

# Transcript of remarks by SEN

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, on the introduction of the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018 into the Legislative Council at a media session at the Central Government Offices, Tamar today (October 31):

Secretary for the Environment: The Government will introduce the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018 into the Legislative Council (LegCo) on November 14 to underpin the implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging.

The implementation of MSW charging sits at the centre of our overall waste reduction strategy. It will provide the necessary financial incentives to drive behavioural changes and encourage various sectors of the community to practise waste reduction and clean recycling. Experiences in other cities clearly show that it helps reduce waste disposal effectively. Amid the increasing waste disposal level in Hong Kong, which is higher than those in other cities like London and Seoul, in addition to combat climate change, we should introduce MSW charging to promote waste reduction and recycling in order to reduce carbon emissions.

Over the past few years, the Government has been consulting various stakeholders and the community to build understanding of and support for the introduction of this major waste reduction policy and on the relevant implementation arrangements. Last year, having regard to the views received from various trades, we announced the modified charging arrangements, which expand the scope of the use of pre-paid designated garbage bags to cover some 80 per cent of the MSW being disposed of every day. The remaining MSW will be subject to a "gate fee" when it is sent to landfills or refuse transfer stations for disposal. The modified arrangements have been largely accepted by the trades and the community.

We do not underestimate the challenges of implementing MSW charging on a territory-wide scale, and have formulated a pragmatic strategy to put this into practice.

The key strategy can be represented by "ECO": "E" stands for "education", "C" stands for "community support" and "O" for "outreaching assistance".

Number one, education and publicity hold the key to the implementation of MSW charging. Under the theme of "Dump Less, Save More", we will launch a territory-wide publicity and public education campaign, which will put due emphasis on first-hand participation, collaboration with various stakeholders and provision of on-site assistance.

Secondly, community support. The Government will put in additional

recurrent resources to support the community to practise waste reduction at source and clean recycling. As recently announced in the Policy Address, the Government will first provide an additional provision of around \$300 million to \$400 million for the next financial year, which will be further increased to no less than \$800 million to \$1,000 million from the financial year when the MSW charging is to be implemented. The amount of this annual provision would be comparable to the estimated gross revenue to be generated from MSW charging, so as to achieve the effect of "dedicated fund for dedicated use".

We plan to make use of additional resources to provide free territory-wide collection service in respect of waste plastics from non-commercial and industrial (C&I) sources and food waste from all sources in the longer run subject to the outcome of the pilot schemes on non-C&I waste plastics and C&I food waste, and implement a pilot scheme to assess the effectiveness of applying reverse vending machines in promoting the recycling of plastic beverage containers.

Thirdly, outreaching assistance. We plan to make use of additional resources to set up outreaching teams to provide on-site assistance to the community, thereby putting waste reduction and recycling, as well as MSW charging, into practice.

Lastly, I would like to say that it will take time to cultivate the necessary behavioural change. To this end, we will put in place a preparatory period of 12 to 18 months after the passage of the Bill to provide the Government, different stakeholders and other people with appropriate time to prepare for the implementation of MSW charging. We estimate that MSW charging could be implemented by end-2020 at the earliest. Let's support the "Dump Less, Save More" movement to make Hong Kong cleaner and greener in the long run. Thank you.

Reporter: What would be the penalty of not using the designated rubbish bag? Also, how can it be executed? People living in a building will throw their garbage to the garbage room on the floor, so how can you identify which bag is from which home?

Secretary for the Environment: I think the enforcement challenge is not only faced by Hong Kong, but also elsewhere which have similar waste charging mechanisms. As I have said earlier, public education and publicity is the priority, as it has been adopted in other cities. After that, enforcement arrangement will be a backup and we will have a risk-based approach. That means, if there are areas identified with frequent fly-tipping, relevant authorities will be notified and necessary enforcement arrangement will be made. Certainly, we will receive complaints on repeated locations (that do not use designated bags), and we will have arrangement on the enforcement plan.

Reporter: Mr Wong, the introduction of the MSW charging bill has been further delayed, and lawmakers will oppose to the bill. How would you assess the public perception and knowledge of this plan? Do you think many of them know about it and how is it going?

Secretary for the Environment: I would like to share with you that over the past period of time, we have been in contact with stakeholders, including business sectors, green groups, education sector, etc. My feeling is that many Hong Kong people are actually supportive to a greener and waste less society in Hong Kong. For lawmakers, we will go through our lobbying process and it is not without challenge. I think we will try our best endeavours to liaise with them because the current proposal has been improved and enhanced. It is a balanced approach, a practicable approach. Certainly, it takes time for Hong Kong to build up various facilities on recycling infrastructure. We will convince them that MSW charging policy should be given priority. Similarly in other cities, they implement MSW charging first, and at the same time they also push ahead other recycling and supporting facilities in parallel.

Reporter: Can you tell more about the penalty? Penalty for not using the bags?

Secretary for the Environment: As I said earlier, publicity and education is the priority but we will also have the enforcement arrangement. Each time if one is caught, the minimum fixed penalty is \$1,500. The amount is equivalent to a typical family's waste charging for a few years. So it would be a substantial warning to individuals if they are not following the law.

Reporter: Now that the implementation of the MSW charging will be postponed one year, how about the year 2022 waste reduction target? Will it be affected?

Secretary for the Environment: As I said earlier and similar to other cities, direction is the key. The timeline will be affected by various factors, including our waste blueprint and the timeline set for the latest MSW charging bill. I think the emphasis should be placed on the direction. We hope to gain the support from lawmakers for the passage of the bill. So, direction is the key.

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

---

## **CHP investigates suspected poisoning case after consumption of medicinal plant**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 31) investigating a suspected case of poisoning related to the consumption of soup containing Radix Fici Simplicissimae suspected to be

mixed with *Gelsemium elegans*, and appealed to members of the public not to collect, buy or consume medicinal plants of unknown origin.

The case involves a family of four persons, comprising one male and three females, aged 2 to 68. They consumed self-prepared soup containing *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* at home last night (October 30) and developed dizziness around 30 minutes after consumption. They attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Yan Chai Hospital on the same day and were in a stable condition. Three of them have been discharged after treatment.

Their urine samples and samples of the unused *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* have been sent for laboratory testing.

Initial investigations revealed that the *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* concerned was bought by a family friend in the Mainland. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"*Radix Fici Simplicissimae* is not toxic, but resembles some toxic plants, such as *Gelsemium elegans*, and it can be mixed up with these substances. Members of the public should purchase medicinal plants from licensed shops with a good reputation and should not consume medicinal plants of unknown origin. If they feel unwell after consumption, they should seek advice from healthcare professionals immediately," a spokesman for the CHP advised.

---

## [Cluster of Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae cases at United Christian Hospital](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for United Christian Hospital made the following announcement today (October 31):

Seven male patients aged 63 to 92 in a surgical ward have been confirmed to have Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) since October 23. Three of the patients concerned are being treated under isolation and are in a stable condition; one patient passed away due to his own underlying disease; and the remaining three patients have been discharged.

The Hospital Infection Control Team has followed up with the departments concerned and experts of the Centre for Health Protection. The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the ward:

1. Apply stringent contact precautions and enhance hand hygiene;
2. Enhance attention to contamination-prone procedures; and
3. Enhance cleansing and disinfection of the ward.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation on the ward. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

---

## **LCQ14: Hawker Assistance Scheme**

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 31):

Question:

Under the Hawker Assistance Scheme (the Scheme) launched by the Government in June 2013, hawker licensees of about 4 300 fixed-pitch hawker stalls in 43 hawker areas might choose to apply for a relocation cum reconstruction grant or surrender of their licences to the Government for an ex-gratia payment of \$120,000. The Scheme expired in June this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of applications for surrender of hawker licences received and approved by the Government under the Scheme;
- (2) of the number of pitches available for allocation (except those unsuitable for allocation due to safety reasons) in the 43 hawker areas upon expiry of the Scheme, with a breakdown by district and hawker area;
- (3) of the respective total numbers of licensed hawkers in the 43 hawker areas (i) before the launch and (ii) upon expiry of the Scheme, with a breakdown by district and hawker area; and
- (4) as the Government indicated at a committee meeting of this Council that it would consider re-issuing the surrendered hawker licences for application by interested parties, of the timetable and progress of the work concerned, and whether the trade and the public will be consulted on the relevant arrangements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To reduce the fire risks posed by on-street hawking activities, the Government obtained funding approval of \$230 million from the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee on March 15, 2013 for a five-year Hawker

Assistance Scheme (the Scheme) for the licensed hawkers in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas in the territory. The Scheme aims to improve the fire resisting design and capability of hawker stalls, and to relocate stalls away from staircase discharge points of buildings or emergency vehicular access.

The Scheme covers the following scope:

(a) Hawkers who are required by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to relocate their stalls for fire safety reasons may apply for a one-off relocation cum reconstruction grant to dismantle their old stalls and build new ones at the newly assigned pitch spaces to meet the fire-resisting specifications drawn up by the FEHD in consultation with the Fire Services Department and the Buildings Department;

(b) Hawkers who are not required to relocate their stalls under (a) may apply for a one-off in-situ reconstruction grant to carry out partial or full reconstruction of their stalls in-situ to meet the prescribed fire-resisting specifications for reducing fire risks; and

(c) An ex-gratia payment (EGP) of \$120,000 will be paid to hawkers (except for those whose licences are newly issued pursuant to the hawker licensing policy review in 2008-09) who opt for voluntary surrender of their hawker licences to the Government. This helps expedite the release of vacant pitches and hence facilitates the relocation of stalls which pose higher fire risks. Hawkers who have obtained a one-off grant for relocation cum reconstruction or in-situ reconstruction of their stalls under the Scheme will not be eligible for EGP, if they surrender their hawker licences subsequently.

