

ATLA's response to recent media reports on financial situation of Hong Kong Airlines Limited

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

In response to the recent media reports on the financial situation of the Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA), the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) responded today (December 21) as follows:

"ATLA is an independent statutory body set up under the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap 448 Subsidiary Legislation A) (the Regulations) and is responsible for considering licence applications to operate scheduled air services.

Under the Regulations, the corporate licensee (including HKA) is required to submit annual audited financial statement for review by ATLA. If necessary, ATLA may also request, under the Regulations, the corporate licensee to submit at any time relevant information for the Authority to assess its financial situation.

ATLA has noted recent media reports on the financial situation of HKA. In accordance with the Regulations, ATLA has been following up on the financial situation of HKA and has, in accordance with the Regulations, requested the airline to explain the situation. ATLA would continue to keep in view the development and take necessary follow-up action(s) on the matter."

Enhanced integrated vocational and skills training services for persons with disabilities

The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) met with the management of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to explain the enhanced service model which combined the strengths of the existing services of Shine Skills Centres operated by the VTC and Integrated Vocational Training Centres (IVTCs) subvented by the SWD, a spokesman for the LWB said today (December 21). The management of the VTC said they appreciated the proposed development directions and indicated full support for the implementation of the proposed service model.

To tie in with the Kwun Tong "Government, Institution or Community" composite development project, the Government will resume the present site of the Shine Skills Centre (Kwun Tong) (SSC) in the fourth quarter of 2021. Meanwhile, the Government proposes to temporarily relocate the programmes and students of the SSC to the renovated vacant school premises at 1D Oxford Road, Kowloon Tong. Upon completion of the Kwun Tong composite development project, the SSC will be reprovisioned back to the Kwun Tong district. The Government will continue to liaise closely with the VTC and provide necessary assistance on the decanting arrangements (including provision of feeder bus services between MTR station and temporary school site for students in need) and reprovisioning of the school premises back to Kwun Tong in future.

The proposed integrated vocational and skills training service model seeks to equip students with disabilities with skills commensurate with their abilities, assist them in adapting to the work environment, keep up their work motivation and sustain their continuous employment in the open market. The training programmes will better suit the individualised needs and aptitudes of students and in particular strengthen their post-training employment support. The spokesman said, "The new arrangements include the provision of post-training employment support services through job coaches for graduates and their employers or peer workers for at least 12 months and ongoing support services up to three years for individual graduates on a need basis. Implementation details will be worked out after further discussion between the Government and the VTC."

In addition, the VTC will formulate a strategic plan to systematically introduce more courses recognised under the Qualification Framework and regularly update the content of the training programmes; strengthen employment-oriented training in simulated work environment to enable students to acquire relevant skills; and arrange more internship opportunities for students. Under the proposed service model, the VTC will arrange "up-skilling" or "re-skilling" courses for graduates in need, with a view to enhancing their opportunities to find employment or change jobs in the open market. The spokesman pointed out that these courses will be open to graduates of the SSCs or SWD-subsidised IVTCs.

"The consensus reached today between the Government and the management of the VTC on the reprovisioning arrangements and proposed service model should be able to provide persons with disabilities with better facilities and enhanced services, improved vocational training services and strengthened employment support. The Government and the management of the VTC will continue to work closely and stay in touch with students, parents and local stakeholders towards the target of seamless transition in service provision," the spokesman said.

Illegal worker jailed

A Pakistani illegal worker holding a recognisance form was jailed at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday (December 20).

Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators received a referral from the Hong Kong Police Force to further investigate an illegal employment case in July. Enforcement officers arrested one male Pakistani worker, aged 37, conveying goods in San Po Kong. Upon identity checking, he was found to be a holder of a recognisance form issued by ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment, and further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant.

The illegal worker was charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. After the trial, he was sentenced to 22 months' and two weeks' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are

trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase, and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Special traffic and transport arrangements for Christmas holidays

The Transport Department (TD) today (December 21) reminded the public to take note of the special traffic and transport arrangements to be implemented during the Christmas holidays to facilitate holiday celebrations. Members of the public are urged to make use of public transport services as far as possible to avoid traffic congestion.

Road closures and traffic diversions will be in effect in phases from late afternoon on Christmas Eve in districts including Central, Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East. There will also be road closure arrangements in the vicinity of Victoria Park during the Hong Kong Brands and Products Expo. Roads in the vicinity of the main shopping and entertainment areas are expected to be busier than usual a few days before the holidays. Members of the public are advised to make use of public transport, avoid driving to busy areas and listen to the latest traffic news broadcasts.

The TD also reminded pedestrians to pay attention to road safety during the festive holidays by observing traffic lights and walking on the pavement. Pedestrians should be considerate and patient, and follow advice or instructions given by the Police. Motorists are advised to drive with care and patience, especially in these busy areas, and should be aware that on-street parking spaces will be suspended due to road closures and traffic diversion arrangements.

The MTR Island Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Tseung Kwan O Line, Tung Chung Line, East Rail Line (except to Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau), Ma On Shan Line, South Island Line, West Rail Line and Light Rail Routes 505, 507, 610, 614P, 615P, 706 and 751 will operate around the clock on December 24.

Some bus and minibus services will be extended or augmented during the Christmas holidays. Hong Kong Tramways and the Central to Mid-Levels escalator and walkway system will also provide extended services. In addition, the ferry service between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui will be

extended during the Christmas holidays.

The TD reminds the public that many public transport passengers are expected to travel via the land boundary control points during the holiday period. Passengers are advised to plan their journeys in advance and make their journeys during non-peak hours. As the waiting time for public transport services may be longer than usual if traffic at the control points is busy, passengers should observe order and heed advice from on-site police and staff of the public transport service operators concerned. Passengers are also advised to keep track of the latest traffic news.

The TD and the Police will closely monitor local and cross-boundary traffic during the holidays and take appropriate action whenever necessary.

Details of special traffic and transport arrangements during Christmas holidays are available at TD's website (www.td.gov.hk).

Special traffic arrangements on Hong Kong Island

Police will implement special traffic arrangements this Sunday (December 23) to facilitate a public order event to be held on Hong Kong Island.

Road closure

The leftmost lane of Garden Road between No. 2 Queen's Road Central and Lower Albert Road will be closed from about 9am until the crowd has dispersed and the traffic resumes normal.

The following roads will be closed from about 12 noon until the crowd has dispersed and traffic resumes normal:

- Eastbound Lower Albert Road between Ice House Street and Garden Road;
- Upper Albert Road between Garden Road and Lower Albert Road;
- Bank Street.

The following roads will be intermittently closed from 2pm until the crowd has dispersed and traffic resumes normal:

- Des voeux Road Central between Pedder Street and Queensway; and
- Queen Road Central between Pedder Street and Queensway.

Traffic diversions

If necessary, the following traffic diversions will be implemented from 12 noon until the crowd has dispersed and the traffic resumes normal:

- Traffic along eastbound Upper Albert Road cannot turn left to westbound Upper Albert Road; and
- Traffic along eastbound Lower Albert Road outside The Fringe Club must go straight to Ice House Street.

Suspension of parking spaces

The metered parking spaces on Upper Albert Road will be suspended from 9am to 5pm.

The metered parking spaces at the slip road outside Lower Peak Tram Terminal will be suspended from 9am to 5pm, except motorcycle parking spaces and disabled parking spaces.

Vehicles may not be permitted to access or leave car parks along the route during the road closure period.

Actual implementation of the traffic arrangements will be made depending on traffic and crowd conditions in the area. Motorists are advised to exercise tolerance and patience and take heed of instructions of the Police on site.