

Air Transport Licensing Authority decided not to take further action against Hong Kong Airlines Limited for the time being

The following is issued on behalf of the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA):

In view of the ongoing financial problems of Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA), ATLA has been closely monitoring the financial situation of the airline over a long period of time in accordance with Regulation 15D(1) of the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation A) (the Regulations).

ATLA decided on December 2, 2019 to attach two new conditions to HKA's licence under Regulation 15E(2) of the Regulations. HKA must (1) ensure cash injection at a level determined by ATLA (or provide an alternative to the satisfaction of ATLA) by a deadline; and (2) raise and maintain its cash and cash equivalent level as stipulated by ATLA. Otherwise, ATLA will take further action under Regulation 15E of the Regulations, which provides for revocation or suspension of licence.

HKA has submitted the latest financial information and representation to ATLA. At a meeting held yesterday (December 6), ATLA thoroughly deliberated on HKA's latest situation and examined the information submitted by the airline. According to the information provided by HKA, the airline has raised its cash and cash equivalent to the level stipulated by ATLA and pledged that the level would be maintained in accordance with the aforementioned Condition 2 attached by ATLA. ATLA also assessed the information provided by HKA regarding Condition 1, and requested the airline to further provide more specific details.

A spokesman for ATLA said today (December 7), "After reviewing all the information submitted by HKA in relation to the new conditions attached by ATLA, including the fact that HKA has raised the cash and cash equivalents to the level required by ATLA and pledged to maintain the level (Condition 2), ATLA has decided not to take further actions against HKA for the time being, pending the airline's submission of further details regarding Condition 1. In reaching the above decision, ATLA has given careful consideration to factors including public interests and the policy direction of maintaining Hong Kong as an international aviation hub."

ATLA will continue to closely monitor the overall operation of HKA, and will ask HKA to continue to improve its operational efficiency and modify its long-term operational strategy. ATLA will take appropriate actions in light of the circumstances as necessary.

HKSAR Government attaches importance to protecting people's rights and freedoms

In response to media enquiries regarding the Human Rights Day rally to be held tomorrow (December 8), a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (December 7) said:

"The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to its constitutional duty to safeguard and protect human rights and freedoms. The Government also hopes that members of the public, when expressing their views and opinions as well as striving for their own rights and freedom, can embody the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to respect others' rights and freedom. All violent and illegal acts are contrary to the spirit of the Declaration.

"Article 4 of the Basic Law states that the HKSAR shall safeguard the rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and of other persons in the Region in accordance with law. Apart from the Basic Law, human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other laws.

"Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong remain in force. Through regular reports to the United Nations in accordance with various human rights treaties, the performance of the HKSAR Government in promoting and safeguarding human rights is under the scrutiny of members of the public, including the Legislative Council, the media and a number of non-governmental organisations.

"The rule of law and freedom are not only the core values of Hong Kong, they are also the foundations of Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability. Hong Kong's judicial independence is safeguarded by the Basic Law, and the power of final adjudication in the HKSAR is vested in the Court of Final Appeal, which may invite judges from other common law jurisdictions to sit on the Court. According to the Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum, Hong Kong ranks second in Asia and eighth in the world for judicial independence. Also, according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators of the World Bank, Hong Kong's percentile ranking in the rule of law has steadily improved from less than 70 per cent before Hong Kong's return to the Motherland to currently over 95 per cent.

"Hong Kong has consistently ranked as the world's most free and open economy by international organisations. The Heritage Foundation of the United States has ranked Hong Kong the world's freest economy for 25 consecutive years. Canada's Fraser Institute has ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest

economy since 1996. These achievements are premised on the HKSAR's strengths including the fine tradition of the rule of law, a free and open market, an efficient public sector and a robust institutional framework.

"Members of the public have the unquestionable freedom of peaceful assembly, of procession and of demonstration. Over the past five years, Hong Kong has held about 44 000 public assemblies and 6 000 public processions – an average of about 27 such events a day.

"From June this year until now, there have been over 900 public demonstrations, processions and public meetings. Unfortunately, many ended in violent and illegal confrontations, including reckless blocking of roadways, throwing petrol bombs and bricks, arson, vandalism, setting ablaze individual stores and facilities of the Mass Transit Railway and Light Rail, and beating people holding different views. All this has seriously endangered people's personal safety, public order and security. The Hong Kong Police Force has been carrying out enforcement actions in strict accordance with the law, to protect life and property and to restore order to society.

"The HKSAR Government has steadfastly safeguarded the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. But, as in other jurisdictions, such freedom is not absolute. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that restrictions might be imposed by law if this was necessary to protect national security, public safety, public order or the rights and freedoms of others.

"As for constitutional development, universal suffrage of 'one person, one vote' for selecting the Chief Executive and electing all members of the Legislative Council is enshrined as an ultimate aim in the Basic Law. To achieve this aim, the community needs to engage in dialogues, premised on the legal basis and under a peaceful atmosphere with mutual trust, with a view to narrowing differences and attaining a consensus agreeable to all sides. The HKSAR Government will assess the situation carefully and take forward constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant Interpretation and Decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

"The District Council Ordinary Election took place safely and smoothly on November 24, with a historical high voter turnout rate of over 70 per cent. Many candidates with different political views actively took part, and were elected. Voters expressed their views in a peaceful and sensible manner, a familiar process treasured by Hong Kong people. In fact, the core values of respecting different views, diversity, inclusiveness, freedom and mutual respect have all along been treasured by Hong Kong people.

