

Chief Executive in Council considers fare increase applications from franchised bus operators

The Chief Executive in Council (CE in C) today (May 30) considered the fare increase applications from franchised bus operators, and decided that:

(a) fares of Long Win Bus Company Limited (LW) should be increased by an overall actual weighted average rate of 4.2 per cent after a 0.3 percentage points (ppts) mitigation effect by its Franchised Bus Toll Exemption Fund (TEF) (i.e. 4.5 per cent before mitigation);

(b) fares of Citybus Limited (Franchise for the Airport and North Lantau bus network) (CTB(F2)) should be increased by an overall actual weighted average rate of 4.2 per cent after a 2.2ppts mitigation effect by its TEF (i.e. 6.4 per cent before mitigation);

(c) fares of New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited (NLB) should be increased by an overall weighted average rate of 7.0 per cent;

(d) fares of Citybus Limited (Franchise for Hong Kong Island and Cross-Harbour bus network) (CTB(F1)) and New World First Bus Services Limited (NWFB) should be increased by an overall actual weighted average rate of 4.9 per cent after a 1.3ppts mitigation effect by their TEFs (i.e. 6.2 per cent before mitigation);

(e) fares of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (KMB) should be increased by an overall actual weighted average rate of 3.9 per cent after a 1.6ppts mitigation effect by its TEF (i.e. 5.5 per cent before mitigation); and

(f) the fare increases in (a) to (e) above should be implemented on June 18, 2023.

The fare increase applications and the decision of the CE in C are summarised in the table in the Annex. In arriving at the actual fare increase rates of individual routes, the Government has looked into the service nature and existing fare levels of these routes and made adjustments to effect relatively lower rates of increase on routes for daily commuters so as to minimise the impact of fare increases on the public. Upon the implementation of new fares on June 18, 2023, about 87 per cent of passengers are expected to pay no more than \$0.5 extra per trip and almost all passengers are expected to pay no more than \$1 extra per trip.

A Government spokesman said, "As bus services are closely related to people's livelihood, the Government has handled the fare increase applications in a prudent manner as we have always been. While the Government

acknowledges the financial viability of franchised bus operators is crucial to their continued operation in accordance with commercial principles for better efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the Government has a duty to exercise its gatekeeper role and assess the fare increase applications in a holistic manner taking into account also public acceptability and affordability. In considering and reviewing the applications, the Government noted that the franchised bus operators submitted their applications last year against the backdrop of the fifth wave of the epidemic and oil prices also at a higher level. Accordingly, the Government has suitably adopted projections with a relatively positive recovery outlook with the benefit of the most up-to-date patronage figures reflecting the prevailing normalcy and cross-boundary travel situation. The Government has also taken into account the future opportunities of business growth for the franchised bus operators arising from the new population intake of major new developments such as those in Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen, Anderson Road in Kwun Tong, and Tuen Mun Area 54."

The spokesman added, "Together with the utilisation of the TEFs to mitigate the rates of fare increase, the overall actual weighted average rates of increase are set at relatively mild levels this time round. With the approved fare increases, the franchised bus operators should continue to invest in improvement in their bus services, including upgrading passenger facilities and safety equipment, transitioning to zero-emission bus fleet and, as one of the major groups of employers in the transport sector, continuing to attract and retain workforce through enhancing remuneration package and working environment. Alongside the processing of the fare increase applications, the Government will continue to encourage and assist franchised bus operators to adopt a multipronged approach in raising revenue and reducing expenditure, including further enhancing operational efficiency of the bus services and increasing non-fare revenue."

The Government has been implementing the non-means tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme (PTFSS) since 2019 to relieve the fare burden of passengers who travel on local public transport services for daily commuting and whose public transport expenses are relatively high. For the beneficiaries of the PTFSS, a portion of the increase in bus fares could be subsidised by the PTFSS.

According to the Fare Adjustment Arrangement for Franchised Buses agreed by the CE in C, the Government has taken into account a basket of factors in assessing the bus fare adjustments:

- (a) changes in operating costs and revenue since the last fare adjustment;
- (b) forecasts of future costs, revenue and return;
- (c) the need to provide the bus operator with a reasonable rate of return;
- (d) public acceptability and affordability;
- (e) the quality and quantity of service provided; and
- (f) the outcome of the supportable fare adjustment rate formula. The formula is only for reference and will not operate as an automatic determinant of the rate of fare adjustment.

