

CE to visit Sichuan

â€‹The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, and his wife, Mrs Janet Lee, at the invitation of the Sichuan Province, will depart for Sichuan Sunday (July 7) to deliberate on and understand the arrival arrangements of the pair of giant pandas gifted to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) by the Central Government. The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, Mr Mickey Lai, and representatives from Ocean Park Hong Kong will join the visit.

Mr Lee and the officials will visit the Dujiangyan Base of the China Conservation and Research Centre for the Giant Panda. During his visit to Sichuan, Mr Lee will meet with leaders of Sichuan Province and visit local facilities.

Mr Lee expressed his sincere gratitude to the Central Government, and his thanks to the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, and the Sichuan Province for their care and support for Hong Kong. "I thank the Sichuan Province for attaching importance to the overall arrangements of gifting giant pandas to the HKSAR. To herald the importance of this, my wife and I will visit Sichuan in person. I will meticulously deliberate on and understand the preparatory work for receiving the two new members of the Hong Kong family. The HKSAR Government will endeavor to make good arrangements for welcoming the giant pandas," Mr Lee said.

Mr Lee will return to Hong Kong on July 9. During his absence, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, will be the Acting Chief Executive. During the absence of Mr Yeung, the Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, will be the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism.

Government responds to Cathay Group's plan to buy back all remaining preference shares

â€‹Regarding Cathay Pacific Airways Limited (Cathay Group)'s announcement today (July 5) that it plans to buy back the remaining 50 per cent of its preference shares from the Government on July 31 this year at a cost of \$9.75 billion, a Government spokesman said:

In June 2020, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

Government invested \$27.3 billion in Cathay Group through the Land Fund, comprising preference shares with detachable warrant of \$19.5 billion and a bridging loan of \$7.8 billion, with a view to safeguarding Hong Kong's position as an international aviation hub in the face of the unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to the relevant investment agreement, in July 2020, the Government designated Fellow Certified Public Accountant Mr Carlson Tong and Senior Counsel Mr Rimsky Yuen as the observers of Cathay Group's Board of Directors, until the Cathay Group repays the Government in full the drawn bridge loan and interest and redeems all preference shares from the Government.

The HKSAR Government is pleased to note Cathay Group's decision to buy back all of its remaining preference shares and would like to express its gratitude to the two observers designated by the Government to sit on Cathay Group's Board of Directors, Mr Carlson Tong and Mr Rimsky Yuen, for their valuable contributions over the past few years.

Major air service providers based in Hong Kong are an important component of Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub. The HKSAR Government's investment in the airline played an important role at a critical time, and the airline's operational and financial situation have improved with the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and other places. We expect the airline to fully restore its capacity to the pre-pandemic level at full speed, actively expand its passenger and cargo flight network, and continuously enhance its service quality, so as to further support the reinforcement and enhancement of Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub.

Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) recorded significant growth in air traffic last year with the full resumption of travel, and demand for flights to and from Hong Kong from all over the world continued to rise. Between April 2023 and March this year, passenger traffic at HKIA rose by more than 260 per cent to 45.2 million, while the number of flight movements rose by more than 90 per cent to 310 000. In the first five months of this year, over 18 million visitors travelled to Hong Kong. Both passenger traffic and flight movements during the peak travel season have returned to 80 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels, and are expected to fully recover by the end of this year. On the cargo side, benefiting from the strong demand for e-commerce, the airport handled 4.5 million tonnes of cargo last year, and HKIA has been the world's busiest cargo airport for 13 out of the past 14 years.

Looking ahead, the HKSAR Government will continue to enhance our strengths as an international aviation hub and strengthen communication with local airlines, with a view to planning our route network in such a way that it fully meets the needs of Hong Kong's overall economic and social development. In particular, Cathay Group has increased the number of flights between Hong Kong and Xi'an and Qingdao since the end of March this year, in response to the country's further opening up of the Individual Visit Scheme to cover the two cities. Direct passenger flights to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, will also be launched in October this year, to further strengthen Hong Kong's ties with Belt and Road countries.

To better complement our country's development of the "Air Silk Road" and leverage the opportunities brought about by the Three-Runway System, the HKSAR Government will continue to strengthen aviation services on existing major routes and routes along the Belt and Road with potential, including destinations in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. The Airport Authority of Hong Kong will also continue to support and encourage airlines to launch and increase flights to and from Hong Kong, as well as work with relevant parties to step up publicity efforts so as to boost the demand for travel to Hong Kong for leisure and business purposes.

Update on cluster of COVID-19 cases in Ruttonjee Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with COVID-19 in a geriatric infirmary ward, the spokesperson for Ruttonjee Hospital made the following update today (July 5):

Two more male patients (aged 49 and 85) in the ward have presented with respiratory symptoms. Appropriate tests were arranged for the patients and their test results were positive for COVID-19. The patients concerned are currently being treated in cohort isolation. One of them is in critical condition due to underlying diseases whereas the other one is in serious condition.

Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow up.

CE commends teachers for teaching excellence (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence Steering Committee:

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (July 5) officiated, and

presented the Award for Teaching Excellence to 10 teachers, at the Award Presentation Ceremony of the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence (CEATE) (2023/2024), while nine teachers received the Certificate of Merit from the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin.

The Chairman of the CEATE Steering Committee, Dr Gordon Tsui, commended the outstanding performance of the awarded teachers, who not only catered to the learning characteristics of the students and helped them set clear learning goals, but also used diversified and innovative learning and teaching strategies to effectively support students in connecting knowledge to daily life and stimulate their learning interest. With this year marking the 20th anniversary of the Award Presentation Ceremony of CEATE, Dr Tsui encouraged all the awarded teachers to continue to innovate, work together to develop quality education for Hong Kong, and strive to nurture outstanding talent for the motherland and Hong Kong.

There were 102 nominations received from secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special schools for the CEATE (2023/2024), covering themes of "English Language Education Key Learning Area (KLA)", "Personal, Social and Humanities Education KLA" and "Kindergarten Education". Assessment of nominations focused on teachers' performance in the four domains of "Professional Competence", "Student Development", "Professionalism and Commitment to the Community", and "School Development". After assessment, six nominations (comprising 10 teachers) were presented with the Award for Teaching Excellence while four nominations (comprising nine teachers) were presented with the Certificate of Merit. Please visit the CEATE website (www.ate.gov.hk) for the list of the awarded teachers.

Other officiating guests at today's ceremony included the Permanent Secretary for Education, Ms Michelle Li; the Chairman of the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals as well as the High-level Advisory Panel (2023/2024), Professor Alvin Leung; the Chairman of the Education Commission, Dr David Wong; the Chairman of the Curriculum Development Council, Professor Isabella Poon; the Chairman of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, Mr Samuel Yung; and the Chairman of the CEATE Assessment Working Group (2023/2024), Professor Lo Ming-tung.

Sharing activities involving the CEATE-awarded teachers are being rolled out gradually to disseminate excellent teaching practices. Details will be announced on the CEATE website and the EDB Training Calendar.

The themes of the CEATE (2024/2025) cover "Chinese Language Education KLA", "Mathematics Education KLA" and "Values Education", while the "Award for Budding Teachers" and the "Award for Education Innovation" will be newly introduced. Nominations will be accepted from July 8 to October 4. Related details will be uploaded to the CEATE website on July 8.



Film Archive's "Morning Matinee" series to showcase classic films by producer Wong Cheuk-hon (with photos)