

Import of poultry meat and products from Province of Groningen in the Netherlands to be suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (March 1) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N6 avian influenza in the Province of Groningen in the Netherlands, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the province with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong imported about 4 900 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 1.8 million poultry eggs from the Netherlands last year.

“The CFS has contacted the Dutch authorities over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation,” the spokesman said.

Press release: Environment Agency begins work on £5million Isle of Wight Flood Scheme

On 1 March Environment Agency contractors are starting construction of a new £5 million flood scheme to better protect more than 300 properties in Ryde. In partnership with the Isle of Wight Council and the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, the completed scheme will significantly reduce flood risk in the area.

Environment Agency Manager John O’Flynn said:

We are delighted to be launching this multi-million pound scheme on the island, which includes over £1 million of partner contributions that will benefit so many local homes and businesses. A sensible approach to funding and a good relationship with our partners has allowed us to begin the work in early spring. We’ll now be able to minimise disruption to the beach in the summer, avoid environmental constraints (including overwintering birds) and deliver a completed scheme that will reduce the flood risk by the autumn.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We are investing £2.6 billion to better protect the country from flooding, including over 1,500 flood defence schemes which will better protect 300,000 homes by 2021. The Isle of Wight scheme is an important step in building our resilience, protecting more than 300 homes and businesses locally and giving people all important peace of mind.

Cabinet member for environment and heritage Councillor John Hobart, said:

Together with our partners, we are making great progress on flood prevention measures for Ryde and we are working alongside the Environment Agency and the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to reduce the risk of floods in the long term. We are excited to see this work beginning early spring to further strengthen flood measures for the residents of Ryde and surrounding habitat.

The first stage of the project is to build a new outfall pipe from the sea wall in front of the existing pump station across Ryde sands to the marina. This will mean a clear outfall is maintained allowing more water to be discharged to the sea in heavy rainfall events and a significant reduction in the frequency of river flows overtopping the bank and flooding land and properties in Ryde.

This work will result in the closure of the section of beach from the existing outfall to Ryde Marina. The Environment Agency expects these essential works to be completed in July 2018, allowing it to reopen for the summer holidays. Although the children's play area next to the public toilets will be used as a works compound, it will be replaced at the end of the project.

The second and final stage is the construction of a flood wall around Simeon Street Recreation Ground, Marymead Close and the river boundary of the BT depot. These works are planned to start in June 2018 and be completed by October 2018.

Anyone who would like to find out more about the scheme or ask questions, is welcome to come along to the next Ryde Flood Action Group Meeting which will be held at the Simeon Arms on 13 March at 5:00pm. There will also be an open day later in the spring where the Environment Agency will present a detailed design of the flood wall that constitutes the second stage of the project.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Monktonmead Brook drains a catchment of approximately 10km² and flows north into the sea via an outfall at Ryde, Isle of Wight. A culvert carries flows the last 170m to the sea wall and a pumping station, after which a 60m

long culvert (an underground pipe) carries water to an outfall on the beach. Flows usually drain through gravity. A tidal flap at the sea wall closes against high tides leading to tide locking. High water levels in the Brook trigger operation of the pumps, which lift water over the seawall and into the last 60m of outfall.

As a result of tidal processes, sand has accumulated on the beach surrounding the end of the outfall leading to its regular burial. This sand migrates up the culvert towards the sea wall restricting flow through the outfall. Despite an automatic increase in pumping, the restriction of flows causes water to back up in the Brook, leading to an increase in flood risk to Ryde.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743

Please ask for the duty press officer.

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cannabis buds (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (February 28) and today (March 1) seized about 3.7 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$660,000 in total at Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point.

Customs officers intercepted a 47-year-old incoming male passenger at Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point yesterday evening and found in his rucksack about 1kg of suspected cannabis buds concealed inside tea packets.

After investigation, Customs officers further seized a small quantity of suspected methamphetamine and apparatus fit for inhaling dangerous drugs at the 47-year-old man's residential premises in Yau Ma Tei.

Also, Customs officers intercepted a 53-year-old incoming male passenger at Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point this morning and found in his rucksack about 2.7kg of suspected cannabis buds concealed inside tea packets.

The two men were arrested and investigations are ongoing.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.



[Opening remarks by S for IT at press conference on innovation and technology initiatives in 2018-19 Budget \(with photo/video\)](#)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, at a press conference on innovation and technology (I&T) initiatives in the 2018-19 Budget today (March 1):

Welcome to today's press conference. I would like to make a brief introduction first, before opening the floor to questions.

