

BFAC appreciates Consumer Council's committed efforts in safeguarding interests of consumers and facilitating business

The following is issued on behalf of the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee Secretariat:

The Business Facilitation Advisory Committee held its 48th meeting today (July 20). At the meeting, members were briefed by the Consumer Council (the Council) on the overview of its functions and structure, and the content of the flagship publication, CHOICE Magazine. The roles of the Council in facilitating business through resolving disputes between consumers and traders, as well as its development direction in the application of advanced technology to dispute resolution were also covered in the meeting.

CHOICE Magazine, through a complaint repository, product testing and market research, and product quality monitoring, protects the interests of consumers. Furthermore, the Council will update its complaint handling system and introduce an Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform in the next two to three years with a view to enabling efficient handling of complaints and provide the most convenient way for complainants and traders to negotiate and resolve consumption disputes.

The Committee appreciated the Council's commitment in safeguarding the interests of consumers and facilitating business through product testing, market research and the ODR platform.

The Committee also received the work reports of its three task forces:

Wholesale and Retail Task Force (WRTF)

- The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) briefed the WRTF on the implementation of the Technology Voucher Programme (TVP). The TVP has become a regular funding programme under the Innovation and Technology Fund since February 2019. The ITC will continue to promote the TVP to industries, and introduce further enhancement measures where appropriate to encourage and facilitate the industries in making use of the TVP. The WRTF welcomed the regularisation of the TVP and suggested the ITC to streamline the vetting procedures to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) enhance competitiveness through better adoption of technologies.

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- The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) briefed the WRTF on the

regulatory framework under the Mercury Control Ordinance (Cap. 640) (the Ordinance). The Ordinance regulates matters including the import, export, keeping and use of mercury, mercury mixtures and mercury compounds, as well as the import, export, manufacture and supply of mercury-added products. The WRTF thanked the EPD for their clarification of the regulatory framework for the Ordinance and the relevant situations that are exempted from the Ordinance.

Food Business and Related Services Task Force (FRSTF)

- In response to the FRSTF's earlier suggestions to the Labour Department (LD) on the statutory requirement of "notification of workplaces", the FRSTF Secretariat reported to the FRSTF the progress of the LD's follow up actions, namely the provision of a one-stop submission service for food business licence applications and "notification of workplaces" via the website of the Business Licence Information Service of Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs of the Trade and Industry Department. The trade may also contact LD district offices to enquire about the notification record regarding their respective premises.
- The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed the enhanced online licensing services related to liquor licences/club liquor licences. Apart from the new functions assisting applicants to fill in the required information more easily, members of the public can also use a single digital identity to log in to the system through the "iAM Smart" mobile app and sign digitally. The FRSTF welcomed the FEHD's committed efforts in enhancing the electronic licensing services, and recommended strengthening the publicity to keep food business operators better informed so that they can make use of the service.

Task Force on Business Liaison Groups (BLGTF)

- The FEHD, Fire Services Department (FSD) and Buildings Department (BD) briefed the BLGTF on the streamlined arrangements which have already been extended to cover Temporary Places of Public Entertainment Licence (TPPEL) applications from premises other than theme parks and attractions to facilitate them in organising temporary public entertainment activities involving temporary structures lasting for more than one month. These include the FEHD allowing the applicants to submit only one application form for applying for a new TPPEL and two consecutive renewals for an activity lasting for no more than three months. Furthermore, if the layout and all other details (including the temporary structures) of the activity remain unchanged, the FSD will grant a Fire Services Certificate with a validity period covering the whole period of the activity while the BD will accept a single authorised person/registered structural engineer's certification on the

structural safety of the temporary structures covering the whole period of the activity. The BLGTF thanked the relevant departments for implementing the business facilitation measures which help reduce trade operators' operational cost and administrative burden.

The Committee also expressed appreciation of the commitment and achievements of the bureaux and departments in continuously enhancing their business licensing services under the "Be the Smart Regulator" Programme.

Papers for the Committee meeting are available at www.gov.hk/en/business/supportenterprises/bf/advisory/index.htm for public access.