

Government announces appointment of Chairman of Hong Kong Trade Development Council

The Government announced today (February 19) the appointment of Professor Frederick Ma Si-hang to succeed Dr Peter Lam Kin-ngok as Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) for two years from June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2027.

Commenting on the appointment, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, said, "With extremely profound experience in public service as well as the commercial sector, Professor Ma is well suited for taking up the HKTDC chairmanship. I am confident that he will lead the HKTDC to make every effort in assisting enterprises to embrace the challenges arising from the ever changing global trading landscape and actively tap new markets and business opportunities, with a view to further promoting Hong Kong's development as an international trade centre."

"I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing Chairman, Dr Lam, for his tremendous contributions during his tenure in promoting Hong Kong's advantages and opportunities. Under his chairmanship, the HKTDC has successfully promoted Hong Kong as a two way global investment and business hub and assisted Hong Kong companies in further exploring the business opportunities in the Mainland and overseas brought by the nation's dual circulation strategy, with outstanding achievements particularly in promoting Hong Kong in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and emerging markets under the Belt and Road Initiative," Mr Yau added.

A brief biographical note of Professor Ma is set out below:

Professor Ma is the non-executive Chairman of the FWD Group, as well as a member of the Chief Executive's Council of Advisers, with extensive experience in public service.

LCQ13: Electric wheelchairs

Following is a question by the Hon Rock Chen and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

It is learnt that in recent years, more and more people with

disabilities and elderly people with impaired mobility have chosen to use electric wheelchairs as a substitute for traditional manual wheelchairs. However, it has been reported that an electric wheelchair user collided with a motorcycle in July last year, arousing public concern about the safety of electric wheelchairs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cases in which the Police (i) issued advice to electric wheelchair users and (ii) instituted prosecutions against electric wheelchair users for contravening traffic regulations in each of the past three years, as well as the respective reasons for issuing such advice and instituting such prosecutions;

(2) as the Consumer Council has earlier on recommended that the Government tighten regulation of the use of electric wheelchairs, including limiting their maximum travelling speed, requiring users to take out insurance, etc, whether the Government will, in accordance with the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), formulate regulations on the use of electric wheelchairs for outdoor travel (e.g. restrictions on the modification of electric wheelchairs, loading requirements, insurance requirements, fire safety standards, prohibition on the carriage of passengers, and maximum speed limits), so as to protect the safety of electric wheelchair users and other road users; if so, of the specific details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views that pavements in many districts in Hong Kong are so narrow that electric wheelchair users may easily come into conflict with pedestrians due to competition for road space, whether relevant government departments will provide additional barrier-free facilities for electric wheelchair users when planning and constructing roads for new towns and new development areas in the future; if so, of the specific details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Health Bureau, the Hong Kong Police Force (Police) and the Transport Department (TD) in respect of electric wheelchair, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Rock Chen is as follows:

(1) The Police does not maintain statistics on enforcement against electric wheelchair users.

(2) Proper use of electric wheelchairs can help ensure the safety of both the wheelchair users and others. The allied health professionals of Hospital Authority (HA) hospitals, when prescribing electric wheelchairs, will teach patients how to use the wheelchairs safely and correctly according to the needs of individual patients. In addition, the Community Rehabilitation Service Support Centre under the HA provides systematic group training for electric wheelchair users so that they could familiarise the skills and

attitudes of using the wheelchairs safely in order to cope with different situations including using public transport and public facilities and handling outdoor obstacles.

Under section 4(8) of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228), it is an offence if any person, in any public place, drives recklessly or negligently or at a speed or in a manner which is dangerous to the public. As regards the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), as it seeks to regulate road traffic and the use of vehicles, it is not suitable for further regulation of electric wheelchairs. Nevertheless, the TD will continue to help promoting the safe use of electric wheelchairs to enhance the safety of road users (including pedestrians).

(3) It is the Government's established policy objective to provide barrier-free environment for people in need (including manual or electric wheelchair users) with a view to enabling them to access premises and make use of the facilities and services therein on an equal basis with others, thereby facilitating them to live independently and integrate into the community.

In planning the pedestrian network in new towns and new development areas, the Government will fully consider the needs of pedestrians (including wheelchair users and other people in need), provide footpaths of sufficient width and set up appropriate pedestrian crossing facilities to enhance the travel experience of wheelchair users and other pedestrians.

The Government will keep in contact with organisations of persons with disabilities, and pay heed to their views on the circumstances which they encounter in the daily use of barrier-free access and facilities.