Since setting up the Innovation and Technology Bureau in November 2015, the Government has put in a huge amount of resources for I&T development. We have implemented measures to finance translational research and development (R&D) activities, promote re-industrialisation, support start-ups and nurture I&T talents, forge ahead with smart city development and promote the use of I&T to improve people's livelihood. In the past two years, the progress of our I&T development is encouraging.

In the 2018-19 Budget announced yesterday, the Financial Secretary unprecedentedly allocated more than \$50 billion to further speed up the development of I&T in Hong Kong, through investing in infrastructure development, R&D collaboration, nurturing start-ups and promoting industries. I shall briefly introduce the relevant measures.

First, the Government will set aside \$20 billion as the first tranche of funding for developing the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop, which is a huge and long-term project to make Hong Kong an important I&T hub in the Bay Area. This provision will cover the site formation, infrastructure and superstructure works, as well as initial

operation of the Park.

Secondly, we will inject \$10 billion into the Innovation and Technology Fund to keep up our support for applied R&D work and I&T projects in Hong Kong. Of this, \$500 million will serve to implement the Technology Talent Scheme announced in the Policy Address. To enable more start-ups and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from the Technology Voucher Programme, we will remove the requirement on having one year of substantive business operation in Hong Kong, and expand the programme to cover enterprises of all sizes.

Thirdly, \$10 billion will be earmarked to support establishing two research clusters in the Hong Kong Science Park, one focusing on healthcare technologies and the other on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies. Hong Kong has clear advantages in these technologies, the applications of which would benefit the whole community. The two research clusters aim at attracting world class scientific research institutions and technology enterprises to Hong Kong, and to join forces with our local universities and scientific research institutions in conducting more midstream and downstream R&D projects, which will serve to nurture more technology talent in Hong Kong. We will provide financial support to non-profit-making scientific research institutions that will establish their presence in these two clusters.

Fourthly, we will allocate \$10 billion to the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation for constructing research infrastructure and facilities, as well as enhancing support for its tenants and incubatees.

Fifthly, \$300 million will be allocated to Cyberport. Of this, \$200 million will be used for enhancing support for start-ups and promoting the development of a digital technology ecosystem. Cyberport will boost its incubation programme and put forward new support measures to attract multinational companies to set up offices and R&D units in Hong Kong. The remaining \$100 million will be spent to foster the development of e-sports industry. Cyberport will develop its arcade into a local e-sports and digital entertainment node and provide support for the e-sports industry.

In his Budget speech, the Financial Secretary remarked that "I&T is undoubtedly an economic driver in the new era." I&T can introduce new industries and create wealth, drive economic transformation, bring quality jobs for young people and improve people's quality of life. In the Policy Address, the Chief Executive has already set forth eight major areas to map out a clear direction for I&T development. This Budget provides the timely, critical and significant resources for accelerating Hong Kong's I&T development. In addition to its vital catalytic effect, the sizeable financial commitment demonstrates the Government's commitment and determination in I&T development.

Fostering I&T development is the way forward for Hong Kong, impinging on the welfare of every citizen and our next generation. I call upon everyone to support Government's efforts to promote I&T. Thank you very much.



[Keynote speech by President Donald Tusk at the BusinessEurope day](#)

Press contacts

[Preben Aamann](#)

European Council President Spokesperson

+32 2 281 51 50

+32 476 85 05 43

Thank you, Emma (Marcegaglia), for your reflections, for your determination and dedication, and of course, for inviting me to this 60th anniversary event; and thank you for our excellent cooperation in the framework of the Tripartite Summit, where the social partners will meet again this month. I want to, first and foremost, wish BusinessEurope a very happy birthday. Certainly from my own experience, I can tell you that this is when life really gets going, at 60. With the European economy expanding strongly, I can say with confidence that your best days are ahead.

I am here as your guest today, full of appreciation for your hard work. The confederation of European business and industry has, since the days of the Coal and Steel Community, been a consistently positive voice in Europe's story, always good at balancing ambition and moderation. First as CIFE, then as UNICE, and now as BusinessEurope, a fraternity that stretches north and south, east and west – from the Italian *Confindustria*, to the German BDI, to the Confederation for British Industry and, of course, to the Polish *Lewiatan*, which I know well. Your service to Europe truly deserves acknowledgment and praise. And I extend it here without reservation.

