

BFAC appreciates Government efforts in assisting trades to pursue I&T and R&D

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

The Business Facilitation Advisory Committee held its 38th meeting today (November 5). At the meeting, members received a briefing from the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) on the various types of support available to the trade, and noted the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 Report released on October 31.

The ITC briefed the Committee on the different funding schemes under the Innovation and Technology Fund which can help boost innovation and technology (I&T) capability in the manufacturing and services industries. The Committee was also briefed on the enhanced tax deduction measure for research and development (R&D) expenditure. The measure aims to encourage more investment by enterprises in local R&D projects in order to promote R&D activities and groom relevant talents in Hong Kong. Members were supportive of the enhanced tax deduction measure. They also said they appreciated the Government's continuous efforts in assisting the trades in the application of I&T, as well as in pursuing R&D with a view to enhancing their competitiveness.

Regarding the Doing Business 2019 Report, the Chairman of the BFAC, Mr Wong Ting-kwong, said, "We are highly encouraged that Hong Kong moved one place up this year and was ranked the fourth on the ease of doing business globally. This is a recognition of the Government's good work in business facilitation." The Committee also expressed its appreciation of the commitment and achievements of the bureaux and departments in further enhancing their business licensing services under the "Be the Smart Regulator" Programme.

The Committee also noted the work of its three task forces:

Wholesale and Retail Task Force (WRTF)

* With effect from August 2018, operators selling prepacked ready-to-eat food requiring hot holding by means of vending machines were required to obtain a permit from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Appreciating the FEHD's efforts in discussing with the trade before implementing the licensing control, the WRTF also supported the relevant control, which would help ensure food safety and protect public health.

* The Dutiable Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 will come into effect on November 30, 2018. Under the Ordinance, no person shall sell or supply intoxicating liquor to minors in the course of business, or sell intoxicating liquor through vending machines. The WRTF welcomed the legislation, which would protect young people from the influence of alcohol. It also appreciated

the Department of Health's efforts in preparing guidelines to facilitate the compliance of the trade, as well as its publicity work on the legislation through various channels.

Food Business and Related Services Task Force (FRSTF)

* The FEHD, the Fire Services Department, the Buildings Department and the Independent Checking Unit of the Transport and Housing Bureau reviewed the food business licence application procedures and proposed to implement measures to help applicants obtain full licences in a timely manner. Relevant departments also reviewed the existing procedures on the processing of applications for layout plan alterations and proposed enhancement measures. The FRSTF welcomed the departments' efforts to address the trade's concern.

Task Force on Business Liaison Groups

* The Task Force on Business Liaison Groups noted that a number of facilitation measures will be implemented progressively in 2018-19, including facilitating the trade in applying for installation of improvised sprinkler systems in premises located in old composite buildings to meet licensing requirements, facilitating licence applications for purpose-built hotels, and providing greater flexibility for club operators to alter their seating layout to suit operational needs.

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