

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.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (April 17). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road

East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;

- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.

[EPD responds to concerns regarding food waste recycling services](#)

In response to recent media reports on the food waste recycling measures in Hong Kong, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has made the following response today (April 16):

The EPD has been actively expanding the food waste collection network, including supporting the collection of food waste from commercial and

industrial sectors and households. Currently, there are approximately 900 food waste collection points across the territory with a daily collection quantity of about 210 tonnes, representing an increase of 40 per cent compared to the same period last year.

The EPD, together with the Housing Department (HD) and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS), are expanding the food waste recycling services to all public rental housing (PRH) estates at full steam. At present, the EPD has installed about 530 food waste smart recycling bins (FWSRBs) in 70 per cent (about 150) of the PRH estates in Hong Kong. The EPD's target is to complete the installation of more than 700 FWSRBs in all of the 213 PRH estates across the territory by this August, covering about one-third of the population in Hong Kong. Some media reported that as of February 2024, no FWSRBs had been installed in the PRH estates of Yau Tsim Mong District and Wan Chai District. With the fact that each of the two districts has one PRH estate managed by HKHS, the EPD had already installed a FWSRB in Prosperous Garden, Yau Tsim Mong District on March 13, while the FWSRB in Lai Tak Tsuen, Wan Chai is expected to commence operation by the end of April.

There were some recent media reports stating that the FWSRBs in some individual PRH estates, such as Yau Lai Estate, Kin Ming Estate, and Choi Hung Estate were found to be fully loaded or malfunctioning. Each FWSRB is equipped with an inner bin with a capacity of 120 liters. When the collected food waste reaches 70 per cent capacity, the system will automatically notify the cleaning staff to replace the inner bin. Since there is no limit to the number of times the inner bin can be replaced, each FWSRB can serve at least one to two PRH blocks. Based on actual experience, each inner bin can accommodate food waste from 60 to 70 households, and each FWSRB is sufficient to serve at least 500 households. The EPD has already allocated additional resources to hire manpower for the replacement and cleaning of FWSRBs in the PRH estates. The department estimated an average participation rate of about 10 to 15 per cent in the first year of food waste recycling in PRH estates. As residents gradually develop the habit of food waste recycling, the participation rate is expected to increase progressively. The EPD will review the usage rate of FWSRBs in each PRH estate from time to time and gradually increase the number of FWSRBs in estates where usage is higher.

Regarding the operation of FWSRBs, the EPD's big data platform indicated that, in general, over 99 per cent of the FWSRBs are functioning normally. In the event of machine failure, the system will automatically restart the FWSRB. If it still cannot be used, the contractor will send technicians for repairs within 48 hours, and additional FWSRBs are available for swift replacement when necessary.

To further enhance the speed of notification, the EPD has established a new alert system. When FWSRBs are unable to normally operate due to bin full or malfunctioning for more than an hour, the system will automatically send messages to the HD's estate management offices and their cleaning contractors for immediate follow-up, while the EPD will also closely monitor the situation on the big data platform. Additionally, the EPD has optimised the screen interface of the FWSRBs. When the inner bin becomes full, the screen displays "Temporarily Full", making it easier for cleaning staff and

residents to understand the status of the FWSRB and expediting notifications to responsible parties. For PRH estates experiencing malfunctions or higher food waste quantities, cleaning staff will place traditional purple food waste bins next to the FWSRBs to ensure an uninterrupted food waste recycling service and maintain environmental hygiene.

For private housing, unlike the PRH estates, relevant stakeholders of residential buildings (such as owners' corporation /owners' committees or property management companies) have to discuss and reach a consensus on participating in the food waste recycling programmes before applying for relevant government funding schemes. The Government has been supporting the installation of FWSRBs in private residential buildings mainly through the Recycling Fund and the Environment and Conservation Fund. The Environmental Campaign Committee and the EPD collaborated to roll out the Pilot Scheme on FWSRBs in Private Housing Estates in end December last year, accepting applications for FWSRBs from private housing estates with over 1 000 households. Currently, the Pilot Scheme has received over 150 applications. The EPD has expedited the approval process and will arrange meetings with applicants to determine the installation locations of FWSRBs as soon as all the required application documents are received. Meanwhile, housing estates have to facilitate the installation of power sockets or other required small-scale engineering equipment (such as platforms, additional lighting and canopies) as well as arranging manpower and resources. The EPD would install the FWSRBs as soon as possible upon completion of these works by the estates (generally three to four months after collecting all the required documents). Currently, about 40 applications for the Pilot Scheme have been approved, and approximately 20 FWSRBs have been installed in five private housing estates.

For residential buildings without sufficient space to install FWSRBs, the EPD has set up FWSRBs for public use in GREEN@SHAM SHUI PO, GREEN@EASTERN and GREEN@SAIKUNG, and will expand to GREEN@SHATIN by the end of April. Moreover, the EPD has added 55 "Food Waste Recycling Spots" in various districts from March to April this year, providing scheduled food waste collection services at designated locations during the nighttime. The first public food waste collection point set up in public market under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will also be launched on April 18 at the Lockhart Road Market. If this trial programme receives positive feedback, the EPD will consider expanding it to more public markets.

To facilitate food and beverage establishments in recycling food waste, the EPD has set up food waste collection points at 65 Refuse Collection Points (RCPs), and will increase to nearly 100 RCPs in the second quarter of 2024. The public can also use these collection points to recycle food waste. In addition, the EPD collects food waste from clusters of restaurants over 15 districts in Hong Kong through mobile booths or trucks, providing a convenient recycling option for restaurants.

