

Import of poultry meat and products from Békés County in Hungary suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (April 17) that in view of a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Békés County in Hungary, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with Hungary for the import of poultry meat but not for poultry eggs. According to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 840 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Hungary last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Hungarian authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks to be held on May 4 and 5

The Transport Department (TD) today (April 17) announced that two auctions of traditional vehicle registration marks will be held on May 4 (Saturday) and 5 (Sunday) in Meeting Room N201, L2, New Wing, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai.

"A total of 350 vehicle registration marks will be put up for public sale at each auction. The lists of marks have been uploaded to the department's website, www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/index.html," a department spokesman said.

Applicants who have paid a deposit of \$1,000 to reserve a mark for auction should also participate in the bidding (including the first bid at the reserve price of \$1,000). Otherwise, the mark concerned may be sold to another bidder at the reserve price.

People who wish to participate in the bidding at the auction should take note of the following important points:

(1) Successful bidders are required to produce the following documents for completion of registration and payment procedures immediately after the successful bidding:

(i) the identity document of the successful bidder;

(ii) the identity document of the purchaser if it is different from the successful bidder;

(iii) a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation if the purchaser is a body corporate; and

(iv) a crossed cheque made payable to "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" or "The Government of the HKSAR". (For an auctioned mark paid for by cheque, the first three working days after the date of auction will be required for cheque clearance confirmation before processing of the application for mark assignment can be completed.)

Successful bidders can also pay through the Easy Pay System (EPS). Payment by post-dated cheques, cash or other methods will not be accepted.

(2) Purchasers must make payment of the purchase price through EPS or by crossed cheque and complete the Memorandum of Sale of Registration Mark immediately after the bidding. Subsequent alteration of the particulars in the memorandum will not be permitted.

(3) A vehicle registration mark can only be assigned to a motor vehicle which is registered in the name of the purchaser. The Certificate of Incorporation must be produced immediately by the purchaser if a vehicle registration mark purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(4) Special registration marks are non-transferable. Where the ownership of a motor vehicle with a special registration mark is transferred, the allocation of the special registration mark shall be cancelled.

(5) The purchaser shall, within 12 months after the date of auction, apply to the Commissioner for Transport for the registration mark to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. If the purchaser fails to assign the registration mark within 12 months, allocation of the mark will be cancelled and arranged for re-allocation in accordance with the statutory provision without prior notice to the purchaser.

For other auction details, please refer to the Guidance Notes – Auction of Traditional Vehicle Registration Marks, which can be downloaded from the department's website,

www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/vehicle_registration_mark/tvrm_auction/index.html.

SEE's opening remarks on food safety and environmental hygiene at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, on food safety and environmental hygiene at the special meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee today (April 17):

Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food Branch of the Environment and Ecology Bureau is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local agriculture and fisheries industries.

Continuous improvement in environmental hygiene

Under the Government Programme on Tackling Hygiene Black Spots, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and various government departments have been working together to tackle hygiene blackspots over the territory. In 2023, the FEHD conducted more than 20 000 special cleansing operations at about 200 hygiene blackspots under its purview and stepped up inspection and enforcement at the same time. At present, more than 90 per cent of the hygiene blackspots under the FEHD's purview have been removed. The FEHD will continue to monitor and remove hygiene blackspots at streets and rear lanes to meet the target set out in the 2023 Policy Address, which is to remove 60 per cent of the remaining environmental hygiene blackspots identified by the departments by end-2024 as compared to end-2023.

In order to further consolidate the results achieved and enhance the efficiency in handling various environmental hygiene problems, we have conducted a comprehensive review on the existing statutory powers and penalties of environmental hygiene-related legislation. The first-stage review focused on raising the fixed penalty levels. The new penalty levels took effect on October 22, 2023. We have completed the second-stage review and proposed legislative amendments as well as implementation of new administrative measures to tackle more effectively problems such as shopfront extension, water seepage in buildings, water dripping from air-conditioners and pest infestation. We briefed the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the Panel) of the Legislative Council on the outcome of the public consultation and the relevant legislative amendment proposals in March this year. Subject to the drafting progress, we target to submit the relevant amendment bill by the fourth quarter of this year at the earliest.

As for the problem of rodent infestation, the FEHD will continue to implement a series of more targeted rodent prevention and control measures. They include strengthening the effectiveness of overnight rodent operations, utilising various new anti-rodent technologies and tools, and fully applying

thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology this year for monitoring rodent infestation in the community and formulating more effective anti-rodent strategies. In 2023, the FEHD captured about 63 000 live rodents, representing an increase of about 40 per cent as compared to 2022, and removed 70 priority rodent blackspots (about 60 per cent) over the territory. The Government will continue to promote participation in anti-rodent work by different sectors of the community, with a view to achieving the target of removing 60 per cent of the remaining and newly identified rodent blackspots by end-2024 as set out in the 2023 Policy Address.

