

Over 650 datasets to be released in first year of government open data plans

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer announced today (January 3) that over 80 government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) had published their first annual open data plans before the end of 2018. Over 650 new datasets will be released in 2019 via the Public Sector Information (PSI) Portal (data.gov.hk) for free viewing and use by the public.

In her first Policy Address, the Chief Executive outlined eight major areas for innovation and technology development. One of these areas is opening up government data to provide raw materials for technology research, innovation and smart city development. The Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology personally chaired by the Chief Executive subsequently firmed up in September 2018 a new policy on opening up government data. The Government Chief Information Officer, Mr Victor Lam, said, "Under the new policy, B/Ds should endeavour to release their data for free public use on the PSI Portal, unless there are justifiable reasons such as involvement of personal privacy. B/Ds should also explore with public and commercial organisations to come up with measures in opening up data with a high degree of public interest."

Open data provides raw materials for technology research and city innovation. Members of the public can browse, download, distribute, reproduce, print and hyperlink all datasets disseminated via the PSI Portal free of charge, for both commercial and non-commercial uses.

"Over 650 new datasets will be opened up in the first year. By the end of 2019, the number of datasets on the PSI Portal will be increased from around 3 300 to close to 4 000 in total, an increase of about 20 per cent," Mr Lam added.

The new datasets cover different areas, including data related to the economy and livelihood, real-time meteorological data, geospatial data, digital maps that can facilitate smart city development, and data that can enhance city management.

To enhance the usability of data, all datasets on the PSI Portal follow international practices and are released in machine-readable formats commonly used by the industry, such as JSON, XML and CSV. The datasets are also annotated with appropriate data descriptions for easy understanding by the public and facilitating search through search engines. Other measures include retaining historical data, encouraging B/Ds to provide geospatial data, providing more Application Programming Interfaces and updating data in a timely manner.

A dedicated feedback form has been provided on the websites of B/Ds and the PSI Portal to allow the public to provide comments and suggestions at any time on the annual open data plans and applications of data.

The annual open data plans of B/Ds can be found on their respective websites and a full list of the plans is available on the PSI Portal.

HA to consider Budget for 2019-20

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

The Finance Committee (FC) of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) held a meeting today (January 3) on the HA's proposed budgets and forecasts for the period 2018-19 to 2022-23. After the meeting, the FC Chairman, Professor Chan Ka-lok, said, "The HA is projected to have the necessary financial resources to meet its recurrent expenditure and implement its current public housing construction programme and maintenance programme in the budget and forecast period."

On the basis of the prevailing assumptions, the cash and investment balance of the HA is projected to decrease slightly from about \$45 billion at the beginning of April 2018 to about \$41 billion by the end of March 2023.

"If and when there are changes to any of the assumptions, the projected financial position will be different. In the face of the upcoming uncertainties, the HA will have to remain vigilant and exercise prudent financial control, to ensure that public funds will continue to be used in the most cost-effective manner. According to the established mechanism, the HA will conduct the annual rolling five-year budgeting process and assess its financial position and future funding requirements," Professor Chan added.

Based on the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2018 announced by the Government last month, the public housing supply target for the 10-year period from 2019-20 to 2028-29 will be 315 000 units, which represents an increase of 35 000 flats compared to the public housing supply target announced in 2017. The relevant financial implications will be reflected in the annual rolling five-year budgets as appropriate.

To achieve the public housing supply target, the Government stands ready to increase spending on public housing and has set aside about \$82.4 billion as the Housing Reserve to provide financial support to the HA.

Today, the FC endorsed the Revised Budget for 2018-19 and the Proposed Budget for 2019-20. The FC has also noted the Financial Forecasts for 2020-21 to 2022-23.

The HA meeting will examine the Budget on January 25.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates of medical wards in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority (HA) is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate of medical wards in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

In addition, the weekly bulletin "Surge in Brief" (appended) will be issued every Thursday to illustrate the four-week trend of key service statistics in public hospitals. "Surge in Brief" can be accessed in the HA Winter Surge designated webpage (www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en).

Red flags hoisted at Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 3) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Entries invited for flower show plant exhibit competition

Members of the public are invited to enrol for the plant exhibit competition, which is one of the major activities of the Hong Kong Flower Show 2019. Application is free of charge and will remain open until January 23. A quota is set for each section of the competition. Entrants will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

The flower show will be held in Victoria Park for 10 days from March 15 to 24 featuring "When Dreams Blossom" as the main theme and with the Chinese hibiscus as the theme flower.

The competition is divided into 15 sections including orchid, Chinese cymbidium, potted plant, cactus and succulent, foliage and carnivorous plant, African violet, bonsai-type plant, floral arrangement in Western style and Oriental style, floral art by school children, primary and secondary school potted plant growing/nursing, and the school garden plot competition.

Completed entry forms should be submitted in person or by post to the Secretariat of the Show Committee of the Hong Kong Flower Show 2019 (11/F, Leisure and Cultural Services Headquarters, 1-3 Pai Tau Street, Sha Tin), by fax (2691 7264) or by email (hkfscompetitions@lcsd.gov.hk) on or before January 23.

The prospectus and entry forms of the competition are available at the flower show webpage www.hkflowershow.hk/en/hkfs/2019/exhibits.html. For enquiries about the competition, please call 2601 8260 or visit the flower show webpage.

The flower show is presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is supporting the flower show for the seventh consecutive year and has been the Major Sponsor of the flower show since 2014.