

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session after attending the Legislative Council Panel on Transport meeting today (February 15):

Reporter: Was there any negligence on the part of the Highways Department over its monitoring role? And also was there any cover-up at all as it hasn't come to light until there's a media report?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I would say that it's far too early to speculate whether (there is) any kind of wrong-doing like this. Of course, there is natural expectation of such. I think we need to take into account the fact, record, as well as subsequent investigation. If there is anything that's gone wrong, we would tackle it.

Reporter: Is there any negligence on the part of the Highways Department over its monitoring?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As Director Chan (Director of Highways, Mr Jimmy Chan) has just mentioned, if the staff or the team who's looking after this particular project could have been more sensitive to the report from their engineering consultant, the situation could have been better.

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

Temporary closure of some LCSD leisure and sports facilities

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (February 15) that the following leisure and sports facilities will be temporarily closed:

(a) The Spiral Lookout Tower in Tai Po Waterfront Park will be temporarily closed from February 18 to April 17 for maintenance works.

(b) The squash courts and table tennis rooms at Tai Po Sports Ground Squash and Tennis Centre will be temporarily closed from February 19 to August 25 for refurbishment works. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Tai Po Sports Centre, Tai Wo Sports Centre, Fu Heng Sports Centre, Fu Shin Sports Centre or Tai Po Hui Sports Centre in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and

sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venues or contact venue staff directly.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, February 15, 2019 is 103.9 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (February 15) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches which are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

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Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a storm or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the department's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

CFS announces test results of targeted surveillance on use of sulphur dioxide in meat

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (February 15) released the test results of a targeted food surveillance project on the use of sulphur dioxide in meat. Among some 600 samples tested, except for seven samples found to contain sulphur dioxide, a non-permitted preservative in fresh meat, which were announced

earlier, all the remaining samples passed the test. The overall satisfactory rate was 98.8 per cent.

"In view of detection of the preservative in fresh meat samples in the past, the CFS has conducted targeted surveillance projects regularly on the use of the chemical in meat in recent years. Samples of beef, pork and mutton were collected from fresh provision shops, supermarkets, market meat stalls and online retailers for testing. The sampling locations also included meat shops and stalls which had previous records of selling meat containing sulphur dioxide," a spokesman for the CFS said.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried fruits, pickled vegetables and meat products such as sausages and grilled burgers. However, under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD), it is not permitted in fresh or chilled meat. Nonetheless, individual meat traders have been found illegally using sulphur dioxide to make meat look fresher. Sulphur dioxide is of low toxicity. As it is water-soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to sulphur dioxide may experience breathing difficulty, headache and nausea.

Under the Regulation, the maximum penalty upon conviction of using sulphur dioxide in fresh or chilled meat is a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to comply with the law and not to sell fresh or chilled meat containing sulphur dioxide. Members of the public should purchase food from reliable market stalls or fresh provision shops, and avoid buying or consuming meat which is unnaturally red.