

Transcript of remarks by SCED at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media stand-up before attending the Legislative Council Finance Committee meeting today (March 20):

Reporter: For an update on the progress of the government programme to subsidise mask factories in Hong Kong, how many companies have joined and what's the progress right now? Will they be able to produce quality face masks for the public?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: Thank you. Since the approval of the emergency fund (Anti-epidemic Fund) last month, we have rolled out a Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme, whereby the Government would subsidise the capital cost, and also agree to procure masks produced under the scheme. We have given initial approval to two applicants who are able to meet the basic requirements. They have the production lines and factory premises in place, and are going to upgrade them to a clean production environment. They have also got the materials and the capacity to fulfil the eligibility criteria.

The commencement of production of these two factories in around April or May signifies (the provision of) the first batch of locally produced and Government-financed masks for government use. We are also receiving other applications. We have another five applications in hand which have initially fulfilled those requirements. We hope to process them in no time, and hopefully they will join the initial two (factories) to start production soon. This also indicates that the Scheme has in fact incentivised local production of surgical masks for government use. But of course, if they produce more than what the Government could procure, they can put them to the market (for sale).

When talking to these enterprises, we notice that some of them are also interested in producing (masks) for children, because children masks are in heavy demand. So we are also discussing with them, see if they can also have other production lines, which can help to produce smaller masks for school-children.

Reporter: The foreign ministry (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) has ordered three journalists from three American press that they can no longer work in Hong Kong. Can you tell us what actually is the Government's response to this order from the foreign ministry?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made a public statement on Wednesday saying that the arrangement was a reciprocal arrangement in response to the US' unfair treatment to certain Chinese media in the US. So this is basically the

reciprocal arrangement by the Ministry. As far as Hong Kong is concerned, the Basic Law does provide protection for freedom of press, and we always welcome international journalists to do their jobs in Hong Kong in strict accordance with both the Basic Law and local laws. I think that will continue to be the case. Thank you.

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

Traffic enforcement operation against illegal parking in Western and Southern District of Hong Kong Island

Western Police District will conduct a traffic enforcement operation against illegal parking in the rural areas of Western and Southern District of Hong Kong Island tomorrow (March 21) and the day after tomorrow (March 22), with a view to ensuring road safety and smooth traffic flow.

Stringent enforcement action will be taken during the operation. The Police will issue fixed penalty tickets to drivers who park their vehicles illegally and in an irresponsible manner, particularly those involve obstructing emergency vehicular accesses, double parking and parking on pavements.

The Police will issue multiple tickets and take summons action against drivers who have contravened illegal parking regulations, obstructed traffic flow or caused danger to other road users. Illegally parked vehicles will also be towed away at once if necessary.

Western Police District had issued a total of 580 fixed penalty tickets and towed 12 vehicles during the traffic enforcement operations in the aforementioned area in the past three weekends.

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, after attending the Legislative Council Panel on Transport meeting today (March 20):

Reporter: There were some lawmakers questioning the necessity of creating three new directorate positions to oversee bus safety. Could you explain why

it is needed? And second question about the Hong Kong Express: Would the Government offer any assistance to the aviation industry at this time when the businesses are severely hit?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: Firstly, I have to emphasise that the Independent Review Committee (on Hong Kong's Franchised Bus Service) has made it very clear that there is room for improvement to enhance franchised bus safety in Hong Kong. It also recommends the Government to act proactively and comprehensively, to take proactive actions to enhance the training, planning and implementation of those safety measures with a view to improving the condition of work, working hours, manpower planning and also application of technology in these aspects. Therefore, there are a host of reasons to establish these new posts to take forward all these recommendations.

In the case of the Hong Kong Express, we are given to understand that the company will take good care of the passengers and also their staff despite the decision to suspend air flight operation from now (should be March 23) until end of April.

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

Registration of poll particulars to close on April 15

The following is issued on behalf of the Electoral Affairs Commission:

Under the Particulars Relating to Candidates on Ballot Papers (Legislative Council and District Councils) Regulation (Cap. 541M), candidates in the Legislative Council (LegCo) and District Council (DC) elections may apply to have certain registered particulars printed on the ballot papers for easier identification by electors.

Bodies or persons wishing to register or amend their particulars with the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) in the 2020 registration cycle should hand in their applications by April 15. According to the Regulation, these particulars include the names, abbreviations of names and emblems of prescribed bodies, and the personal emblems of prescribed persons.

In accordance with the Regulation, approved specified particulars have been included in a register made available for public inspection at the EAC's website (www.eac.hk). Bodies or persons concerned are not required to make another application in respect of the specified particulars which have been approved and included in the register. Also, according to the Regulation, the EAC will deregister registered particulars if no request is made to print the particulars on ballot papers for two consecutive LegCo elections, two DC elections and the by-elections that are held between these elections.

The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) will send letters starting from today (March 20) to all affected bodies and persons to state that their registered particulars will be deregistered. If members of the affected bodies and the affected persons wish to use the de-registered particulars at the 2020 LegCo General Election, they should submit fresh applications by April 15.

"Although applications can be submitted at any time during the year, only those applications submitted on or before the statutory cut-off date of April 15 will be processed within the 2020 registration cycle. Upon approval of the applications by the EAC, the specified particulars may be used in the 2020 LegCo General Election. Applications submitted after April 15 will only be processed in the 2021 registration cycle," a spokesman for the EAC said.

Application forms are available at the REO and all District Offices. They can also be downloaded from the EAC's website.

The EAC will carefully consider all applications in accordance with the criteria and procedures stipulated in the Regulation.

Details of all successful applications will be gazetted and open to public inspection at the REO during office hours. The public can also view the information at the EAC's website.

For enquiries concerning the application procedures, please call the REO hotline on 2891 1001.

Labour Department appeals to employers to make flexible arrangements for employees on statutory holiday of Ching Ming Festival to reduce risk of infection

â€‹The Labour Department (LD) today (March 20) appealed to employers to have early discussions with employees on flexible arrangements concerning the statutory holiday of the Ching Ming Festival (April 4) so that their employees may stagger grave-sweeping activities accross dates before and after the festival, thereby avoiding overcrowding to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This will help maintain good labour-management relations and protect the health of employees as well as the community.

The LD spokesman said, "The Ching Ming Festival is a statutory holiday. Employers may give prior notice to employees in accordance with the

Employment Ordinance (EO) to arrange for employees to take an alternative holiday within 60 days before or after the statutory holiday. Moreover, with the mutual consent of the employer and the employee, any day within 30 days before or after the statutory holiday or alternative holiday may be taken by the employee as a substituted holiday."

For enquiries about the EO, please contact the LD at the 24-hour enquiry hotline on 2717 1771 (provided by 1823) or by email at enquiry@labour.gov.hk. Details of the EO are also available on the LD's homepage (www.labour.gov.hk).