

Public consultation begins on new legislation for regulating mercury, mercury compounds and mercury-added products

The Environment Bureau today (August 30) released a consultation document setting out the proposed scope and approach of the new legislation for regulating mercury, mercury compounds and mercury-added products in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The proposed legislation will allow the HKSAR to effectively fulfil its obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The consultation will end on October 5 this year.

Mercury is a naturally occurring toxic heavy metal. It has wide usage in various products and industrial processes, posing a global threat to human health and the environment. The Convention is an international treaty aiming to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. The Convention entered into force in the People's Republic of China, including the HKSAR, on August 16, 2017. To effectively implement the Convention in the HKSAR, it is necessary to introduce the proposed legislation.

The proposed legislation will restrict the import and export of mercury; prohibit the manufacture, import, export, sale and supply of specified mercury-added products; prohibit the use of mercury or mercury compounds in specified manufacturing processes; and control the storage of mercury and mercury compounds. Exemption quantities for mercury or mercury compounds to be used for laboratory-scale research or as a reference standard are proposed in the consultation document, together with the proposed penalty levels for offences under the various provisions of the new legislation.

"The proposed legislation will enable the HKSAR to effectively discharge its obligations under the Convention, ensuring that the environment and the health of the public are better protected from hazards arising from mercury and its compounds," a spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said.

The consultation document can be viewed or downloaded from the EPD's website (www.epd.gov.hk). Members of the public may also obtain a copy of the document during office hours at the following address:

Cross-Boundary and International Group
Environmental Protection Department
33/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

The EPD has arranged two consultation forums on September 19 and 27 to explain to stakeholders and the public the provisions of the new legislation in more detail. Details of the consultation forums can be found on the EPD's

website and members of the public can register for attending the forums by returning the reply slip.

The Government welcomes public views, which must be submitted to the EPD as detailed in the consultation document within the consultation period, on the new legislation.