

Appointment of Research Grants Council Chairman

The Government announced today (June 12) that the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, has appointed Professor Joseph Lee Hun-wei as Chairman of the Research Grants Council (RGC) for a term of three years with effect from July 1, 2020.

Professor Lee is an expert in environmental hydraulics, water quality modelling and environmental management. He is currently a member of the RGC, as well as the Senior Advisor to the President of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and Chair Professor of the Guangzhou HKUST Fok Ying Tung Research Institute. He was a member of the Engineering Panel under the RGC between 1993 and 1998.

"Professor Lee is a distinguished scholar, seasoned educator and university administrator. With his ample experience in higher education and research, I am confident that he will continue to advance the vibrant research culture in academia and lead the RGC in rendering enhanced support to the research community in the years to come," Mr Yeung said.

Mr Yeung also paid tribute to Professor Benjamin W Wah, the outgoing Chairman of the RGC, for his valuable contributions during his chairmanship of over seven years. "Under Professor Wah's sterling leadership, the RGC has continued to excel and firmly established itself as a respected and major academic research funding body in Hong Kong that stands international comparison and contributes to building a solid foundation for research in Hong Kong," he said.

"Professor Wah has provided invaluable counsel on research-related matters. He has spearheaded new research funding schemes to meet the diversified needs of different scholars in the research arena. During his tenure, there has been increasing collaboration between the RGC and other research bodies from both the Mainland and overseas."

The RGC advises the Government, through the University Grants Committee, on the needs of Hong Kong's higher education institutions in the field of academic research and on the distribution of funding for academic research projects undertaken by academic staff of higher education institutions. The RGC manages a variety of research funding programmes, including the General Research Fund, the Early Career Scheme, the Collaborative Research Fund, the Research Impact Fund, the Theme-based Research Scheme, the Areas of Excellence Scheme and various Joint Research Schemes. It has set up committees and subject panels to assess research bids in various disciplines, such as biology and medicine, business studies, engineering, humanities and social sciences, and physical sciences. It also manages a number of fellowship schemes, including the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme and the RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme.

Import and export of mercury to be controlled under Import and Export (General) Regulations

The Import and Export (General) Regulations (Amendment of Schedules 1 and 2) Order 2020 (Amendment Order) to control the import and export of mercury was gazetted today (June 12).

The Amendment Order seeks to subject mercury trading to the import and export control under the Import and Export (General) Regulations (Cap. 60 sub. leg. A). Under the Amendment Order, elemental mercury as a scheduled article specified in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 to the Regulations will be subject to the respective import and export licensing control to be administered by the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) under the delegated authority of the Director-General of Trade and Industry.

"The Amendment Order will enable Hong Kong to effectively fulfil the obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury to restrict the import and export of mercury," a spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said.

The Convention, which came into force in August 2017, is an international legally binding treaty to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. The People's Republic of China is one of the Parties to the Convention, which also applies to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. One of the obligations under the Convention is to control the import and export of mercury by establishing a prior written consent mechanism to regulate mercury trading. Before issuing a licence, the DEP will consider whether the use of the mercury will be allowed under the Convention, whether the mercury will be stored in an environmentally sound manner, whether the source of the mercury is allowed under the Convention in the case of an import licence, and whether the import of the mercury is agreeable to the importing side in the case of an export licence. These factors for consideration will be stated in the application guidelines to be issued by the EPD.

The Amendment Order will be tabled in the Legislative Council for negative vetting on June 17, and will take effect on November 1, 2020.

Updates to regulations for merchant ships on prevention of pollution proposed

The Government proposes to amend the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulation, the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulation and the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution) Regulation to incorporate the latest requirements of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of the International Maritime Organization into local legislation.

A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau today (June 12) said, "The proposed amendments involve allowing the use of electronic record books on board ships as an alternative to traditional hard copy record books, and the scope of application of Energy Efficiency Design Index requirements to ships having ice-breaking capabilities." The amendments are in line with the trend of transacting shipping business by electronic means, and will contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development.

The Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development and the Hong Kong Fleet Operation Advisory Committee of the Marine Department have been consulted on the legislative proposal. Members supported the proposal.

The proposed legislative amendments were gazetted today and will be tabled at the Legislative Council on June 17 for negative vetting.

Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Health hazards of hot environment at work" on June 18 (Thursday). The talk, designed for workers in hot environments to enhance their awareness of heat stroke prevention, will cover symptoms of heat stroke, its first aid treatment and preventive measures.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational health nurse and occupational hygienist at 3pm in the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

The LD will hold another talk entitled "Occupational safety and health (OSH) for confined space workers" on June 22 (Monday). To enhance workers' OSH awareness in regard to confined spaces, the talk will explain the related

OSH hazards as well as their preventive measures.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational hygienist, occupational safety officer and occupational health nurse at 3pm in Activity Room 1, G/F, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

Both talks will be conducted in Cantonese. Admission is free. Infection control measures taking into account the latest epidemic developments will be adopted at both venues. For enquiries or registration, please call 2852 4040.

[HKSAR Government firmly opposes UK report](#)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government made the following response today (June 12) to the Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong (July to December 2019) issued by the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (the Report):

The HKSAR Government reiterated its firm commitment to the implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle in accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Basic Law). We firmly oppose and express deep regret over the Report's inaccurate and biased remarks on the national security law and the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the HKSAR.

