

All tickets for “Build a Better Community” gala distributed

Attention TV/Radio Announcers:

Please announce the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals.

The Home Affairs Department has announced that all free tickets for the "Build a Better Community" gala at various venues have been distributed.

The gala will be broadcast live between 7pm and 10pm this Saturday (December 9) jointly by the Television Broadcasts Limited, ViuTV, HOY TV, Phoenix Satellite Television, Radio Television Hong Kong, Metro Broadcast and Commercial Radio (in no particular order). Members of the public who cannot obtain a ticket may enjoy the live broadcast.

Please take note that the free tickets for the gala are not to be sold, resold, or used for any commercial purposes. Any suspected violations detected will be referred to law enforcement agencies for appropriate action.

LCQ17: Special 100% Loan Guarantee

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

During the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Government launched the Special 100% Loan Guarantee (Special Loan) under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme, with the Government providing 100% guarantee to assist small and medium enterprises in alleviating financial difficulties and tiding over the difficulties. In addition, the Financial Secretary proposed in the Budget delivered in February this year that the application period of the Special Loan be extended to the end of March next year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications received, approved, rejected and being processed by the lending institutions participating in the vetting and approval of applications for the Special Loan since April this year (with a tabulated breakdown by industry), and the amount of money involved in the approved applications;

(2) of the current default rate and amount of default claims of the Special Loan; whether the Government has projected the future default situation, and whether the guarantee amount of the default loans concerned will constitute a burden on the Government's finance; and

(3) as it has been reported that some swindlers have obtained the Special Loan by deception through various means (including the use of false instruments), and some applicants have even closed down their businesses after obtaining loans and have defaulted on the loans on the pretext of emigration, which has reduced the Special Loan to "a cash withdrawal machine" for swindlers or people with ill intentions, whether the Government has assessed the situation of the Special Loan being abused and estimated the number of approved applications which will involve loan defaults; whether it will rigorously combat the relevant fraudulent and defaulting behaviours to ensure the proper use of public money?

Reply:

President,

The Government helps businesses obtain commercial loans by providing loan guarantees under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS). To assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) hard hit by the epidemic in coping with cash flow problems, the Government launched in April 2020 the Special 100% Guarantee Product under the SFGS to provide low-interest concessionary loans, and introduced enhancements several times and extended the application period to end March 2024, with a view to benefitting more SMEs.

The Government's reply to the three parts of the question is set out below:

(1) From April to end October 2023, the application figures of the Special 100% Guarantee Product are as follows:

Number of applications received	4 282
Number of applications approved	3 685
Number of applications under processing	330
Number of applications rejected (Note)	161
Total loan amount of approved cases (\$)	12.6 billion

The figures of the major beneficiary sectors of the applications approved are as follows:

Beneficiary sector	Number of applications approved
Trading, wholesale and retail	1 265

Engineering and construction	313
Manufacturing	133
Others (e.g. catering, transportation)	1 974

(2) From its launch in April 2020 to end October 2023, the application and default figures of the Special 100% Guarantee Product are as follows:

Number of applications approved	65 049
Total loan amount of approved cases (\$)	136.9 billion
Number of default cases	3 585
Loan guarantee amount of default cases (\$)	7.5 billion
Default rate	5.49%

The default rate is subject to change having regard to various factors, such as the overall economic environment, the business situation of individual sectors, and some loans still subject to principal moratorium or partial principal repayment arrangements. So far the default rate is lower than the assumed default rate of 25 per cent.

(3) Stringent vetting procedures have been put in place under the SFGS. Lending institutions are required to check the eligibility of enterprises with their professional knowledge, judgement and due diligence, and submit the verified applications with the necessary documents to HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI) for final assessment and approval. To avoid abuse of the SFGS, in the event that an application is suspected to be involved in illegal activities, HKMCI and lending institutions will reject the application and report to law enforcement agencies. HKMCI and lending institutions so far have referred a number of cases suspected to be involved in illegal activities to law enforcement agencies for follow-up, and will continue to communicate and co-operate closely with them with a view to guarding against and handling properly applications that may involve in illegal activities.

The Government will continue to monitor closely the applications and the operation of the SFGS, and review its effectiveness.

Note: Apart from rejected applications, some applications were withdrawn by the applicant enterprises.

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cannabis resin and suspected cocaine worth about \$700,000 at airport (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 5) detected two passenger drug trafficking cases at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 3.4 kilograms of suspected cannabis resin and about 500 grams of suspected cocaine with a total estimated market value of about \$700,000.

In the first case, a 27-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Delhi, India, yesterday. During customs clearance, Customs officers found about 3.4kg of suspected cannabis resin and about 180g of suspected cocaine concealed inside a false compartment of his checked-in suitcase. The man was subsequently arrested.

