

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (May 18):

Reporter: The so-called incentive plan for vaccinated people was not much of a difference. With Europe and the US opening up for travel by summer, is Hong Kong afraid of being left out of the social global reopening if it doesn't do more for vaccinated people? Second question, media reports that the authorities will crack down on the June 4 vigil, from organiser and citizens will be arrested, to District Council (members) will be disqualified. Can you confirm that? And when will the vigil be allowed to happen again? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, the foremost priority of the Hong Kong SAR Government, and indeed of many governments, is to keep the city safe, is to fight COVID-19. I realise it is important to resume a number of activities, to have some travelling with the Mainland and with overseas places, but nothing is more important than to keep the city safe and to keep our people safe. We will not sacrifice this very important mission just because we want to rush to resume travel. This highly responsible attitude is being displayed by Singapore and Hong Kong in postponing for a second time the Air Travel Bubble. I hope this is well appreciated by the people of Hong Kong and also by the global community because fighting COVID-19 is a global endeavour. We need solidarity and co-operation in order to effectively fight COVID-19.

Having said that, I do confess we could do much better in terms of vaccination. We have enough supply – I said that we have administered 2 million doses, but we have another 2 million doses in our storeroom. We have a whole network of Community Vaccination Centres, and from today onwards, we are even reaching out to major companies which have the suitable venue for them to assemble their staff, say up to 150 and 200, and then we will send the medical team to provide vaccination to the staff onsite, the first dose and then later on the second dose. I doubt any places have that sort of service for their people to receive vaccination. I hope that the appeal is not so much to us, it's to the people of Hong Kong. That's why I said I am very pleased to read at least two editorials this morning, one in Chinese, saying that since we are approaching zero (infection), let's do more on vaccination. I think that's an appeal to the people. Then in the English newspaper it said that in light of the Taiwan experience, vaccination is the only way out. That is my response.

On all the other things you have mentioned, they are speculative reports and I'm sorry, the Chief Executive does not wish to comment on speculative reports.

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

Special enforcement operation targets new works construction sites in Kai Tak Development Area and Kowloon Bay

The Labour Department (LD) has been attaching great importance to the work safety of construction workers, and is also determined to safeguard the employment opportunities of local workers. To curb unsafe work activities and crack down on illegal employment, the LD commenced a four-week Special Enforcement Operation on April 23 targeting the new works sites in the Kai Tak Development Area and Kowloon Bay.

To crack down on the employment of illegal workers, Labour Inspectors of the LD, vested with the authority of Part IVB of the Immigration Ordinance, checked 84 workers on employee's proof of identity at the new work sites of the Kai Tak Development Area during the operation. Fourteen contractors were also checked to see if employees' compensation insurance was in place under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance.

The LD's spokesman today (May 18) warned, "Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Immigration Ordinance, employers are required by law to take all practicable steps to ensure that job seekers are lawfully employable before employing them. Employing illegal workers is a serious offence. Employers are liable to a fine of \$350,000 and imprisonment for three years upon conviction. In addition, pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, no employer shall employ any employee in any employment unless there is in force a policy of insurance to cover his or her liabilities under the laws (including the common law) for injuries at work in respect of all his or her employees. An employer who fails to secure insurance cover is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years."

The spokesman added, "In the third week of the operation, the Occupational Safety Officers of the LD inspected 17 new works sites with 97 improvement notices issued and 15 prosecutions initiated. The above-mentioned legal notices and prosecutions mainly involved issues including failure to erect guard rails at floor edges, failure to use safe working platforms, failure to secure the loads during lifting operations adequately, and failure to wear suitable safety helmets and eye protectors by workers. During the operation, the LD also noticed that some contractors had failed to properly maintain the excavators and operate them safely for excavation work, which may cause the excavators to overturn, and hence result in serious accidents."

