

CoI into Construction Works at and near Hung Hom Station Extension under Shatin to Central Link Project submits final report to Chief Executive

The following is issued on behalf of the Commission of Inquiry into the Construction Works at and near the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project:

The Commission of Inquiry into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project was appointed by the Chief Executive in Council on July 10, 2018.

In view of the extensive scope of the inquiry, the complexity of the matters under examination and the large number of witnesses involved, the Commission needed an extension of time to consider the evidence and complete its report, and obtained the approval of the Chief Executive in Council on December 4, 2018, to submit its report by February 26, 2019.

The Commission conducted 46 days of substantive hearing between October 22, 2018 and January 29, 2019, and heard evidence from 72 witnesses. In addition, the Commission admitted 14 witness statements and an expert report as evidence without the witnesses being called to give evidence at the substantive hearing.

On February 19, 2019, the Chief Executive in Council expanded the terms of reference of the Commission to inquire also into the problems concerning the construction works at the North Approach Tunnels, the South Approach Tunnels and the Hung Hom Stabling Sidings under the Shatin to Central Link Project, and extended the date of submission of the Commission's final report to August 30, 2019. The Commission was retitled "Commission of Inquiry into the Construction Works at and near the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project" to reflect the expanded mandate.

The Commission submitted its interim report to the Chief Executive on February 25, 2019 on its findings and recommendations on matters covered by the original terms of reference. On March 26, 2019, the Government published the interim report in redacted form.

Subsequently, having regard to the work progress and work plan at the time, the Commission requested an extension of time to submit its final report to the Chief Executive by November 29, 2019, which was approved by the Chief Executive in Council on July 2, 2019.

Since then, there had been developments that had impacted the progress

of the inquiry. The "Final Report on Holistic Assessment Strategy for the Hung Hom Station Extension" and the "Final Verification Study Report on As-Constructed Conditions of the North Approach Tunnels, South Approach Tunnels and Hung Hom Stabling Sidings", produced by the MTR Corporation Limited and accepted by the Government, raised new and important issues that had to be addressed. Due also to the availability issues of various parties involved in the inquiry which caused difficulties to the scheduling of further hearings, the Commission requested a further extension of time to submit its final report to the Chief Executive by March 31, 2020, which was approved by the Chief Executive in Council on September 10, 2019.

The Commission further conducted 32 days of substantive hearing between May 27, 2019 and January 23, 2020, and heard evidence from 46 witnesses on matters covered by the expanded terms of reference. In addition, the Commission admitted three witness statements as evidence without the witnesses being called to give evidence at the substantive hearing.

Having concluded the inquiry, the Commission submitted its final report to the Chief Executive today (March 27).

Enhanced arrangements for Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, Patent Application Grant and Public Sector Trial Scheme announced

The Innovation and Technology Commission today (March 27) announced the enhanced funding and administrative arrangements for the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme and the Patent Application Grant with a view to easing the capital funding problems of enterprises in staff training and individuals or enterprises in applying for patents. In addition, the funding scope of the Public Sector Trial Scheme will be extended to all technology companies conducting research and development (R&D) activities in Hong Kong.

Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme

Under the new arrangement, the Commission will disburse 50 per cent of the approved training grant before the completion of training courses to the funding recipient enterprises upon request. The new arrangement will be applicable to applications received from March 30 onwards.

The Programme subsidises staff of local enterprises on a 2(Government):1(Enterprise) matching basis to receive technology training, especially those related to "Industry 4.0". The funding ceiling for each eligible enterprise in each financial year is \$500,000. The Vocational Training Council is the Secretariat that administers the Programme.

Patent Application Grant

From April 1, applicants will no longer be required to pay a \$3,000 deposit at the time of application. After the application is approved, applicants will not be required to pay in full immediately their required contribution to the cost of patent registration. In addition, the Government will, based on the first quotation for the patent registration fee provided by the patent agent appointed by the applicant, disburse an advance payment of 25 per cent of the Government's contribution (i.e. 90 per cent of the quotation) to the patent agent. Currently, applicants are required to pay administrative fees to the implementation agent of the Grant (i.e. the Hong Kong Productivity Council). Under the enhanced administrative arrangements, applicants will no longer be required to pay administrative fees, and the approved funding can be utilised in full for expenses related to the patent registration.

The Grant aims to subsidise locally incorporated companies and Hong Kong permanent residents which/who have neither owned any patent nor received funding from the Grant before to apply for patents for their own inventions. The maximum grant is \$250,000 or 90 per cent of the cost of the patent application, whichever is the lower.

Public Sector Trial Scheme

From March 30, the funding scope of the Scheme will be extended to all technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong. Eligible companies are welcome to apply.

At present, the Scheme provides funding support for the production of prototypes or samples and conducting of trials in public sector organisations of the R&D outcomes by organisations or companies conducting R&D projects which are funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund, as well as incubatees and graduate tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited. The enhanced Scheme will assist more local technology companies in realising and commercialising their R&D outcomes and encourage public sector organisations to utilise more local R&D outcomes.

The maximum funding for each application is \$1 million. Application is open all year round.

The Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, the Patent Application Grant and the Public Sector Trial Scheme are funding schemes under the Innovation and Technology Fund. Details are available on the websites of the schemes. The websites and enquiry channels are as follows:

Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme

Website: <http://vtc.edu.hk>

Email: rtt@vtc.edu.hk (Vocational Training Council)

Patent Application Grant

Website: www.itc.gov.hk/en/fund_app/patent_app_grant.html

Email: ipsc@hkpc.org (Hong Kong Productivity Council)/enquiry@itf.gov.hk
(Innovation and Technology Fund Secretariat)

Public Sector Trial Scheme

Website: www.itf.gov.hk/l-eng/PSTS.asp

Email: enquiry@itf.gov.hk (Innovation and Technology Fund Secretariat)

Appointments to Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund Board

The Government announced today (March 27) the re-appointment of Mr Ma Ho-fai as the Chairman of the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund Board (PWIFB) for a term of two years with effect from April 1, 2020.

Five incumbent members have also been re-appointed for another two years. They are Mr Chu Yin-cheong, Mr Lam Chun-sing, Mr Mohan Datwani, Ms Elizabeth Law and Mrs Susan So Chan Wai-hang.

One new member, Ms Juan Leung Chung-yan, has been appointed for a term of two years as well.

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, welcomed the appointments.

"I am thankful to Mr Ma for his dedication to the work of the PWIFB and am confident that under his leadership, the PWIFB will continue to ensure the effective operation of the Fund to provide protection to employees," he said.

Dr Law also expressed gratitude to the outgoing member, Ms Leung Fong-yuen, for her dedicated service and valuable contribution to the PWIFB over the past six years.

The membership of the PWIFB, which will take effect from April 1, 2020, is as follows:

Chairman:

Mr Ma Ho-fai

Members (representing employees):

Mr Chu Yin-cheong
Mr Lam Chun-sing
Ms Juan Leung Chung-yan

Members (representing employers):

Mr Mohan Datwani
Ms Elizabeth Law
Mrs Susan So Chan Wai-hang

Public Officers:

Assistant Commissioner for Labour (responsible for wage security matters)
Assistant Principal Legal Aid Counsel (responsible for insolvency matters)
Assistant Principal Solicitor of the Official Receiver's Office

The PWIFB, formed under the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Ordinance, is tasked mainly with administering the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund, which provides ex gratia payments to employees whose employers have become insolvent.

Results of Pharmacist Registration Examinations December 2019 announced

The following is issued on behalf of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong:

The Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong announced today (March 27) the results of the Pharmacist Registration Examinations held in December 2019.

There were 59, 118 and 85 candidates sitting for examinations in pharmacy legislation in Hong Kong, pharmacy practice and pharmacology respectively, with corresponding passing rates of 37 per cent, 32 per cent and 32 per cent.

Apart from meeting other requirements prescribed by the Board, any pharmacy graduate outside Hong Kong intending to be registered as a pharmacist in Hong Kong is required to pass the above three subjects.

The Board conducts its Registration Examinations twice a year, normally in June and December.

Appointments to Community Investment and Inclusion Fund Committee

The Government today (March 27) announced the appointment of two new members and the re-appointment of one incumbent member to the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) Committee for a term of two years with effect from April 1, 2020.

The two new members are Ms Karin Ann and Mr Teddy Tang Chun-keung.

Ms Karin Ann is the Principal and School Founder of The International Montessori School. She is also a member of the Steering Committee on the Child Development Fund.

Mr Teddy Tang Chun-keung is the Principal of The Hong Kong Management Association K S Lo College. He is also the Chairperson of the Secondary School Places Allocation Committee.

An incumbent member, Dr Eliza Cheung Yee-lai, has been reappointed.

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said he looked forward to the valuable advice from the appointed and re-appointed members on the development of social capital in Hong Kong. He also thanked the two outgoing members, Ms Lam Pik-chu and Dr Wingco Lo Kam-wing, for their valuable contributions to the CIIF Committee.

The CIIF was established in 2002 to promote social capital development through encouraging mutual support in the neighbourhood, community participation and cross-sectoral partnership. The CIIF Committee is tasked to handle applications for funding under the CIIF and advise the Government on the administration of the CIIF as well as the development of social capital in Hong Kong.

The membership list of the CIIF Committee, with effect from April 1, 2020, is as follows:

Chairman

Mr Kwan Chuk-fai

Vice-Chairman

Dr Raymond Chan Kwok-hong

Members

Ms Karin Ann

Miss Amy Chan Lim-chee

Mr Dennis Chan Wan-pan

Dr Eliza Cheung Yee-lai

Mr Alan Cheung Yick-lun

Mr Alan Chow Ping-kay

Dr Fan Ning

Ms Amy Fung Dun-mi
Ms Josephine Lee Yuk-chi
Dr Vivian Lou Wei-qun
Miss Yanice Mak Wing-yan*
Mr Francis Ngai Wah-sing
Mr Leo Tam Ka-ming
Mr Teddy Tang Chun-keung
Mr Anthony Wong Kin-wai
Miss Joanna Wong Kwan-chiu*
Ms Wong May-kwan
Dr Wong Tak-cheung
Mr Wong Wai-kit
Mr Yuen Sui-see

* Appointed through the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth.