

BFAC appreciates Government's efforts in facilitating customs clearance

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

The Business Facilitation Advisory Committee held its 41st meeting today (January 14). At the meeting, members received a briefing from the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) on the Single E-lock Scheme (SELS) and Hong Kong Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme.

Jointly launched by the C&ED and the Mainland Customs, the SELS targets inter-modal transshipment cargoes between Hong Kong and Guangdong. By means of electronic lock and GPS equipment, the SELS streamlines the customs clearance process and expedites cargo flow. The AEO Programme aims at facilitating the cross-boundary movement of goods and enhancing international supply chain security. Enterprises accredited as Hong Kong AEOs may enjoy customs facilitations in terms of reduced inspection and priority clearance.

The Committee expressed appreciation of the efforts made by the C&ED in taking forward the above measures to facilitate cargo clearance for imports and exports while balancing the need to maintain effective controls.

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

Wholesale and Retail Task Force (WRTF)

- The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI) briefed members on the Government's proposal to introduce a new 90 per cent guarantee product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme administered by the HKMCI. The WRTF welcomed the new loan guarantee product which assisted SMEs to tide over potential financing difficulties due to the economic downturn.
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed members on the "Salt/Sugar" Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food Products. The WRTF appreciated the CFS' promotion efforts which would be conducive to the consumers in making the right choice when purchasing food.

Food Business and Related Services Task Force (FRSTF)

- In order to tide enterprises over financial difficulties, the Government announced a series of support measures to the food business. Among them, the FEHD and the Drainage Services Department briefed the FRSTF on the support measures relating to the waiver of licence fees and trade effluent surcharge.
- Under the prevailing food business licensing regime, the FEHD briefed members on the relaxed licensing requirements for the provision of

independent chimney for premises and cashier activity within food preparation area. This allows the trade greater flexibility in meeting actual operational needs.

- The Buildings Department (BD) and Independent Checking Unit under the Transport and Housing Bureau briefed members on the Self Certification System by Authorised Person to allow operators to adopt third-party certification in the alteration of the layout plans of food premises for more flexible arrangement of their business operations.
- The FRSTF appreciated the departments' efforts in implementing the business facilitation measures to reduce the trade's administrative burden, responding to their enquiries and listening to their concerns.

Task Force on Business Liaison Groups (BLGTF)

- The Home Affairs Department (HAD) briefed members on a number of business facilitation measures to facilitate licence applications for hotel/guesthouse and club premises. The BLGTF thanked the HAD for the measures which would enhance the efficiency and transparency of the licence application process.
- To streamline the application processing for Temporary Places of Public Entertainment Licences, the BD briefed members on its initiative to allow Authorised Persons/Registered Structural Engineers to provide certification on temporary structures that have been pre-accepted by the BD. The Fire Services Department briefed members on the proposal to relax the exempt quantity for compressed carbon dioxide in response to the trade's concern, so as to facilitate the business operations of food kiosk operators inside the theme parks.
- The BLGTF thanked the departments concerned for their efforts in implementing these measures to facilitate the development of the relevant industries.

The Committee also expressed 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.

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