The second case involved a 48-year-old male passenger who arrived in Hong Kong from Paris, France, yesterday. During customs clearance, Customs officers suspected that the passenger had dangerous drugs concealed inside his body cavity. He was then escorted to the hospital for examination. Upon examination, he was confirmed by a doctor to have foreign objects concealed inside his body. He was arrested immediately. As at 5pm today (December 6), the arrested man has discharged 23 pellets of suspected cocaine weighing about 320g in total.

The arrested man of the first case has been charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. The case will be brought up at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (December 7). The investigation of the second case is ongoing.

Following the increasing number of visitors to Hong Kong, Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

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.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



LCQ18: Measures to create strong impetus for growth

Following is a question by the Hon Adrian Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

There are views that Hong Kong needs to create strong impetus for growth in various aspects so as to boost the confidence of members of the public and investors in the future development of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views pointing out that diversity in shop and product type is an important factor in elevating the consumer sentiment of members of the public, whether the authorities have studied the introduction of measures to nurture and support local creative brands and brands run by small business, with a view to expanding the scope of business development for the operators concerned and enhancing the attractiveness of the relevant brands to consumers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether survey studies have been regularly conducted on the patterns and types of night time leisure activities of interest to members of the public, in order to serve as an important basis for formulating and adjusting various short and medium term plans for "Night Vibes Hong Kong" activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has plans to create new tourism attractions and brands for Hong Kong in a holistic manner, such as actively lobbying the organisers of major international sports events to stage championship series in Hong Kong, as well as actively inviting world-renowned singers to hold concerts in Hong Kong, so as to transform Hong Kong into a genuine "events capital"?

Reply:

President,

There are currently over 360 000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Hong Kong, accounting for over 98 per cent of the total number of enterprises and contributing significantly to the economic development of Hong Kong. The Government strives to maintain a free, open and business-friendly environment, and provides multi-pronged support for SMEs' innovation and development of diversified markets. The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address a number of industry policies to develop a diversified economy, with a view to creating a strong impetus for growth and enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness.

Having consulted the Financial Secretary's Office, the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), our reply to the three parts of the question is set out below:

(1) To assist SMEs in developing their businesses, the Trade and Industry Department (TID) encourages SMEs to develop brands, explore more diversified markets, and enhance their competitiveness through various funding schemes. Among others, the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund) provides funding support to non-listed enterprises to develop their brands. As at end-October 2023, over 6 700 applications have been approved under the BUD Fund, involving a funding amount of over \$4.1 billion. Around 35 per cent of these applications involve projects related to developing brands. In addition, the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF) also provides funding support for SMEs to develop their brands and businesses in overseas markets through participating in export promotion activities. As at end-October 2023, over 290 000 applications have been approved under the EMF, involving a funding amount of over \$5 billion.

Cyberport will also launch the Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme to provide funding support for SMEs in the retail and food and beverage sectors to apply electronic payment and other digital solution packages with a view to promoting their digitalisation and enhancing their competitiveness.

In addition, the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs under the TID and the other three SME centres (the "SME Centre" under the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the "SME One" under the Hong Kong Productivity Council, and TecONE under the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation) also provide free information on business and government funding schemes for SMEs, as well as consultation services on different industries, including information and consultation services that assist SMEs in starting businesses.

(2) The Government launched the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" campaign in mid-September 2023, staging in collaboration with various organisations a wealth of attractive night-time events with local characteristics, covering entertainment, arts, culture, consumption and more across the city, to unite different sectors of the community and create a dynamic vibe in Hong Kong.

"Night Vibes Hong Kong" provides more choices of night-time activities in Hong Kong, allowing the participation of the public and tourists according to their interest while revitalising the city's nightlife at the same time. We will continue to consider the views of the public, review the effectiveness of the campaign in a timely manner and listen to stakeholders' views on the potential future development.

All along, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) provides healthy and diverse cultural and recreational services and activities to the public, and from time to time collects views of the public on the activities provided in order to improve its services. However, it has not conducted regular surveys on services that it does not provide.

(3) The CSTB and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) have been taking proactive efforts in strengthening Hong Kong's status as the Events Capital of Asia, not only organising a series of mega events, but also supporting the staging of large-scale events and activities in Hong Kong, including cultural, arts and performance activities, international sports competitions, international conventions and exhibitions, etc. Through promotion and publicity, we intend to attract tourists to visit Hong Kong to participate in events and experience the city and create a vibrant ambience.

For cultural and arts activities, the CSTB and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council will host the first "Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo" from October 14 to 18, 2024. It will bring together selected performing arts programmes from the international community, build a platform for outstanding performing arts of the Mainland and Hong Kong to expand overseas opportunities, and enrich tourists' experiences at the same time. In addition, the LCSD will continue to organise the "Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival" in 2024, as well as the "Asia+ Festival" which showcases the essence of culture and arts from different countries and regions. Programmes include stage performances, film screenings, exhibitions, outdoor carnival, etc., allowing tourists to experience the cultural uniqueness of Hong Kong and different regions.

