

Advisory Committee on Countryside Conservation established

The Environment Bureau announced today (June 28) that the Advisory Committee on Countryside Conservation (ACCC) will be established on July 1, 2019 to advise on priorities for conservation and revitalisation works proposals to be carried out by the Countryside Conservation Office (CCO), as well as to advise on policy and operational matters relating to the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS).

As announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address in 2017, the Government strives to promote conservation of remote areas in the countryside, thereby protecting the natural ecology, revitalising the architectural environment of villages, and conserving cultural and heritage resources.

A spokesman for the Environment Bureau said, "To support sustainable and holistic conservation efforts in Hong Kong's remote rural countryside, the CCFS will be set up to provide a dedicated funding source for relevant countryside conservation projects covering ecological conservation, as well as the revitalisation of architectural and cultural heritage according to priorities."

Appointed and chaired by the Secretary for the Environment, the ACCC comprises scholars, professionals, rural/district stakeholders, representatives of green groups and representatives of relevant Government departments. The appointment of committee members will take effect on July 1 for a term of two years. The CCO under the Environmental Protection Department will serve as the secretariat to the ACCC.

The membership and terms of reference of the ACCC are at Annexes A and B respectively.

Speech by SFH at International Council of Nurses Congress (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at the International Council of Nurses Congress 2019 – Main Session 2 in Singapore today (June 28):

Distinguished guests, friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I would like to briefly explain the work of the Food and Health Bureau of the HKSAR. The Food and Health Bureau is firmly committed to promoting and protecting the health of all citizens in Hong Kong. We also endeavour to enhance food safety and provide quality environmental hygiene. The Government attaches great importance to the prevention of non-communicable diseases, including tobacco control.

The Government launched in May 2018 "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong", with nine local targets to be achieved by 2025 in order to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases in Hong Kong.

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health was established in 2001. It is responsible for implementing and enforcing the tobacco control legislation, particularly the smoking ban in statutory no smoking areas. Apart from law enforcement, the priority functions of the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office also include promoting a smoke-free culture and enhancing compliance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance through publicity and health education and co-ordinating the smoking cessation services.

To protect public health, it is the established policy of the Government to discourage smoking, contain the proliferation of tobacco use and protect the public from exposure to second-hand smoke as far as possible. To this end, the Government adopts a progressive and multi-pronged approach comprising legislation, enforcement, publicity, education, smoking cessation and taxation. Our current policy on tobacco control has full regard to the provisions of World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC).

With the progressive implementation of tobacco control measures and the efforts made by different sectors of the community over the past three decades, the proportion of daily smokers among the population aged 15 and above dropped with steady steps from about 23.3 per cent in 1982 to 10.0 per cent in 2017. The smoking prevalence in Hong Kong is among the lowest in the Western Pacific region. As you can see from the table, we have implemented various tobacco control initiatives over the years, including expanding no smoking areas, increasing tobacco duty, prohibiting tobacco advertisement, etc. This would not be achievable without the help from different sectors of the community.

I understand most of the people working in the tobacco control field have heard about the MPOWER. In gist, MPOWER is a policy package intended to assist in the country-level implementation of effective interventions to reduce the demand for tobacco, as ratified by WHO FCTC. The six most effective policies that can curb the tobacco epidemic are outlined in WHO's MPOWER strategy:

- Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies
- Protect people from tobacco smoke
- Offer help to quit tobacco use
- Warn about the dangers of tobacco
- Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- Raise taxes on tobacco

First of all, let us take a look on how Hong Kong monitors the use of tobacco among local population.

To monitor tobacco use, the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department has regularly conducted a population-based THS (Thematic Household Survey) to track the trend and pattern of smoking since 1982. The latest survey was conducted in 2017. For each round of survey, some 10 000 households would be selected and all persons aged 15 and above within this household would be interviewed. As mentioned earlier, the daily cigarette smoking prevalence is on a decreasing trend over the past decades from 23.3 per cent in 1982 to 10.0 per cent in 2017.

The letter "P" in the MPOWER measure is to protect people from tobacco smoke.

Starting from January 1, 2007, smoking is banned in all indoor areas of workplaces and public places in Hong Kong, including restaurants and bars, as well as outdoor areas of schools, public pleasure grounds, beaches, public transport facilities, etc, in phases.

Recently the smoking ban has been extended to bus interchanges. Non-smokers waiting and queuing for changing buses at bus interchanges would not be able to take effective measures against second-hand smoke if smoking is allowed. To protect the health of passengers, we extended the smoking ban to bus interchanges located at tunnel portal areas and leading to expressways or tunnel areas since 2016.