But the main source of my respect for you is that – at the end of the day – businesses, both large and small, hold the key to the success of the European economy. You are on the front-lines of making Europe the workshop of a

changing world economy. Politicians do not create jobs, generate wealth or adapt to technological revolutions; enterprises and employees do, working hard each day in a global market place that does not tolerate complacency or waste.

To support your efforts, it is our job as politicians to provide the right conditions, set the right incentives and maintain the independent institutions that are needed to underpin a prosperous economy. Has the European Union done a good job in this regard? I believe that we have, and would even say that our track record of the last years is something we can look at with satisfaction.

Let me just mention a few steps that we took. Three years ago, EU leaders created the European Fund for Strategic Investments to kick-start investment in Europe. We pushed forward an ambitious market opening agenda on trade, such as the CETA agreement with Canada, while at the same time protecting ourselves against unfair trade practices. We redoubled our efforts to fight youth unemployment. We took further steps towards a more sophisticated and complete internal market, progressing the capital markets union, the energy union, and the digital agenda. And last but not least, we agreed on the process that will decisively strengthen Economic and Monetary Union.

The economic statistics confirm that we are on the right track. The economy is now growing at its fastest pace in a decade, with robust growth expected to continue. And all EU countries share in this expansion: each and everyone of them are showing positive growth numbers. Fortunately, these good growth figures are also translating into a stronger labour market. Unemployment is declining fast, and the total number of people employed is at a record high.

However, it would be foolish to let a little good news obscure the unfinished business that we still have in economic policy. The effects of the past crisis are still visible, especially when it comes to youth unemployment. Leaders are due to have tough debates over the coming weeks that will incorporate our strategies for the single market and common policies on tax, trade, and research and innovation. My first priority is to complete our work on EMU, to make our monetary union stronger and more resistant to future economic shocks. Despite the current positive outlook, these will surely come, sooner or later.

In December, leaders agreed that it makes sense to prioritise completing the Banking Union and further developing the European Stability Mechanism. Politically, we are not as far away from a consensus on these matters as some imagine. Indeed, if not now, then when? And economically, this is the moment to remove a key vulnerability of EMU: the fiscal link between sovereigns and banks. A complete Banking Union and a more solid ESM will help break this link. Accordingly, I have asked the Finance Ministers in the Council to speed up their work on these topics, so that we are ready to take decisions on them in June. In the meantime, leaders will have another broader discussion in March on the long-term development of EMU, including on more ambitious proposals in the fiscal and economic dimension.

Last week, leaders began discussions on modernising the EU budget to better

reflect our economic priorities, but also to take greater account of new political imperatives like security, defence, and stemming illegal migration. At our discussion last week, I was pleased to see that all the leaders approached this question with open minds, rather than red lines, and agreed that the EU will need to spend more on these new priorities, while not losing sight of traditional areas like agriculture and cohesion policy. Even though many leaders said that they are ready to contribute more to the post-2020 EU budget, it is clear that this will be a very difficult debate. But it is one which we must have anyway, if only because of the revenue gap of some €10 billion annually that will be caused by Brexit.

Brexit is indeed, as your programme puts it, the “one big question” that hangs over everything. Yesterday, Michel Barnier published a draft Withdrawal Agreement, which will be discussed by Member States in the coming days. But I am absolutely sure that all the essential elements of the draft will be accepted by all. I would like to underline here again that Mr Barnier has the full support of both the EU institutions and the EU27.

Recently, London has definitively confirmed its red lines, including “no customs union” and “no single market”. We acknowledge these red lines without enthusiasm and without satisfaction. But we must treat them seriously. With all their consequences. And one of the possible negative consequences of this kind of Brexit is a hard border on the island of Ireland. The EU wants to prevent this scenario. Hence, if no other solution is found, the proposal to “establish a common regulatory area comprising the Union and the United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland”. And, until now, no-one has come up with anything wiser than that. In a few hours I will be asking in London whether the UK government has a better idea, that would be as effective in preventing a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Everyone must be aware that the UK red lines will also determine the shape of our future relationship. Next week I will present the draft guidelines in this respect. Here I want to stress one thing clearly. There can be no frictionless trade outside of the customs union and the Single Market. Friction is an inevitable side effect of Brexit. By nature. Thank you

[Download as pdf](#)