The CSTB also plans to organise the "Hong Kong Fashion Design Week" in 2024 by consolidating the fashion and design promotional activities that used to be held in different months of a year. We will invite members of local fashion design, industrial and commercial sectors, as well as prominent and influential fashion brands and industry practitioners from the Mainland and overseas to join.

The six events supported by the Mega Arts and Cultural Events Fund have been successfully organised in 2023 (including Art Basel Hong Kong 2023 and Art Central 2023, etc.), and four approved events will be held in the coming months.

For sports activities, there is a record high of over 15 major international sports events with funding support through the "M" Mark System being held in Hong Kong in 2023, such as the Aramco Team Series Hong Kong, the FIA World Rallycross Championship, as well as the Hong Kong Tennis Open, attracting many tourists and members of the public to participate.

The HKTB has also launched a series of festive promotions and large-scale events with Hong Kong cultural characteristics, including the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, "Hallo" Hong Kong Halloween, Hong Kong Cyclothon, Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, Taste Around Town, as well as the recently launched Hong Kong WinterFest and the Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations to be held at the end of the year, etc. The CSTB promotes the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism, and will continue to work with the HKTB to stage large-scale local and international cultural, sports and tourism events in Hong Kong and promote these events to Mainland and overseas visitors to attract them to come to Hong Kong and participate. As and when an individual event is confirmed, we would announce the details as soon as possible.

[Lunar New Year fair stalls for rent at upset prices starting December 13](#)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (December 6) that 54 Lunar New Year (LNY) fair stalls which were not taken at auctions held earlier would be available to the public for renting at their upset prices from December 13 to 19, on a first-come, first-served basis.

â€‹The LNY fairs will be held from February 4 to 10, 2024. Locations and prices of these 54 dry-goods stalls are as follows:

Fair	Number of stalls	Let out price per one stall
Victoria Park (Causeway Bay)	27	\$8,540
Tat Tung Road Garden (Tung Chung)	12	\$450
Fa Hui Park (Sham Shui Po)	15	\$7,800

The number of remaining stalls may be subject to change and the actual number of stalls available for renting will be released on December 13, 2023.

â€‹People who are interested in renting a stall should approach the following FEHD offices, as appropriate, to apply in person from 9.30am to 12.30pm or 2.30pm to 4.30pm during the abovementioned renting period:

Fair venues	Address of handling office	Telephone number
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Victoria Park (Causeway Bay)	8/F, Lockhart Road Municipal Services Building, 225 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong	2879 5706
Tat Tung Road Garden (Tung Chung)	Room 626, 6/F, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong	2852 4549
Fa Hui Park (Sham Shui Po)	Room 301-302, 3/F, FEHD Nam Cheong Offices and Vehicle Depot, 87 Yen Chow Street West, Kowloon	2309 2086

Applicants must be at least 18 years old and ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. Each applicant may select only one stall at a time. Successful applicants shall comply with all the stipulations and provisions as set out in the licence agreement. An FEHD spokesman stressed that the public should not assign, sublet, transfer or otherwise part with any of the benefits or obligations of the licence agreement of the LNY fair stalls. Otherwise, the department is entitled to terminate the agreement and the licensee shall immediately vacate the stall.

The fair sites will be made available to the licensees three days in advance of the fairs (from February 1 to 3, 2024) for the setting up of stalls. In the event of any unforeseeable incident that will result in shortening of the whole licence period (including the duration for setting up stalls and the business period of the fair), the Government has the right to postpone the commencement date and shorten the duration of the period. The let out price (licence fee) paid will be refunded to the licensee on a pro-rata basis without interest.

Stall licensees must completely remove the stall structure and all paraphernalia, together with all refuse, debris and unsold commodities (whether damaged or otherwise), from the licensed area before 7am on February 10, 2024.

The FEHD reminded licensees that the stalls are solely for the purpose of selling and promoting the sale of the permitted commodities, and no other activities are allowed in the licensed area. If the FEHD considers that any activity conducted by the licensee to publicise, promote, display, show or sell any permitted commodities in the venue is unlawful, contrary to the interest of national security, immoral or incompatible with the object of the LNY fair, the FEHD is entitled to direct the licensee to stop conducting such activity and the licensee must immediately comply with such direction.

Stall licensees should not destroy, damage or abandon any unsold commodities at or in the vicinity of the stall.

According to the licence agreement, except inside designated stalls, licensees shall not keep, store or use helium cylinders in the licenced area. Whereas licensees of the designated stalls could keep, store or use helium cylinders in the licenced area, the quantity of helium should be such that a

licence is not required pursuant to the Dangerous Goods (Application and Exemption) Regulation 2012 (Cap. 295E), i.e. equivalent to 150 litres of helium. Sales of floating LED glowing balloons and aquarium fish by stall licensees are prohibited at the LNY fairs.

Public notices and details of the renting of 2024 LNY fair remaining stalls on a first-come, first-served basis are available at the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk) or call the FEHD hotline at 2868 0000.