With the enactment of the Fixed Penalty (Smoking Offences) Ordinance in 2009, persons smoking in statutory no smoking areas and on public transport carriers are liable to a fixed penalty of HK\$1,500.

Another MPOWER measure is to offer help to quit tobacco use.

Smoking cessation is an integral and indispensable part of the Government's tobacco control policy to complement other tobacco control measures. The Department of Health operates an integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline to handle general enquiries and provide professional counselling and information on smoking cessation, and arrange referrals to various smoking cessation services in Hong Kong, including public clinics under the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority, as well as community-based cessation programmes operated by NGOs.

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office was designated by the WHO to set up the Collaborating Centre for Smoking Cessation and Treatment of Tobacco

Dependence in Hong Kong in April 2012. The Centre aims to provide evidence-based smoking cessation training for healthcare personnel; develop, test and evaluate models of smoking cessation; and assist WHO in the dissemination of information and good practices on smoking cessation.

The next measure is to warn about the dangers of tobacco. The measures that we adopted in Hong Kong are the pictorial health warning on the cigarettes packets, as well as implementing publicity and health education.

The amendment order which seeks to expand the coverage of health warnings on the packets of tobacco products from 50 per cent to 85 per cent came into effect on December 21, 2017, and into full effect on June 21, 2018. The number of forms of health warning also increased from six to 12.

We endeavour to enhance the awareness of the general public on the harmfulness of smoking, to prevent people, especially younger people, from picking up the smoking habit. The Department of Health subvents the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health to carry out publicity and education programmes, such as health talks, training programmes, theatre programmes, etc, in schools to raise awareness on smoking hazards, including the use of alternative smoking products. The Department of Health also collaborates with NGOs in organising health promotional activities at schools. The programmes aim to enlighten students to discern marketing tactics used by the tobacco industry, and equip them with skills to resist picking up the smoking habit because of peer pressure through interactive teaching materials and mobile classrooms.

The letter "E" represents enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

In Hong Kong all advertisements and promotions on tobacco products are now prohibited. The ban covers all tobacco advertisement in TV, radio, films, Internet, as well as printed media or retailers. Besides, the promotion of tobacco products, for example, giving free samples of tobacco products, giving a tobacco product as a prize or giving valuable consideration to induce an individual to buy tobacco products, are also prohibited.

The last MPOWER measure is to raise the tobacco tax, which is considered by the WHO as the single most cost effective way to reduce tobacco use.

Tobacco duty increase is long established and part and parcel of our multi-pronged approach to tobacco control. Over the years, tobacco duty has been increased progressively in tandem with the strengthening of overall tobacco control. The duty on tobacco products was last increased by about 41.5 per cent and about 11.7 per cent in 2011 and 2014 respectively to tie in with our tobacco control measures.

Now, I would like to talk about our future goals.

To safeguard our public health, we hope to bring down the smoking prevalence further to below 10 per cent. Under "Towards 2025: Strategy and

Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong", the Government has also laid down the target of further reduction smoking prevalence to 7.8 per cent by 2025, to meet the WHO NCD target.

Last but not least, I would like to share our new proposed legislative amendment to ban alternative smoking products, including e-cigarettes, heat-not-burn products and herbal cigarettes.

The emergence of alternative smoking products has posed new health risks and challenges. Often packaged as less harmful substitutes with promotion tactics targeted at youngsters and non-smokers, these products open a gateway to the eventual consumption of conventional cigarettes. The fact is: all these new smoking products are harmful to health and produce second-hand smoke. There is also a lack of sufficient evidence to prove that these products can help quit smoking. Instead, there are studies that suggested that the introduction of these new products could result in dual use with conventional cigarettes. The public may underestimate the harmful effects of these products and eventually endorse the smoking image and relevant behaviours once again. There is increasing evidence that both e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn products are definitely harmful to health and may bring about gateway effects. Overall, protecting public health should be the Government's prime consideration. We must ensure that our achievements in tobacco control over the years would not be undermined, and must prevent the harm of new products from taking root. With this in mind, the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address 2018 the legislative amendment proposal to ban the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of alternative smoking products. The Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019 was introduced into the Legislative Council in February 2019. Details of the Bill are currently being scrutinised by the Bills Committee.

Thank you very much.



Financial results for the two months ended May 31, 2019

The Government announced today (June 28) its financial results for the two months ended May 31, 2019.

Expenditure for the period April to May 2019 amounted to HK\$81 billion and revenue HK\$68.9 billion, resulting in a cumulative year-to-date deficit of HK\$4.3 billion after receipt of net proceeds of HK\$7.8 billion from issuance of green bond under the Government Green Bond Programme (Green Bond).

A government spokesperson said that the cumulative year-to-date deficit for the period was mainly due to the fact that some major types of revenue including salaries and profits taxes are mostly received towards the end of a financial year.

The fiscal reserves stood at HK\$1,166.6 billion as at May 31, 2019.

Detailed figures are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Consolidated account (Note 1)

	Month ended May 31, 2019 HK\$ million	Two months ended May 31, 2019 HK\$ million
Revenue	21,286.6	68,838.0
Expenditure	(39,068.1)	(80,991.7)
Deficit before issuance of Green Bond	(17,781.5)	(12,153.7)
Net proceeds from issuance of Green Bond	7,828.7	7,828.7
Deficit after issuance of Green Bond	(9,952.8)	(4,325.0)
Financing		
Domestic		

Banking sector (Note 2)	9,403.0	2,956.7
Non-Banking sector	549.8	1,368.3
External	–	–
Total	9,952.8	4,325.0

Government debts as at May 31, 2019 (Note 3)

HK\$9,348 million

Debts guaranteed by Government as at May 31, 2019 (Note 4)

HK\$25,614 million

Table 2. Fiscal reserves

	Month ended May 31, 2019 HK\$ million	Two months ended May 31, 2019 HK\$ million
Fiscal reserves at start of period	1,176,510.3	1,170,882.5
Consolidated deficit after issuance of Green Bond	(9,952.8)	(4,325.0)
Fiscal reserves at end of period (Note 5)	1,166,557.5	1,166,557.5

Notes:

1. This Account consolidates the General Revenue Account and the following eight Funds: Capital Works Reserve Fund, Capital Investment Fund, Civil Service Pension Reserve Fund, Disaster Relief Fund, Innovation and Technology Fund, Land Fund, Loan Fund and Lotteries Fund. It excludes the Bond Fund, the balance of which is not part of the fiscal reserves. The Bond Fund balance as at May 31, 2019 was HK\$144,708 million.

2. Includes transactions with the Exchange Fund and resident banks.

3. The Government Debts include the Green Bond issued in May 2019 to institutional investors totalling US\$1,000 million (equivalent to HK\$7,848 million as at May 31, 2019) with maturity in May 2024, in addition to the outstanding institutional notes totalling HK\$1,500 million as at May 31, 2019 with maturity in July 2019. They do not include the outstanding bonds with nominal value of HK\$101,235 million and alternative bonds with nominal value of US\$3,000 million (equivalent to HK\$23,544 million as at May 31, 2019) issued under the Government Bond Programme (with proceeds credited to the Bond Fund). Of these bonds under the Government Bond Programme (including Silver Bonds with nominal value of HK\$8,735million, which may be redeemed before maturity upon request from bond holders), bonds with nominal value of

HK\$10,000 million were repaid upon maturity on June 20, 2019; bonds with nominal value of HK\$22,253 million and alternative bonds with nominal value of US\$1,000 million (equivalent to HK\$7,848 million as at May 31, 2019) will mature within the period from July 2019 to May 2020 and the rest within the period from June 2020 to March 2034.

4. Includes guarantees provided under the SME Loan Guarantee Scheme launched in 2001, the Special Loan Guarantee Scheme launched in 2008, the Special Concessionary Measures under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme launched in 2012, and a commercial loan of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation.

5. Includes HK\$219,730 million being the balance of the Land Fund held in the name of "Future Fund" as from January 1, 2016, for long-term investments initially up to December 31, 2025. As from July 1, 2016, the Future Fund also includes HK\$4,800 million, being one-third of the actual surplus in 2015-16 as top-up.

Hong Kong as an Information Society (2019 Edition) published

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (June 28) a publication entitled "Hong Kong as an Information Society (2019 Edition)".

This publication presents statistics compiled from a variety of data sources relevant to the development of an information society in Hong Kong, including the recent developments in information and communication technology services, the external trade of information and communication technology goods, and the use and penetration of information technology in the business, household and government sectors. Analyses of the demand for manpower in the information technology field and development of relevant educational programmes are also provided.

The publication is available for downloading free of charge from the website of the C&SD at www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/statistical_report/commerce_and_industry/index_cd_B1110006_dt_latest.jsp.

Enquiries about this publication can be directed to the Science and Technology Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7291 or email: itsurvey@censtatd.gov.hk).

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The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited on phishing email, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on [the HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the email concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the email should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.