The spokesman of the HKSAR Government said, "Since the return to the Motherland, the HKSAR has maintained stability and prosperity under the principle of 'one country, two systems', and implemented 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy in strict accordance with the Basic Law.

"According to Article 1 of the Basic Law, the HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Article 12 of the Basic Law stipulates that the HKSAR shall be a local administrative region of the PRC which shall enjoy a high degree of autonomy and come directly under the Central People's Government (CPG). The implementation of the 'one country, two systems' policy in the HKSAR is entirely the internal affairs of the PRC. Every other state has no right to intervene, directly or indirectly, in those internal affairs.

"It is absolutely wrong and totally groundless for the Report to allege that the enactment of the national security law for the HKSAR by the Central Authorities 'lie[s] in direct conflict' with Article 23 of the Basic Law. In accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law, the HKSAR is authorised to legislate national security laws. However, it does not preclude the Central Authorities from legislating at a state level for national security.

Legislating on national security is within the purview of the Central Authorities and is outside the limits of the autonomy of the HKSAR. In view of the current situation in Hong Kong and the difficulty faced by the HKSAR to complete on its own legislation for safeguarding national security in the foreseeable future, the Central Authorities have the right and duty to introduce a national law to improve at the state level the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms for national security for the HKSAR.

"The Decision adopted by the National People's Congress (NPC) on establishing and improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security (the Decision) is within the power and authority of the NPC. The national security law to be formulated by the Standing Committee of the NPC in accordance with the Decision aims to prevent, stop and punish acts and activities to split the country, subvert state power, organise and carry out terrorist activities and other behaviour that seriously endanger national security, as well as activities of foreign and external forces to interfere in the affairs of the HKSAR. It will only target an extremely small minority of criminals.

"The national security law helps better protect the legitimate rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people, restore stability in Hong Kong, and safeguard the long-term prosperity and stability of the city. Any allegation that the law will undermine Hong Kong people's freedoms and 'one country, two systems' is no more than alarmist speculation and simply fallacious.

"The national security law will neither undermine 'one country, two systems' nor change the executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, enjoyed by the HKSAR. There will be no impact on the various rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people in accordance with the law. The national security law will create favourable conditions for strengthening the foundation of the successful implementation of 'one country, two systems' and ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

"The Report alleged that China and the HKSAR Government had sought to characterise the protests as primarily socio-economic, rather than political, in nature and blamed 'foreign forces' for instigating the unrest. In fact, notwithstanding that the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 was formally withdrawn at the Legislative Council meeting on October 23, 2019, Hong Kong has been besieged by escalating violence since June 2019. The emergence of incidents involving explosives and firearms has posed risks of terrorism, seriously jeopardising public safety. In addition, organisations advocating 'Hong Kong independence' and 'self-determination', allegedly supported by foreign or external forces, have incited protesters, especially young people, to challenge the authority of the Central Authorities and the HKSAR Government. These are the facts on the ground. The Police have a statutory duty to take appropriate actions to maintain law and order and safeguard public safety, so as to protect the life and property of the general public, bring offenders to justice and restore public order as soon as possible."

The spokesman supplemented that, "The Independent Police Complaints

Council (IPCC) submitted the 'Thematic Study Report on the Public Order Events (POEs) arising from the Fugitive Offenders Bill since June 2019 and the Police Actions in Response' to the Chief Executive (CE) on May 15. The IPCC is a statutory independent organisation comprising 26 members drawn from different professional sectors in the community, of whom eight (including the Chairman) are from the legal sector, two from the medical sector, two are accountants, one is an engineer, one is a surveyor, and other members are from the education, banking, finance, transport, commercial, public services and philanthropic sectors. The IPCC had examined a large volume of information obtained from different channels including the media, social media platforms and members of the public in order to ascertain and state the facts impartially in the Thematic Study Report for gaining a broad picture of the POEs. Amongst the information examined were 22 533 video clips and 23 550 photos. The fact-based report is comprehensive and objective, in which IPCC has also proposed 52 recommendations to the HKSAR Government. The CE has accepted all the recommendations in the report. The Secretary for Security has set up a task force and will supervise it personally to carefully study and effectively follow up on every recommendation. The Task Force would regularly submit work progress to the CE. The Police must also report to and discuss with IPCC its follow-up actions in accordance with the mechanism under the IPCC Ordinance.

The spokesman stressed, "Hong Kong has a well-established and fair criminal judicial system. Article 63 of the Basic Law provides that the 'Department of Justice of the HKSAR shall control criminal prosecutions, free from any interference'. The prosecutors have always been discharging this constitutional duty independently and professionally, without fear or favour. Prosecutorial decisions are based on an objective assessment of admissible and reliable evidence and applicable laws, made strictly in accordance with the Prosecution Code which is available to the public. Cases will not be handled any differently owing to the political beliefs, demands or backgrounds of the persons involved.

"Pursuant to the constitutional safeguards laid down in the Basic Law, the HKSAR has a well-established legal system and rule of law tradition as well as an independent judiciary and has continued to apply the common law system with which the international business community is familiar. The HKSAR Government is committed to safeguarding the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong, which has been affirmed by the relevant reports issued by various international ranking institutions. For instance, the latest Rule of Law Index 2020 released by the World Justice Project, in which Hong Kong maintains its ranking as No. 5 in the East Asia and Pacific Region and No. 16 globally, has clearly affirmed Hong Kong's commitment."

The spokesman reiterated that foreign governments, legislatures and politicians should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR.