

# TAC briefed on operating arrangements for Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (September 18) by the Government on the operating arrangements for the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL).

The XRL will commence operation on September 23. It will connect with the national high-speed rail network, offering direct trains to 44 destinations. During the early stage of commissioning of the XRL, there will be 114 pairs of short-haul trains daily during peak periods. As for weekdays and weekends (i.e. Friday to Sunday), there will be 70 and 82 train pairs respectively. Subject to the market demand, the train schedule can be adjusted based on patronage. There will also be 13 pairs of direct long-haul trains daily.

The TAC Chairman, Mr Larry Kwok, said, "Members note that the XRL will not only provide a faster and more convenient means of cross-boundary transport to and from the Mainland for people in Hong Kong, but also strengthen links between Hong Kong and the Mainland. It will foster commercial and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and major cities in the Mainland. As an important part of transport network with high connectivity in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the XRL will enhance the strategic role of Hong Kong as the regional transport hub. With more and more Hong Kong people working, conducting business, studying and retiring in the Mainland, the commissioning of the XRL can enhance long-term development opportunities for promoting sustainable growth in trades including tourism, commerce and professional services, which will bring out enormous economic and social benefits."

The TAC was briefed on the train schedule for short-haul and long-haul services, fares and ticket purchase arrangements, traffic and public transport arrangements to and from the West Kowloon Station, station facilities and more. In addition, the TAC Members also noted that the Government, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) have signed legal documents to vest the land or interests or other rights in respect of land for the operation of the XRL, and assigned the movable assets of the XRL to the KCRC. The KCRC has formally granted the operating right of the XRL to the MTRCL for 10 years according to the Supplemental Service Concession Agreement.

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# Coin Collection Programme

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (September 18) announces a new service schedule of the two Coin Carts under the Coin Collection Programme, for the period of October 29 to December 30. The schedule and other details of the Programme are shown on the HKMA webpage ([coincollection.hkma.gov.hk](http://coincollection.hkma.gov.hk)).

Since the launch of the Programme in October 2014, the two Coin Carts have completed 21 cycles of serving the 18 districts on August 26, 2018. The Carts had carried out 480 000 transactions, collecting 399 million coins with a total face value of HK\$547 million during the period. The collected coins are re-circulated to meet demand.

The Coin Carts provide service at locations that are convenient to the public without affecting the normal flow of traffic and pedestrians. Locations that have suitable power supply facilities, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department mobile library service locations, are preferred so as to reduce the need for using the Coin Carts' own stand-by generators. This makes the Programme more environmentally friendly. In selecting the service locations, the HKMA has taken into consideration comments and suggestions given by district councils and members of public; and has consulted the Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force as necessary.

The two Coin Carts collect coins from members of public in the 18 districts of Hong Kong on a rotating basis. Under normal circumstances each Coin Cart will stay at a location for a week, subject to availability of the parking space and the maintenance schedule of the Cart. Service hours are from 10am to 7pm. Each vehicle is equipped with two coin counting machines and operational staff will be present to provide assistance. An electrical wheelchair lift is available for use. Users can choose to exchange coins for banknotes or adding value to their stored value facilities, such as Octopus Cards or e-wallets (including AlipayHK, Octopus 0! ePay, Tap&Go, TNG Wallet and WeChat Pay). There is also a Community Chest donation box inside each vehicle. The coin collection service is free of charge.

The HKMA will review the Programme from time to time and regularly update the service schedule to give advance notice to the public.

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# Diets and physical activity of preschool students show improvements

The Department of Health (DH) today (September 18) announced that the results of the Survey on Healthy Lifestyle of Preschool Students 2016/17 were satisfactory, with findings showing that lower class students of full-day classes at kindergartens and child care centres had been served an average of 1.2 servings of fruit, two servings of vegetables and 3.1 glasses of water, as well as conducted an average of 120 minutes of physical activity per day.

The DH also announced the launch of the Healthy Drinks at School Charter, which aims to enhance the school culture conducive to healthy eating and reduce the sugar intake of preschool students.

The Survey was conducted between November 2016 and March 2017, during which 380 schools and 3,639 parents of lower class students were interviewed to assess the diets and physical activity of preschool students during and after school. Most of the interviewed kindergartens and child care centres provided a conducive environment to healthy eating and physical activity for preschool students. Over 60 per cent had formulated a healthy eating school policy while around 80 per cent had formulated a physical activity school policy.

The Assistant Director of Health (Health Promotion), Dr Anne Fung, at a press conference today said, "Compared to a similar survey conducted by the DH in 2013, kindergartens and child care centres provided fewer instant drinks (not including milk formula) and used food as rewards for preschool students less frequently. However, more than half of the interviewed kindergartens and child care centres still provided full-cream or sweetened dairy products for their students. Fifty-one per cent provided instant drinks (not including milk formula) (a drop of 16 per cent compared to the 2013 survey), with half of them adding full-cream or other sweetened dairy products (49 per cent) or sugar (24 per cent) to those drinks. Forty-five per cent of staff members had used food such as biscuits, cookies, sweets and chocolate as rewards (a drop of 19 per cent compared to the 2013 survey)."

To reduce the sugar intake of preschool students from drinks, the DH has launched the Healthy Drinks at School Charter to be implemented from the 2018/19 school year. Kindergartens and child care centres signing the Charter, which is valid for three school years, have committed to encouraging young children to drink water and to make healthy drinks available to them. They have also vowed not to provide drinks with added sugar or with a relatively high sugar content, and not to use food as a reward. So far more than 300 kindergartens and child care centres have signed the Charter.

Dr Fung pointed out that excessive intake of sugar not only increases the risk of overweight and obesity in children, but also their chance of suffering from tooth decay. Children having sugary drinks will even develop a

sweet tooth, which in turn hinders the development of a healthy eating habit. In addition, unhealthy foods with high sugar, high salt or high fat are usually used as rewards. She expressed the hope that the Charter can help create and enhance a school environment and culture conducive to healthy eating, as well as promote healthy drinks at school, thus urging more kindergartens and child care centres to sign the Charter.

The survey also found that parents' knowledge on healthy eating and physical activity for preschool students requires improvement. Less than half of the interviewed parents knew that children aged 4 to 6 years should consume at least two servings of fruit per day, while only 15 per cent knew that children aged 2 to 6 years should perform at least 180 minutes of physical activity each day. On the other hand, 79 per cent parents knew about restriction of screen time for preschool students (an increase of 17 per cent compared to the 2013 survey), and the median duration of preschool students' screen-time activity had been reduced from 80 minutes to 60 minutes.

Dr Fung noted that 94 per cent of preschool students had not consumed enough fruit and vegetables and over 70 per cent had less than 180 minutes of physical activity per day, while over 40 per cent of parents had used food as rewards. She advised parents to pay attention to their children's daily intake of fruit and vegetables and whether they have performed sufficient physical activity. Parents should use rewards such as verbal encouragement or applause, or give extra parent-child activity time or offer small school supplies to their children instead of food, to ensure their healthy development.

She added, "Compared to students in full-day classes, those in half-day classes were served less fruit and vegetables in kindergartens and child care centres and performed less physical activity per day. Parents of students in half-day classes should pay special attention since the diets and physical activity of these students are mainly arranged by their family."

To combat the threat of non-communicable diseases, the Government this year announced "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong", setting out nine local targets to be achieved by 2025, which include halting the rise in prevalence of raised blood pressure, diabetes and obesity as well as attaining a 30 per cent relative reduction in mean population daily intake of salt/sodium. The DH will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to promote the adoption of healthy eating habits by the public to achieve the targets.

The survey results also revealed that the kindergartens and child care centres which had joined the StartSmart@school.hk Campaign (SSS Campaign) of the DH performed better in promoting healthy diet and physical activity at school than those that had not joined the campaign. Over 60 per cent of parents agreed that the SSS Campaign had enhanced their knowledge and concern on healthy eating and physical activity, and was effective in enhancing healthy eating and physical activity among their children.

Dr Fung said that the DH will continue to empower schools, school staff

and parents in promoting healthy eating and physical activity by strengthening co-operation with kindergartens, child care centres and school sponsoring bodies through the SSS Campaign. A series of education materials such as videos and posters will also be produced.

The Controller of the Centre of Health Protection of the DH, Dr Wong Ka-hing, presented certificates of appreciation to representatives of 10 task force members of the SSS Campaign for their support and contribution to the Healthy Drinks at School Charter.

The territory-wide SSS Campaign was launched by the DH, the Education Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in 2012, and is targeted at children aged 2 to 6 years. Using effective health education resources and training targeting kindergartens and child care centres, it aims to encourage and support parents and caregivers to create conducive environments to healthy eating and physical activity for preschool students in the school and at home, and to help preschool students cultivate a sustainable healthy lifestyle.

The public is welcome to visit the StartSmart@school.hk Campaign website ([www.startsmart.gov.hk](http://www.startsmart.gov.hk)) to learn more about the Healthy Drinks at School Charter and health tips for preschool students.

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## **Total number of reported drug abusers in decline but drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still require attention**

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) reviewed the local drug situation in the first half of 2018 at its quarterly meeting today (September 18). The overall number of reported drug abusers declined compared to the same period last year, while drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still call for attention.

According to the latest figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), the total number of reported drug abusers in the first half of 2018 decreased by 4 per cent (from 4 166 to 4 018) compared with the same period last year. The number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 registered a decrease of 7 per cent (from 275 to 255).

The number of newly reported drug abusers decreased by 3 per cent (from 836 to 815) compared with the same period last year. About half (48 per cent) were young adults aged between 21 and 35, showing that drug abuse in this age

group still requires attention.

The latest CRDA figures also revealed that the median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was five years in the first half of 2018, compared with 4.3 years in 2017, indicating that hidden drug abuse remains a concern.

In the first half of 2018, the total number of reported narcotic analgesic abusers increased by 3 per cent (from 2 305 to 2 379). The vast majority were heroin abusers, the number of which increased by 3 per cent (from 2 304 to 2 378). The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (PSAs) decreased by 11 per cent (from 2 369 to 2 111) compared to the same period last year. Among the newly reported cases, the number of PSAs (at 715) was considerably higher than that of narcotic analgesic abusers (at 101).

Heroin remained the most common type of drug abused among all reported drug abusers. Meanwhile, methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused, with the number of reported abusers having decreased by 25 per cent (from 1 036 to 776) compared to the same period last year. There were increases in the numbers of reported cocaine abusers (from 474 to 516) and cannabis abusers (from 194 to 220). Increased cocaine and cannabis abuse among reported young drug abusers aged under 21 was also observed (the number of cocaine abusers increased from 122 to 146; the number of cannabis abusers increased from 68 to 75).

The numbers of abusers of other major types of psychotropic substances also saw reductions, including triazolam/midazolam/zopiclone (from 510 to 509), ketamine (from 418 to 260), cough medicine (from 148 to 133), MDMA ("ecstasy") (from 16 to 15) and nimetazepam (from 17 to 13).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Ben Cheung, said, "There are still challenges in our anti-drug work. Although the overall number of reported drug abusers in the first half of 2018 declined, the hidden drug abuse problem persisted. The proportion of drug-abusing young adults remained high, and the numbers of young cocaine abusers and cannabis abusers also increased. Therefore, we will continue to strengthen preventive education and publicity, especially those for youngsters, and explore more means to reach out to hidden drug abusers in co-ordination with the anti-drug sector. Anti-drug information and help are available through the Narcotics Division (ND)'s anti-drug hotline 186 186 and instant messaging service 98 186 186."

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Manda Chan, said, "At the start of the new school year, the ND and ACAN will continue to disseminate anti-drug messages to youngsters through different channels and platforms, including popular websites and mobile applications. Youngsters are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles, understand the harms of drug abuse and stay away from drugs."

The CRDA figures for the first half of 2018 are available on the [ND's website](#).

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## Unemployment and underemployment statistics for June – August 2018

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for June – August 2018) released today (September 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in June – August 2018, same as that in May – July 2018. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1% in the two periods.

Comparing June – August 2018 with May – July 2018, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment increased by around 9 700 from 3 872 700 in May – July 2018 to 3 882 400 in June – August 2018. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 12 400 from 3 987 400 to 3 999 800.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 2 700 from 114 700 in May – July 2018 to 117 400 in June – August 2018. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also increased by around 1 400 from 44 100 to 45 500.

### Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "Labour market remained tight in June – August 2018, with the unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate staying unchanged at 2.8% and 1.1% respectively. Total employment registered a further solid growth on a year-on-year basis."

"Changes in sectoral unemployment rates were generally small when compared to the preceding three-month period. On a year-on-year comparison to net out seasonal fluctuations, most major service sectors showed improvement in the unemployment situation. In particular, unemployment rates in the information and communications, accommodation services, as well as retail sectors recorded visible declines."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "While labour market conditions will likely remain favourable in the near term, the Government will stay vigilant as to how developments in the external environment will affect the local labour market going forward."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) is committed to providing comprehensive and free employment services through its job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and on-line platforms, with a view to providing appropriate support services which meet the needs of the job-seekers. The LD

has also implemented special employment programmes for job-seekers who have special needs or difficulties in employment (such as the youth, mature persons and persons with disabilities) to enhance their employability and facilitate their employment.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment on September 20 and 21 at the Tuen Mun Town Hall, with 44 participating employers offering around 5 200 vacancies from various industries. The LD will also organise the New Opportunities – New Terrain Job Expo on October 25 and 26 at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Besides, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at the LD's industry-based recruitment centres and job centres located across the territory.

#### Further Information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for June – August 2018 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 74 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the publication contains statistics for the quarter April – June 2018 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2018 will be available by end November 2018. Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001)).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the Household Statistics Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: [ghs@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:ghs@censtatd.gov.hk)).