As regards food business licence, the FEHD is progressively rolling out a number of enhancement measures, including expanding the scope of the Professional Certification System, which adopts an approach of "licence first, inspection later", to cover general restaurant licences, issuing e-licences for food business applications, and publishing a "DIY Application for Food Business Licences" to facilitate business operation.

New public markets and Market Modernisation Programme (MMP)

We are actively taking forward several new public market projects which are at different planning stages, among which the new market in Tin Shui Wai will be completed first by the second half of 2027. Endorsement of the Public Works Subcommittee of the LegCo has been obtained for the construction of the Joint-user Complex with Market in Area 67 of Tseung Kwan O. Subject to the Finance Committee's funding approval, the works will commence as soon as possible and are expected to be completed in around 4.5 years. As for the MMP, the overhauled Lai Wan Market officially reopened in March 2024. We will continue to maintain close communication with stakeholders and implement other MMP projects.

Agriculture and fisheries development

The Government has all along attached great importance to the local agriculture and fisheries industries and is committed to promoting their modernisation and sustainable development. We support the sector in terms of application of advanced technology and intensification of production, as well as helping it seize the opportunities arising from the Greater Bay Area development. In December 2023, we published the Blueprint for the Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Fisheries (the Blueprint), which was formulated hand in hand with the agriculture and fisheries industries, and briefed the Panel on its content. The Government is implementing the measures set out in the Blueprint in phases.

On the fisheries front, the four new fish culture zones with a total sea area of about 590 hectares will commence operation in phases starting from this year. To lower the start-up cost for fishermen, the Government plans to set up five units of modern deep-sea cages in phases for rental to fisheries associations/organisations starting from the first half of 2025 at the earliest. Local mariculture production is expected to increase by 100 per cent by 2027 (within the current-term Government) comparing to 2022.

On the agriculture front, we will facilitate the establishment of a

modernised Technoâ€‘Agricultural Park of about 11 hectares within part of Agricultural Park Phase 2, led by the agriculture industry through public-private partnership model, and is expected to commence operation in phases starting from the end of 2024. In addition, a pilot project on modernised urban farming in Ma On Shan Sai Sha Road Garden will commence operation in the second half of 2024. To promote the development of leisure farming, we will enable farms engaged in commercial agricultural production to offer leisure farming activities as ancillary businesses, including setting more lenient licence terms in the first half of 2024 for the farms to facilitate the sale of their produce cooked by simple methods.

Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members. Thank you.

[Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks](#)

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Occupational Health of Office Workers Series (III) More Exercise, Smart Work" on April 24 (Wednesday). The talk will introduce the benefits of exercise. Demonstrations and practice of workplace exercises will also be included.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational health nurse at 3.30pm at the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Science Museum, 2 Science Museum Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East.

The LD will hold another talk, entitled "Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment and Heat Stress Risk Assessment" on April 29 (Monday). The talk, designed for workers working in hot environments to raise their awareness of heat stroke prevention, will cover symptoms of heat-related illnesses, their first aid treatment, preventive measures and risk assessment.

The talk will be given by the occupational hygienist and occupational health nurse at 6.30pm at the Lecture Theatre of the Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

Both talks will be given in Cantonese. Admission is free but pre-registration is required. Interested participants can register online (www.oshsreg.gov.hk). For enquiries, please call 2852 4040.

Applications invited for flag days in 2025-26

Charitable organisations wishing to hold flag days between April 2025 and March 2026 are invited to apply to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) from today (April 17) to May 16.

To enable more organisations to solicit donations through flag sales, 28 flag days in 2025-26 will be assigned as regional flag days so that three organisations can sell flags concurrently on those days, one each on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and in the New Territories. There will also be 28 territory-wide flag days to be held in the year.

An SWD spokesman said today that applicant organisations must be bona fide non-profit-making organisations exempt from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) and, after the recognition of tax exemption, have organised charitable activities in each of the past three years. Applicant organisations should refer to the eligibility criteria as detailed in the Explanatory Notes for Application for Flag Days in 2025-26.

"Flag day applications will be considered by the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee according to factors including the organisation's integrity and management capability; the nature, value and standard of its existing services; its financial need; and its ability to organise a flag day," the spokesman said.

The application form and the Explanatory Notes for Application for Flag Days in 2025-26 can be downloaded from the SWD website at www.swd.gov.hk or obtained from the Lotteries Fund Projects Section of the SWD at Rooms 3601-02, 36/F, Dah Sing Financial Centre, 248 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, from today to 6pm on May 16. Applications for flag days in 2025-26 can also be submitted online. Please refer to the SWD website for application details.

The completed application form together with the required documents should reach the department at the above address by 6pm on May 16. Late applications will not be considered.

"Applicant organisations will be informed of the result around October this year," the spokesman added.

Enquiries can be made by telephone to 2832 4318 or 2832 4301, by fax to 2838 0441, or by email to eolf5@swd.gov.hk.