In considering the fare increase applications of the franchised bus operators, the CE in C has, based on the above-mentioned arrangement, examined the cases holistically and fully considered the views of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council and the Transport Advisory Committee.

[HKSAR Government resumes national studies programme on Mainland \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is gradually resuming the national studies programme on the Mainland. The first batch of 23 directorate civil servants will soon depart for Beijing to attend a seven-day national studies programme. The participants will first undertake studies at the National Academy of Governance to gain an in-depth understanding of the country's policies of governance and major strategies, and will then proceed to Shanghai to learn about the country's modern history and culture as well as its latest local developments.

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, made a special visit to the Civil Service College (CSC) to meet with the programme participants today (May 30) prior to their departure to Beijing, expressing the Civil Service Bureau's expectations for them and learning about their preparatory work. The Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Clement Leung, and the Head of the CSC, Mr Oscar Kwok, also shared their experiences with the participants at the meeting.

Mrs Yeung said, "All physical training and exchange activities for civil servants on the Mainland had been suspended in the past three years due to the epidemic. Since the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, this marks the first training course dedicated for directorate officers after resumption of the national studies programme, which bears remarkable significance."

The Director-General of Communications of the Office of the Communications Authority, Mr Chaucer Leung, and the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Management), Mr Joe Chow, are the leader and the deputy leader of the programme participants respectively, all the remaining participants are senior civil servants at the rank of Directorate Pay Scale Point 3 or above, covering management from the Chief Executive's Policy Unit, the Education Bureau, the Health Bureau, the Architectural Services Department, the Census and Statistics Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Fire Services Department, the Department of Health, the Housing Department, the Immigration Department, the Information Services

Department, the Department of Justice, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Planning Department, the Trade and Industry Department, the Social Welfare Department, the Treasury and the Lands Department, as well as the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Mrs Yeung added, "Colleagues participating in the programme possess extensive experience in public administration. They are at the highest leadership level of the respective policy bureaux and departments responsible for management and decision-making. I hope that the programme could enhance their understanding about the systems and developments, as well as the social and economic situation in the Mainland, and to help them keep abreast of the national strategies and their implications for Hong Kong. We will make on-going efforts to organise programmes in Hong Kong and in the Mainland for civil servants from different ranks to let colleagues have an in-depth understanding about national affairs to cater for the HKSAR Government's active integration into the national development."

The CSC currently collaborates with nine Mainland institutions in organising national studies programmes for middle and senior-level civil servants, namely the National Academy of Governance, Tsinghua University, Peking University, China Foreign Affairs University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Wuhan University, Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen University. The programmes include lectures and site visits with topics covering the Constitution and the Basic Law, safeguarding national security and the country's latest policies and developments.



[“Quarterly Report on General Household Survey” for January to March 2023 published](#)

The "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" for January to March 2023 is now available for access and download.

The report contains statistics on labour force, employment, unemployment and underemployment for the first quarter of 2023. It also contains detailed analyses of the characteristics of different categories of members of the labour force, including their age, sex, educational attainment, employment status, occupation, industry, hours worked per week and monthly employment earnings, etc. Information on reasons for leaving last job and duration of unemployment for the unemployed is also presented.

Users can browse and download the report at the website of the Census and Statistics Department (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200).

The summary of broad survey findings published in the report is shown in Table 1 attached. Enquiries about the contents of the report can be directed to the General Household Survey Section (3), Census and Statistics Department (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).

[Health risk category for Air Quality Health Index may reach “Serious” Level](#)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal air pollution levels since yesterday afternoon (May 29). According to the EPD's forecast, it is expected that the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at some air quality monitoring stations may reach the "Serious" level later today (May 30). The air pollution levels are expected to remain higher in the following few days.