LCQ20: Quality of lunch boxes of primary school lunch suppliers

Following is a question by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

It is learnt that as most primary schools in Hong Kong are whole-day schools now, students of these schools have to have lunch at school, and many students eat lunch boxes pre-ordered by schools from lunch suppliers (pre-ordered lunch boxes). However, many parents have relayed that the quality of pre-ordered lunch boxes varies, and some students find them unpalatable or discard them just after having a few bites, causing worries about inadequate nutrition uptake in students. There are views that while requiring lunch suppliers to provide nutritious lunches, the Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch

for Students published by the Department of Health provide no specific recommendations on the overall food quality of the lunches. On the other hand, it has been reported by Mainland media that many primary schools on the Mainland are equipped with their own canteens, providing students with lunches prepared by cooks on site that are both nutritious and delicious. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider formulating guidelines on the overall food quality of pre-ordered lunch boxes to ensure that students can enjoy lunches that are both nutritious and delicious;

(2) in the past three years, whether it received complaints from parents about the food quality of pre-ordered lunch boxes; if so, how the complaints were dealt with; and

(3) whether it will consider emulating the practice of some primary schools in our country and set up canteens at subsidised schools to provide students with nutritious and delicious lunches prepared on site?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to healthy eating among children and has been encouraging schools to formulate a policy on healthy eating conducive to promoting students' good eating habits and healthy lifestyle. Schools generally take into account factors like scales of suppliers, food quality and hygiene, prices, views of parents holistically when choosing school lunch suppliers.

In consultation with the Health Bureau, the Department of Health (DH), and the Environment and Ecology Bureau, our consolidated reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing is as follows:

(1) The current Nutritional Guidelines on Lunch for Students was published by the DH in 2006 and has been updated ever since. The main objectives of the Guidelines are to ensure that primary and secondary school students can have nutritionally balanced school lunches that meet the needs of their growth and development, and serve as a reference for the quantity and quality of food as stipulated in the contracts signed between schools and lunch suppliers. The Guidelines also recommend the use of ingredients low in oil, salt, and sugar, and more natural ingredients, herbs, and spices to enhance the flavour of dishes, making lunches more appetising. The Education Bureau (EDB) has also issued circulars to call on schools to refer to relevant guidelines when arranging lunch for students and observe the principles of healthy eating such as the suggested ratio of grains, vegetables and meat in a lunch box, and reducing intake of fat, salt and sugar by students. Moreover, it was announced in the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address that the Whole School Health Programme launched by the DH will be strengthened. Health reports will be compiled for each participating school to recommend targeted school-based health promotion measures, which will include diet arrangements focusing on

nutrition, growth and development needs.

(2) The EDB has been promoting home-school co-operation to encourage schools to explain to parents the schools' policy on healthy eating and encourage parents to echo with schools' efforts by guiding their children to consume food with high nutritional value and having the meals with them in order to help children develop healthy eating habits. Schools are also encouraged to engage parents in the discussion of lunch arrangements such as inviting them to join the lunch supplier selection team to formulate lunch requirements, selection criteria and marking scheme. Schools should also maintain communication with parents on the nutritional value and quality of the lunch provided, collect views from parents and students regularly and provide timely feedback to the lunch suppliers so as to jointly monitor and improve the quality of school lunch. If necessary, parents may prepare healthy lunchboxes for their children. From the 2022/23 school year up to January of the current school year, the EDB received a total of two complaints about the food quality of school lunch boxes from parents. The cases were found unsubstantiated after investigation.

(3) Given the different conditions and needs of schools, schools may opt for lunchboxes prepacked by lunch suppliers, or adopt on-site meal portioning as encouraged by the EDB. In on-site meal portioning, school lunch suppliers may cook rice and vegetables on-site and reheat other food (e.g. meat) at the school campuses. Schools built according to the EDB's Schedule of Accommodation updated in 2009/10 are provided with a tuck shop-cum-central portioning area as part of the standard provision of school facilities for implementation of on-site meal portioning.

EDB announces arrangements for third round of Basic Law and National Security Law Test in 2024/25 school year

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (February 19) announced that the third round of the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) in the 2024/25 school year will be open for application from 9am on February 21 to 5pm on March 6. The test will be held on April 12 (Saturday).

The target participants for the third round of the test are persons with a bachelor's degree or those who will attain a bachelor's degree in the 2024/25 or 2025/26 academic year and are planning to join or change to another secondary school, primary school or kindergarten to take up a teaching post. Applications can be made through the EDB's online application

system (www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst). Limited places for the test will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who have already obtained a pass result in the BLNST organised by the EDB, the Civil Service Bureau or recruiting departments/grades for degree holders will not be accepted to sit the test again.

Starting from the 2023/24 school year, all newly appointed teachers in public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (including newly joined teachers and teachers changing schools) are required to pass the BLNST in order to be considered for appointment. The requirement applies to all ranks of the teacher grade including principals.

