount importance in Hong Kong's fight against COVID-19.

Pursuant to the Regulation, save for exempted persons, all persons who have stayed in the Mainland, Macao or Taiwan in the 14 days preceding their arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of their nationality or travel documents, will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Moreover, pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), starting from March 19, all persons arriving from countries or territories outside China are also subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for

six months. The DH solemnly reminds persons under quarantine to comply with the statutory requirements and conduct quarantine for 14 days.

CHP investigates three additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (June 15), the CHP was investigating three additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 1 113 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 1 112 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve two females and a male aged between 10 and 47. All of them had a travel history during the incubation period. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

Meanwhile, the CHP has been actively conducting epidemiological investigation as well as carrying out preventive and control measures in regard to the cluster in Luk Chuen House, Lek Yuen Estate, Sha Tin. The CHP has given out more specimen bottles to residents of Luk Chuen House through the Housing Department for collecting deep throat saliva samples for the second round of COVID-19 testing. The CHP strongly appeals to the residents to collect their deep throat saliva samples according to instructions and submit them to the CHP in the specified period (today to June 17) for early testing. The CHP will arrange compulsory testing for those who do not return their samples.

The CHP will also arrange the second round of COVID-19 testing for residents of the "10" and "12" units of Luk Chuen House who are under quarantine at a quarantine centre before the completion of their 14-day quarantine period.

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work

or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

June 2020 issue of “Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics” now available

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (June 15) the June 2020 issue of the "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" (HKMDS).

Apart from providing up-to-date statistics, this issue also contains three feature articles entitled "The Cultural and Creative Industries in Hong Kong", "Tourism Satellite Account for Inbound Tourism of Hong Kong" and "Trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland of China".

"The Cultural and Creative Industries in Hong Kong"

The cultural and creative industries are among the most dynamic economic sectors in Hong Kong, contributing to both economic growth and job creation. They comprise a set of knowledge-based activities that deploy creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs and deliver goods and services with cultural, artistic and creative contents. This feature article provides the latest statistics of the cultural and creative industries in Hong Kong in 2018.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Construction and Miscellaneous Services Statistics Section, C&SD (Tel: 3903 6962; email: asps@censtatd.gov.hk).

"Tourism Satellite Account for Inbound Tourism of Hong Kong"

Inbound tourism plays an important role in the economy of Hong Kong. Tourism Satellite Account is an effective statistical framework for measuring the economic contribution of tourism. This feature article describes the major results of the Tourism Satellite Account for Hong Kong's inbound tourism in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Industrial Production Statistics Section, C&SD (Tel: 3903 7245; email: manufacturing@censtatd.gov.hk).

"Trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland of China"

Hong Kong has maintained a close trading relationship with the mainland of China (the Mainland) for many years. In the past decade, the Mainland was both Hong Kong's largest destination of total exports of goods and supplier

of imports of goods, on average accounting for 54.1% and 46.9% of Hong Kong's total exports and imports respectively.

This feature article analyses the performance and highlights the salient features of merchandise trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland during the period from 2010 to 2019.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Trade Analysis Section, C&SD (Tel: 2582 5026; email: trade@censtatd.gov.hk).

Published in bilingual form, the HKMDS is a compact volume of official statistics containing about 140 tables. It collects up-to-date statistical series on various aspects of the social and economic situation of Hong Kong. Topics include population; labour; external trade; National Income and Balance of Payments; prices; business performance; energy; housing and property; government accounts, finance and insurance; and transport, communications and tourism. For selected key statistical items, over 20 charts depicting the annual trend in the past decade and quarterly or monthly trend in the recent two years are also available. Users can download the Digest free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp460.jsp?productCode=B1010002).

Enquiries about the contents of the Digest can be directed to the Statistical Information Dissemination Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4738; email: gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk).

Extension of application period for LawTech Fund

The deadline for application for the LawTech Fund (the Fund), established by the Government under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund, will be extended for one month to July 26. This will allow more time for eligible law firms and chambers to prepare for application in light of the Judiciary's expanded practice for remote hearings through the use of video-conferencing facilities (VCF) and telephone in the civil courts from June 15, and the most recently published technical specifications for connecting to the courts' VCF.

Applications for the Fund commenced in April. The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association established a Joint Committee to process and assess the applications for the Fund, as well as to arrange the disbursement of the funding. The application form and the guidance notes are available at the homepages of the Law Society of Hong Kong (www.hklawsoc.org.hk) and the Hong Kong Bar Association (www.hkba.org/covid-19/lawtech-fund).

The Fund aims to, amongst others, assist some small and medium-size law firms and barristers' chambers in procuring and upgrading information technology systems and arranging for their staff to attend lawtech training courses. Law firms or chambers with five or fewer practising lawyers as at April 8, 2020 (announcement of the Fund), and at the time of granting the subsidy, will be eligible for a reimbursable amount of up to \$50,000.

The Government encourages eligible law firms and chambers to make use of the Fund to enhance their technological capability.