"The Government appeals to members of the public taking part in public assemblies and processions to continue to adhere to the fine tradition of Hong Kong people and express their views in a calm and peaceful manner. In view of the social controversies and disputes as well as other problems brought about by the legislative amendment exercise, the HKSAR Government has learned its lesson and will humbly listen to and accept criticism. We hoped that all sectors of the community could work together with the government to

restore order in society as soon as possible so that Hong Kong can continue to move forward."

[Transcript of remarks by FS at media session \(with photos/video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at a media session after attending radio programmes this morning (December 7):

Reporter: So you said that you will consider cash handouts with an open mind. Could you explain a little bit more? What's your consideration?

Financial Secretary: On this matter of cash handouts, there are always diverse views: some people suggesting across-the-board kind of cash handouts; some people suggesting targeted approach; and there are also a lot of people holding very different views, saying that during these difficult economic times, particularly in view of the possible protracted period of heavy external headwind, perhaps we should save the resources for the future. So in the meantime, I am adopting a listening mode, continue to engage different sectors to listen to their views before we can come to any conclusion.

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



[Appeal for information on missing girl in Kwai Chung \(with photo\)](#)

Police today (December 7) appealed to the public for information on a

girl who went missing in Kwai Chung.

Lo Cheuk-yiu, aged 16, went missing after she was last seen in Kwai Shing East Estate on December 2 morning. Her family made a report to Police on December 4.

She is about 1.65 metres tall, 41 kilograms in weight and of thin build. She has a pointed face with yellow complexion and long black hair. She was last seen wearing a white and blue school uniform, a blue sweater, white socks and black shoes.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing girl or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of New Territories South on 3661 1174 or 9143 9685, or email to rmpu-nts-2@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



[Reef Check 2019 finds corals in healthy and stable condition \(with photos\)](#)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (December 7) that the Reef Check this year showed that local corals are generally in a healthy and stable condition and the species diversity remains on the high side.

Hong Kong Reef Check 2019, a four-month exercise that started in June, covered a wide range of areas including a number of sites of ecological

importance as well as the best coral-growing sites known in the eastern part of Hong Kong waters extending from Tung Ping Chau in the north to Ninepin Groups in the south. Among the 33 survey sites, nine were within marine parks, including Hoi Ha Wan, Yan Chau Tong and Tung Ping Chau.

A variation in coral coverage, ranging from 10.0 per cent to 82.5 per cent, was recorded among the survey sites. Fifteen sites recorded over 50 per cent of coral coverage, including five sites within marine parks. Among all sites, Sharp Island North recorded the highest coral coverage of 82.5 per cent.

Reef Check 2019 also assessed the condition of corals at nine sites using the Coral Watch tool. By measuring the colour intensity of the coral using a specially designed Coral Health Monitoring Chart, the health condition of corals can be determined. The deeper the colour, the healthier the corals. The average health index of the sites was 3.96 (ranging from 3.3 to 4.5), which was similar to last year's figure (4.04). The average health index is well above the general average value (3), indicating that the corals are in a healthy and stable condition.

Hong Kong Reef Check's survey method and data collection follow international standards. Reef Check divers recorded coral coverage and health status as well as other indicator species (including 20 species of fish and invertebrates). A correlation was observed between coral coverage and species diversity, indicating that sites with high coral coverage tend to support more fauna groups in close association with corals. All of the 20 assigned indicator species were recorded in the survey sites, with wrasses, groupers, butterfly fish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers and cowries commonly found. A majority of the survey sites were found to have a high species diversity. Most of the groupers, wrasses, sweetlips and snappers were found in survey sites at Port Shelter in Sai Kung and North-eastern waters including the three marine parks there.

Coral bleaching was observed at a few sites but the impact was minor and localised.

No signs of destructive fishing practices were observed at any sites. Abandoned nets were found at a few sites but their impact was minor. The AFCD will arrange for a contractor to clear the nets.

Hong Kong Reef Check is part of a global programme to promote the sustainable management of coral reefs. Hong Kong Reef Check aims to raise public awareness of the ecological importance of corals and the need for coral conservation, and to provide updated information on local corals for conservation and management. The Hong Kong Reef Check Foundation held the first Reef Check in 1997. The AFCD has collaborated with the Foundation in conducting the survey since 2000, which has created growing attention and support from the public. This year, 88 dive teams involving over 900 volunteer divers took part in the event representing a 20-fold increase in divers as compared with that in 1997. The AFCD will later present souvenirs and certificates to the Reef Check teams and participating scientists to

recognise their contributions.

Coral reefs are highly productive systems, which support a high diversity of marine life. For the sake of coral conservation in Hong Kong, the AFCD continues to put in place a series of measures and programmes. Key measures include the designation of marine parks and marine reserves for the conservation of the marine environment and protection of corals, the organisation of a range of educational and publicity activities to enhance public understanding of the importance of protecting the marine environment and coral communities, the yearly Reef Check and studies to monitor the status of coral communities of Hong Kong and provide information for effective and adaptive management, the installation of mooring and coral marker buoys to reduce coral damage caused by boating and recreational activities and the maintenance of a database to record the diversity and unique features of local corals. Recently, the AFCD has completed a consultancy study of coral bleaching and bioerosion in Hong Kong. The study provided updated and scientific data and recommended appropriate management measures and long-term monitoring.