The EDB is conducting five rounds of the BLNST for degree holders and non-degree holders respectively this school year. Details are available on the EDB webpage (www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst). The fourth round will be open for non-degree holders and will be held on June 22 (Sunday). The fifth round will be open for degree holders and will be held on July 19 (Saturday). Relevant arrangements will be announced in due course.

LCQ8: Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work

Following is a question by the Hon Lam So-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

The Labour Department (LD) launched on May 2 last year the revised "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" (GN) and introduced the optimised Heat Stress at Work Warning system. However, some labour unions have relayed that GN and the optimised measures are virtually non-existent (including the fact that some companies still do not arrange rest time or shaded areas for rest breaks for their employees), failing to help employees in preventing heat stroke. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cases of heat stroke-related work injury cases registered at LD in the past three years; whether it has reviewed if the number of heat stroke-related work injury cases registered has decreased after the revision of GN; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the details; if the outcome of the review is in the negative, whether it has studied the reasons for that;

(2) after the revision of GN, of the respective numbers of advice or warnings

given by the authorities against employers who have not taken sufficient measures to prevent heat stroke; as the Secretary for Labour and Welfare indicated in a media interview in May last year that for employers who deliberately do not follow GN, the authorities will invoke the provision of general responsibility of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509) to institute prosecutions, of the number of such prosecutions so far; and

(3) of the specific timetable for reviewing GN; whether the authorities will consider legislating to mandate employers to conduct workplace heat stress risk assessment for their employees so as to further ensure the safety of employees; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Lam So-wai's question is as follows:

(1) The number of work injury cases related to heat stress in the past three years is listed below:

Year	2022	2023	2024
Total number of cases	16	31	29*

* As some suspected cases are still under investigation, the number of cases in 2024 is provisional and subject to change based on the investigation outcome.

The increase in the number of cases is probably related to the issuance of the "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" (GN) by the Labour Department (LD) in 2023 and the extensive publicity carried out in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Council. The GN raised employers' and employees' awareness and concern about heat stroke at work, as well as their understanding that heat stroke at work can be considered and handled as work injuries, thus resulting in an increase in the reporting of relevant cases in 2023 and 2024.

(2) In the summer of 2024, the LD conducted a total of 23 620 inspections related to risk control measures against heat stress and issued 1 031 warnings to relevant stakeholders. The warnings were mainly related to failure to conduct a heat stress risk assessment in accordance with the GN to ensure the implemented heat stroke preventive measures are appropriate and effective, failure to keep records of heat stress risk assessment, or failure to take adequate preventive measures to reduce the risk of heat stroke at work. We did not find any serious contravention in the period of inspection that warranted prosecution under the general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSH0). We believe that most employers recognise the need to prevent their employees from getting heat stroke at work and are willing to take necessary measures against heat stress

in accordance with the recommendations in the GN.

(3) In 2023, the LD issued the GN and introduced the Heat Stress at Work Warning (HSWW) based on the Hong Kong Heat Index to enable employers and employees to formulate, with reference to the GN and according to the heat stress level, appropriate and risk-based control measures to reduce the risk of heat stroke posed to employees at work.

Taking into account the views of various stakeholders, the LD expedited the review in May 2024 with parts of the GN revised and strengthened in order to enhance the employers' and employees' understanding of the criteria and recommendations provided in the GN. At the same time, the HSWW system was optimised by linking its warning with the Hong Kong Observatory's "Extremely Hot" special alert and adjusting the cancellation mechanism of HSWW further so that the re-issuance of warning within a short time after cancellation was significantly reduced in 2024.

Under the general duty clauses of section 6 of the OSHO, every employer must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and health at work of all the employer's employees, including the provision or maintenance of a working environment and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health of the employees. Employers are required to conduct heat stress risk assessments for employees working in hot environment, and take necessary risk control measures based on the assessment results to prevent employees from getting heat stroke at work. The LD will conduct inspection and law enforcement work. In particular, inspection of workplaces with a higher risk of heat stroke will be stepped up during summer time to ensure that employers have taken appropriate measures to safeguard employees against heat stroke at work. If irregularities are found during inspection, relevant law enforcement actions will be taken based on the seriousness of the circumstances and the evidence available.

We believe that the GN can raise the awareness and capacity of employers and employees in preventing heat stroke at work, and we will continue to conduct various publicity and promotional activities as well as education and training work to remind and assist them to take appropriate heat stroke preventive measures in accordance with the GN. Moreover, the LD will continue to perform inspection and law enforcement work to monitor the implementation of heat stroke prevention measures in high-risk industries and ensure that employers have taken appropriate measures to prevent employees from getting heat stroke at work.