During the first three weeks of the operation, the LD inspected a total

of 54 new works sites with 314 improvement notices issued and 37 prosecutions initiated. Pursuant to the general duty provisions of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, employers shall provide safe working environments, safe plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The LD once again reminds contractors and employers to provide plant and devise systems of work for their work activities that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use the provided personal protective equipment properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers. For employees' rights and benefits, the employers shall ensure that job seekers are lawfully employable before employing them, and take out employees' compensation insurance.

Government receives tentative results of 2021 Pay Trend Survey

A spokesman for the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) said that the bureau received the tentative results of the 2021 Pay Trend Survey from the secretariat of the Pay Trend Survey Committee (PTSC) today (May 18).

The tentative results, presented in the form of gross pay trend indicators (PTIs), show the rates of pay adjustment in the private sector in three salary bands for the period from April 2, 2020, to April 1, 2021. The PTSC will meet next week to decide whether to validate the gross PTIs.

"The Chief Executive-in-Council will fully consider all relevant factors under the established annual civil service pay adjustment mechanism in determining the annual civil service pay adjustment. These factors include the net PTIs (see attachment) calculated from the gross PTIs, the state of Hong Kong's economy, the Government's fiscal position, changes in the cost of living, the pay claims of the staff side and civil service morale," the CSB spokesman said.

Pay Trend Survey Committee Meeting on

May 18, 2021

The following is issued on behalf of the Pay Trend Survey Committee:

The 2021 Pay Trend Survey Report (2021 PTS Report), compiled by the Pay Survey and Research Unit of the Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service, has been distributed to Members of the Pay Trend Survey Committee (PTSC) earlier today (May 18).

The survey has indicated the following average pay adjustments in the surveyed companies over the 12-month period from April 2, 2020, to April 1, 2021.

Tentative findings of the 2021 Pay Trend Survey (PTS) (subject to verification)

	Basic Pay Indicator	+	Additional Pay Indicator	=	Gross Pay Trend Indicator
Lower Salary Band (below \$24,070 per month)	1.67%	+	-1.19%	=	0.48%
Middle Salary Band (\$24,070 – \$73,775 per month)	2.03%	+	-1.54%	=	0.49%
Upper Salary Band (\$73,776 – \$147,235 per month)	1.60%	+	-2.60%	=	-1.00%

Members of the PTSC are at present studying the PTS Report in detail. Subject to their analysis and deliberation, the PTSC will verify and consider whether to validate the findings of the survey at its meeting scheduled for May 26. After that, the PTSC will submit the survey findings to the Government.

In accordance with the established practice, the Chief Executive-in-Council (CE-in-Council) will take into account the pay trend indicators derived from the PTS and other pertinent considerations (such as the state of Hong Kong's economy, the Government's fiscal position, changes in the cost of living, the pay claims of the staff side and civil service morale) before making a decision on the 2021-22 civil service pay adjustment.

The survey results reflect the pay trend in 113 companies covering 145 544 employees over the 12-month period from April 2, 2020, to April 1, 2021. Among these companies, there are 83 larger companies (employing 100 or more staff) and 30 smaller companies (employing 50 to 99 staff). These companies are regarded as typical employers in their respective fields, and are

generally known as steady and good employers with rational and systematic salary administration.

The survey is conducted in accordance with the improved methodology as approved by the CE-in-Council in March 2007. The survey takes into account adjustments to basic salary and additional payments awarded to employees of the surveyed companies attributable to factors in relation to cost of living, general prosperity and company performance, general changes in market rates, merit and inscale increment.

The PTSC is chaired by Mr Lee Luen-fai, who is a member of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service. Mr Lee wishes to express the PTSC's sincere appreciation for the co-operation and assistance rendered by the companies that participated in the 2021 PTS.

Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan) temporarily suspends operations

The Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan) (HKETCO) has temporarily suspended operations with effect from today (May 18). During the temporary suspension of HKETCO operations, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will continue to handle general enquiries and requests for assistance made by Hong Kong residents in Taiwan, as well as provide Taiwan residents with information related to Hong Kong, through the hotline services of 1823 and 1868, and the GovHK website.