The Scheme commenced on June 3, 2013 and ended on June 2, 2018 (i.e. closed for applications).

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows –

(1) Among the 4 330 licensed fixed-pitch hawkers in the 43 hawker areas, FEHD received applications from 854 hawkers for surrender of hawker licences for EGP in the five-year Scheme period. The approval procedures for all applications had been completed and the stalls were vacated. Besides, FEHD received 422 applications for relocation cum reconstruction grant and 3 002 applications for in-situ reconstruction grant to upgrade the fire safety standards of hawker stalls. In other words, 98.8 per cent of the licensed hawkers in the 43 hawker areas had joined the Scheme since its commencement.

(2) In processing the applications for surrender of hawker licences for EGP, some of the hawker pitches vacated were deleted as they were located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or emergency vehicular access. Some other hawker pitches vacated were used to accommodate hawker stalls which were originally located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or emergency vehicular access or those stalls necessary to be relocated for other reasons or used for the purpose of rationalising the overall layout of the hawker areas. Due to fire safety considerations, vacated hawker pitches which were located within six-metre radius in front of the staircase discharge points of buildings were

unsuitable for re-use. As a result, as at August 31, 2018, there are a total of 237 vacant hawker pitches which can be used for reallocation under the Scheme. Details are set out in Annex I. At present, FEHD is collating figures on hawker pitches within or outside the 43 hawker areas which are vacated due to other reasons. As a rough estimate, the number of vacant pitches available for allocation amounts to almost 400.

(3) The number of hawkers in the 43 hawker areas before and after the Scheme is set out in Annex II.

(4) At present, the Government has commenced consultation work in relation to the issue of new fixed-pitch hawker licences and the allocation of vacant fixed pitches. Also, meetings were held with the stakeholders (including the trade) to listen to their views. Given the limited number of vacant fixed pitches, the principles of fairness, impartiality and openness should be adopted in allocating the pitches. The Government will later report to the LegCo Panel for Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene on the latest development and recommendations.

---

## **FSDC holds forum to explore how big data and Fintech changed financial industry (with photo)**

The following is issued on behalf of the Financial Services Development Council:

The Financial Services Development Council (FSDC) and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University today (October 31) jointly hosted a forum to explore how big data and financial technology (Fintech) have changed financial institutions.

Entitled "How Big Data and FinTech Changed the World of Finance", the forum was the 29th event under the FSDC's Practitioner Speaker Series. The panel featured the Director of the Financial Services Advisory Team of EY, Mr Chris Barford, who also serves as Co-chair of the Big Data Committee of the FinTech Association of Hong Kong.

As Director in EY's Data and Analytics practice leading the Financial Services team in Hong Kong, Mr Barford said, "Due to massive technological revolutions, surveys that predict that work is going to change for us all over the next 20 years may underestimate how significant the upcoming adjustments will be. However, there is so much hope and potential. In every prior technological revolution, we have created new jobs, new opportunities and different ways of being more productive."

He added, "I encourage young graduates and university students to think for themselves how big data, Fintech and disruption will benefit Hong Kong's future as a competitive hub for financial services. The focus on working for a single large financial institution for life that was often your parents' dream is no longer the only route to a long career in financial services. At this point in your life, I would encourage you to consider a career path that embraces data, Fintech and disruption. 'Risk on', as investors would say.

"With the introduction of virtual banking licences, due in December 2018, Hong Kong is poised on the edge of a financial services revolution, which was kicked off with the use of stored value facilities over the last few years. I hope that the difference between a mainly cashless, mobile first Mainland and Hong Kong's more traditional models that rely on money, paper forms and Octopus will converge. All of these innovations rely on big data, and I am hopeful this will occur imminently thanks to the Government's focus in this area, and the significant Fintech investment that private businesses are making."

The FSDC's Practitioner Speaker Series is a project developed between the FSDC and local universities, with speakers from the financial services industry giving talks to university students about important industry facts and the skill sets required in developing a career in financial services.

#### About the FSDC

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government established the FSDC in 2013 as a high-level, cross-sectoral advisory body to engage the industry in formulating proposals to promote the further development of Hong Kong's financial services industry and to map out the strategic direction for development.

The FSDC set up five committees, namely the Policy Research Committee, the Mainland Opportunities Committee, the New Business Committee, the Market Development Committee and the Human Capital Committee, as the five streams of its work.

