

Fatal traffic accident in Tsing Yi

Police are investigating a fatal traffic accident happened in Tsing Yi today (October 18), in which a 56-year-old male light goods vehicle (LGV) passenger died.

At 10.57am, an LGV driven by a 53-year-old man was travelling along Ching Hong Road towards Tsing Yi Interchange with a 56-year-old male passenger on board. When approaching near Ching Chung House, Cheung Ching Estate, it reportedly lost control, rammed into a kerb and side-turned. It then swerved to the opposite traffic lane and collided with a bus driven by a 60-year-old man which was travelling along Ching Hong Road towards Tsing Yi Road West.

Sustaining serious multiple body injuries, the male passenger was rushed to Yan Chai Hospital in unconscious state and certified dead at 11.48am. The bus driver and the LGV driver also sustained multiple body injuries and were sent to Princess Margaret Hospital in conscious state.

The LGV driver failed the Rapid Oral Fluid Test and was arrested for drug driving and dangerous driving causing death. He is being detained for further enquiries.

Investigation by the Special Investigation Team of Traffic, New Territories South is underway.

Anyone who witnessed the accident or has any information to offer is urged to contact the investigating officers on 3661 1348 or 3661 1346.

Police strongly condemn the irresponsible driving behavior of the driver. It not only jeopardises the safety of other road users and threatens one's personal safety, but is also the actual cause of serious traffic accidents. Police do not tolerate such acts and will take resolute enforcement action.

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Order to amend Dangerous Drugs Ordinance to be gazetted on October 20

A spokesperson for the Security Bureau said today (October 18) that the Government will publish the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2023 (the Order) in the Gazette on Friday (October 20).

â€‹The Order will be tabled at the Legislative Council on October 25, 2023, for negative vetting, and is expected to become effective on December 15, 2023. Details including the justifications of the legislative proposal could be found from the brief for the Legislative Council issued today at Annex.

The Order would add five substances, namely, 2-methyl-AP-237, etazene, etonitazepyne, protonitazene, and ADB-BUTINACA, to the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO) (Cap. 134). These substances will be under the same strict control as other dangerous drugs under the DDO. Trafficking and illicit manufacturing of these substances are liable to a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million. Possession and consumption of

these substances in contravention of the DDO will be subject to a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment and a fine of \$1 million.

â€‹The Government has been vigilant in closely monitoring drug trends in and outside Hong Kong, and takes timely action to bring new drugs and precursor chemicals under legislative control. As a regular exercise, the Government from time to time proposes amendments to the DDO as well as the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (Cap. 145) to include new dangerous drugs and precursor chemicals under statutory control, to prevent them from posing a threat to public health and safety. The spokesperson said, "The amendments aim to deter any potential trafficking and abuse of these dangerous drugs and precursor chemicals. This will help fortify Hong Kong's defence against drugs."

September's monthly gravidtrap index for Aedes albopictus mosquitoes drops further

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (October 18) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for Aedes albopictus mosquitoes in September dropped further to 4.5 per cent from 5.8 per cent in August and was at Level 1 at its lowest, indicating that the distribution of Aedes albopictus mosquitoes in the areas surveyed was not extensive.

In September, among the 64 survey areas, there was only one area (Sheung Shui) with the area gravidtrap index exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. The gravidtraps in the district concerned were mostly located in the vicinity of private residential areas, schools, recreational and sports facilities and public places. The FEHD has collaborated with relevant government departments by taking immediate action to strengthen mosquito prevention and control work in the area concerned. The first phase gravidtrap index in the district concerned in October has dropped significantly to a lower level at 5.2 per cent.

Moreover, the monthly density index for Aedes albopictus in September remained at 1.1, which represented that an average of 1.1 Aedes albopictus adults were found in the Aedes-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult Aedes albopictus was not abundant in the survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for Aedes albopictus in different survey areas as well as information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department's website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The Government is very concerned about mosquito infestation. The FEHD has continued to intensify mosquito prevention

and control work with relevant government departments in areas under their purview, including eliminating mosquito breeding places, applying larvicides, conducting fogging operations to eradicate adult mosquitoes, and placing mosquito trapping devices at suitable locations. The FEHD has also conducted site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support to assist them in formulating and implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. At the same time, the FEHD has strengthened publicity and education. Under the concerted efforts and collaboration of various parties, the index in September dropped further. The FEHD will continue to monitor the mosquito infestation in all districts, and will conduct prompt and effective mosquito prevention and control work."

The FEHD will conduct a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The third phase of the territory-wide campaign, lasting 12 weeks, was launched on August 7 and will run until October 27. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD will target areas that have drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, to remove accumulated water and carry out mosquito prevention and control work. To further enhance the effectiveness of mosquito control, the FEHD and relevant government departments have also carried out the second phase of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations since April 24 to focus on eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, and called on property management offices to arrange necessary repairs to their premises so as to minimise mosquito breeding places. Furthermore, intense adult control has been conducted by means of regular ultra-low volume fogging operations after the onset of the rainy season.

In view of the possible occurrence of new collections of stagnant water in the aftermath of rainstorms or tropical cyclones, the FEHD appeals to members of the public to work together to carry out mosquito prevention and control measures early, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing water in vases and scrubbing their inner surfaces, removing water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. The FEHD also advises members of the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF). DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high and Hong Kong has recorded 38 imported DF cases so far this year. Members of the public should stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

LCQ19: Fraud cases involving loans or grants to support enterprises

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Kennedy Wong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Ms Lillian Cheong, in the Legislative Council today (October 18):

Question:

It has been reported that a number of recent fraud cases have involved the use of false instruments to fraudulently obtain loans or grants provided by the Government to support enterprises, including those under the Special 100% Loan Guarantee, the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales, the Technology Voucher Programme and the Distance Business Programme. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of the aforesaid fraud cases detected by the Police and the amount of money involved in each of the past three years; among such fraud cases, the number of persons being successfully convicted and the penalties imposed;

(2) among the fraud cases mentioned in (1), of the number of those in which the Police successfully intercepted the defrauded money and the amount of money involved;

(3) among the defrauded money mentioned in (1), of the percentage of the defrauded money involving the Special 100% Loan Guarantee in the total amount of loans approved under the scheme;

(4) whether it will review if there are loopholes in the existing procedures and mechanisms for vetting and approving applications under the aforesaid schemes and programmes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it knows if the Hong Kong Productivity Council has established a mechanism to conduct random checks or reviews of the applications for the relevant funding schemes and programmes; if it knows, of the details, including (i) the manpower involved in the related work and (ii) the number of cases of alleged misuse of funds, in each of the past five years?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along been striving to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to revive and embrace new business opportunities, including exploring more diversified markets, through implementation of

different measures. To ensure proper use of public money, stringent vetting mechanisms have been put in place under funding schemes of different government bureaux/departments to prevent abuse of funding and fraud. If the relevant government bureau/department/unit suspects that any applications or approved projects involve illegal act in obtaining funding, such cases will be referred to law enforcement agencies for handling.

Since the question involves policy purview of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and Security Bureau, having coordinated information from the relevant policy bureaux, a consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is provided as follows:

(1)and(2) The Police does not have a breakdown of the statistics on fraud cases related to Government loans or funding.

(3) As at end September 2023, a total of 64 697 applications for the Special 100% Guarantee Product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) have been approved, involving a loan amount of \$135.6 billion. Among them, 1 531 applications, involving a loan amount of \$4.1 billion, were found to be suspicious cases after approval. The HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI), the administrator of the SFGS, has taken appropriate actions, including providing assistance to law enforcement agencies, taking legal actions and stopping borrowing enterprises from drawing down the loans. In collaboration with lending institutions and law enforcement agencies, the HKMCI has rejected or ceased to process 932 suspicious applications, involving a loan amount of \$3.14 billion. The HKMCI does not possess the statistics of the judicial proceedings involved in the aforementioned cases.

(4) To ensure proper use of public money, stringent vetting procedures have been put in place under the schemes mentioned in the question.

In respect of the Special 100% Guarantee Product under the SFGS, lending institutions are required to verify the eligibility of enterprises with their professional knowledge, judgement and due diligence, and submit the verified applications with the necessary documents to the HKMCI for final assessment and approval.

For the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund), the Technology Voucher Programme (TVP) and the Distance Business Programme (D-Biz), the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC), as the Secretariat, conducts the initial vetting of applications submitted by enterprises/organisations and reviews the relevant supporting documents to confirm if the applicants could fulfil the eligibility criteria and, having regard to actual circumstances and needs, follows up and verifies the contents of the application. The HKPC will not continue to process any applications submitted if it is found to contain inaccurate declaration or statement. For applications under the BUD Fund, the HKPC will submit applications to the Government's inter-departmental committee for vetting after initial screening. Subsequently, applications will be submitted to the Programme Management Committee (PMC) for consideration and approval. For applications under the TVP and the D-Biz, the HKPC will complete the initial assessment and submit them to the relevant vetting committees (the TVP

Committee and the D-Biz Vetting Committee respectively) for consideration. Applications supported by the committees will be submitted to the Commissioner for Innovation and Technology for funding approval.

Upon project completion, the HKPC will review the project reports and other required documents submitted by the enterprises/organisations as well as the audited accounts as necessary. If needed, the HKPC will verify the contents with the relevant enterprises/organisations. For applications under the BUD Fund, the final payment will only be disbursed after all the project reports have been submitted to PMC for consideration. For applications under the TVP and the D-Biz Programme, all project reports must be submitted to relevant vetting committees for consideration and accepted by the Government and the HKPC before final disbursements are released. For any enterprises/organisations failing to implement the project or in breach of any provisions of the funding agreement, the HKPC may cease disbursing any part of the funding to them, and/or has the right to recoup all or part of the disbursed funding.

Overall speaking, relevant departments or secretariats will refer any suspected illegal cases identified to relevant law enforcement agencies for follow up, and will actively cooperate with the related investigation work. The Government will continue to closely monitor the application process and operation of various funding schemes in order to timely review the effectiveness.

(5) The HKPC has put in place vigorous mechanisms to ensure that funding would only be disbursed if the projects comply with relevant requirements under the schemes. Please refer to our response to part (4) of the question for details.

The HKPC conducts on-site inspections of selected applications under the BUD Fund to guard against misuse of funds. Since the launch of the scheme (i.e. from June 2012) to end-September 2023, the HKPC has conducted on-site inspections of a total of 745 approved projects, among which 25 were terminated afterwards but the disbursed funding has yet to be returned by the enterprises. The Government and the HKPC will demand the return of disbursed funding from the enterprises that have received funding according to the established mechanism.

For the D-Biz Programme, the application was closed in October 2020. The HKPC reviewed all suspected cases and conducted random on-site inspections based on the risk-based principle. When processing the final reports submitted by applicants, the HKPC conducted random on-site inspections for more than 2 700 projects and referred 173 suspected cases to the law enforcement agencies for follow up.

Regarding the TVP, the HKPC has been appointed as the Secretariat of the TVP since June 2021. As part of the final report vetting process (i.e. completed projects), the HKPC will arrange on-site visits to premises of selected applicants before approval of final reports and fund disbursements. As at end-September 2023, the HKPC has already conducted random on-site visits for 509 projects. In the past, when reports of bid-rigging or fraud

cases involving the TVP applications were received, the HKPC would review the related projects to identify whether there was any breach of provisions or conditions set out in the "TVP Guidance Notes for Applications" or the funding agreement, and whether there was preliminary evidence showing that the applicant had committed illegal act that would require referral to law enforcement agencies. Since June 2021, the HKPC has received 19 such reports, of which seven were referred to law enforcement agencies for follow up after reviewing the cases.

Regarding the manpower involved in the related work, the aforementioned monitoring work is part of the HKPC's regular work, such breakdown of figures on manpower deployment is not available.