Under the influence of the outer subsiding air of Typhoon Mawar, the weather today is very hot and mainly fine, light to moderate westerly to northwesterly winds are bringing an airstream with higher regional pollution levels and is unfavourable for pollutant dispersion. The intense sunshine enhances photochemical smog activity leading to rapid formation of ozone and fine particulates in the Pearl River Delta region. The high ozone level also promotes the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, Typhoon Mawar will turn northwards gradually and move slowly in the next couple of days, linger around the seas east of Taiwan. It is expected that air pollution levels will remain higher than normal until a trough of low pressure brings a few showers to Hong Kong.

With a health risk category in the "Very High" range or above, children, the elderly and persons with existing heart or respiratory illnesses are advised to reduce physical exertion and outdoor activities to a minimum or avoid such activities. The general public is advised to reduce, or reduce to a minimum, outdoor physical exertion, and to reduce time outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. As health effects of air pollutants may vary for individuals, persons who are in doubt or experience discomfort should seek advice from health-care professionals. The public may visit the Centre for Health Protection's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/460/3557.html) for more information on health effects of air pollution and relevant health advice.

The Education Bureau (EDB) urges all schools to visit the EDB website for appropriate measures to safeguard students' health and take note of changes in the index. The relevant hyperlink is as follows:
www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-activities/sch-activities-guidelines/index.html .

When AQHI is at the "Very High" level, employers of outdoor workers performing heavy manual work are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their employees, such as reducing outdoor physical exertion and the time of their stay outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. At the "Serious" level, employers of all outdoor workers are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their employees.

Members of the public can check the current AQHI readings at the EPD's website (www.aqhi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.

[Speech by SITI at Data Science and AI Forum 2023 \(English only\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, at the Data Science and AI Forum 2023 today (May 30):

Professor Freddy Boey (President of the City University of Hong Kong (CityU)), Professor Joe Qin (Chair of Organising Committee of Data Science

and AI Forum 2023, Dean and Chair Professor of School of Data Science and Director of Hong Kong Institute of Data Science of CityU), Professor Michael Yang (Vice-President (Research and Technology) of CityU), Professor Chi-hou Chan (Acting Provost of CityU), distinguished speakers and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am most honoured to be here today at the Data Science and AI Forum 2023.

First of all, I would like to extend my appreciation to the City University of Hong Kong and the Lingnan University of Hong Kong for organising such a timely two-day forum. It also gives me an opportunity to congratulate the two new Presidents for taking up the important positions of the key universities in Hong Kong. I believe this Forum will provide an exciting opportunity for scholars and industry experts to explore and exchange on the latest development in AI (artificial intelligence) and data science.

Over the past few months, generative AI technology applications such as ChatGPT and other AI chatbots have drawn a great deal of attention in our society and worldwide. The technology and their instant popularity are certainly ground-breaking and impressive.

But all opportunities arising from ventures like generative AI come with risks and costs. This technology and its wide application have caused heated debates on information security, privacy protection, ethics and intellectual property rights, to name just a few. There is yet clear consensus on the universal approach to deal with these contentious issues. Different economies or even organisations within the same sector such as tertiary education are working on the best practice. The Hong Kong Government will keep in view the international discussion and adopt an open mind to the appropriate options to handle the AI-related pros and cons.

One thing we must share, I believe, is that any measures we contemplate and take with regard to AI must not stifle innovation and creativity in the making of a better world. One of the drivers in the promotion of innovation, research and industry development is consortium of talent. Since late last year, we have set up the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, OASES in short, to foster the landing of strategically important businesses in Hong Kong. We will tailor flexible packages involving land, tax and other financial incentives to targeted enterprises, including those in the field of AI and data science as the first batch. In just a few months, we have made good progress in attracting both Mainland and international tech companies to set foot in Hong Kong. I hope more will come forth after this Forum.

Another accelerator to forge ahead with the AI development is adequate computing infrastructure. As announced by our Financial Secretary in the Budget earlier this year, the Government will conduct a feasibility study on the development of an AI Supercomputing Centre in Hong Kong. I believe it will come in the next couple of years. This strategic technological infrastructure is set to provide cutting-edge computing power and capability

to local universities and research institutes, government departments and industry sectors, and be a strong impetus to our AI ecosystem.

Ladies and gentleman, Hong Kong is poised to break new grounds and scale new heights by leveraging the huge potential of AI and other emerging technologies. We must work with best brains like you. I wish you all insightful takeaways from this Forum and a great success for the event. Thank you very much.