In order to enhance the cost-effectiveness and environmental hygiene of food waste collection, 10 government venues and private premises with funding support have installed food waste pre-treatment systems ("Food TranSmarter"). Additionally, there are about 20 projects under preparation. The collected

food waste is converted into slurry through the pre-treatment systems and can be temporarily stored for several days before being delivered to the food waste treatment facilities for conversion into energy, thereby reducing transportation costs.

The EPD will continue to strengthen publicity and promotion to the public and various sectors in the community, and provide more training and support to encourage active participation in food waste recycling, with a view to increasing the amount of food waste recovered in Hong Kong in an orderly manner.

SFST's opening remarks on financial services at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee (LegCo) today (April 16), on the estimates of expenditure for financial services and the key areas of work:

Chairman and Honourable Members,

I will briefly introduce the estimates of expenditure for financial services and our key areas of work in 2024-25.

Estimates of expenditure

The allocation to the Financial Services Branch (FSB) and departments under its purview for 2024-25 is about \$2.1 billion, representing an increase of about \$0.621 billion over the revised estimate of last year. This is mainly due to the increased cash flow requirements of the eMPF Platform project and "funding for promoting and facilitating the development of the financial services sector" under FSB's general non-recurrent account, as well as the additional provision for the preparation of the 2026 Population Census by the Census and Statistics Department.

Key areas of Work

In the coming year, our work will focus on four main areas, namely, consolidating Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre, promoting high-quality development, bolstering confidence, and developing digital economy.

(A) On consolidating Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre, we will continue to expand the capacity and scope of mutual market access. This covers our current proactive discussion with the relevant Mainland authorities on the introduction of block trading, inclusion of RMB counters in the Stock Connect, and expansion of the mutual-market access regime to cover real estate investment trusts.

At the same time, we are stepping up efforts in respect of asset and wealth management, including extending the Grant Scheme for Open-ended Fund Companies and Real Estate Investment Trusts for three years, providing tax concessions for single family offices, and hosting the Wealth for Good in Hong Kong Summit to attract family offices to set foot in Hong Kong. The New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme launched from March 1 this year has also been receiving desirable responses.

We will press ahead with the development of an offshore Renminbi (RMB) ecosystem, encourage institutions to provide more offshore RMB products and risk-management tools and carry out RMB financing in Hong Kong. We will also develop the Central Moneymarkets Unit (CMU) into Asia's major international central securities depository platform.

Besides, we will issue \$120 billion worth of bond in 2024-25 under the Infrastructure Bond Programme and Government Sustainable Bond Programme, of which \$70 billion will be retail tranche that includes \$50 billion worth of Silver Bond and \$20 billion worth of retail bonds. This will not only promote the development of financial inclusion, but also better manage the cashflow needs of infrastructure projects.

(B) On high-quality development, we will further consolidate Hong Kong's status as a green and sustainable finance hub. We published in end-March this year a Vision Statement to set out the vision and approach of the Government and financial regulators in developing a comprehensive ecosystem for sustainability disclosure in Hong Kong. Our target is to launch a roadmap within 2024. At the same time, we will extend the Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme for three years and expand the scope of financial support to cover transition bonds and loans, further enriching the green and sustainable finance ecosystem in Hong Kong. We will also launch the Green and Sustainable Fintech Proof-of-Concept Subsidy Scheme in the first half of this year to provide early-stage funding support for green Fintech.

(C) We have unwavering confidence in Hong Kong's financial market, and will continue to strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness through specific policy measures. In the first half of this year, we will submit the legislative proposal for the introduction of the company re-domiciliation mechanism to facilitate companies domiciled overseas to re-domicile to Hong Kong. On opening up new capital sources, we are working on the listing of an ETF in the Middle East that tracks Hong Kong stock indices. On the stock market, the Government has been coordinating with the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) and Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) to implement the various short-term measures recommended by the Task Force on Enhancing Stock Market Liquidity in full speed. The majority of the measures have already

been launched. The HKEX targets to implement the treasury share buy-back arrangements, as well as publish the consultation conclusions on maintaining trading under severe weather and announce the implementation details in the middle of this year. Besides, the stamp duties payable on the transfer of real estate investment trust units and the jobbing business of option market-makers will be waived, in respect of which we will introduce a Bill into the LegCo within this year.

(D) On digital economy, in October last year, the HKMA (Hong Kong Monetary Authority) completed Phase 1 of the eâ€‘HKD Pilot Programme, and Phase 2 of the Pilot Programme commenced last month. As regards the Multiple Central Bank Digital Currency Bridge (mBridge), Phase 1 of its service, which is expected to be launched this year, will first settle crossâ€‘boundary transactions for corporates using central bank digital currencies. The scope of eâ€‘CNY pilot testing will expand in Hong Kong, further enhancing the efficiency and user experience of cross-boundary payment services.

On virtual assets (VA), we are taking forward a number of initiatives to strengthen regulation, so as to facilitate the healthy and responsible development of the VA market in Hong Kong. Specifically, the HKMA has launched the stablecoin "sandbox" in March this year for institutions intending to issue stablecoins to conduct trials within a controlled environment. We have also completed public consultations on regulating stablecoin issuers and VA over-the-counter trading services respectively, and are considering the comments and suggestions received. Subject to the progress of the preparation work, we will introduce respective Bills into the LegCo as soon as possible.

Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer Members' questions. Thank you.