

Task force of THB co-ordinates supply from Mainland in full steam

To follow up on the consensus and achievements from the Mainland-Hong Kong thematic meeting on COVID-19 epidemic, the Task Force of Supplies from the Mainland led by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, has respectively touched base with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government. The first video conference was convened today (February 18) with the Director-General of the Department of Commerce of Guangdong Province, Mr Zhang Jingsong, the Deputy Secretary of the CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Mr Ai Xuefeng, and other members of the Task Force, to follow up the supply from Mainland to Hong Kong, discussed the concrete measures to stabilise the supply by land transportation and explore other means of transportation. The recommendations put forward in the meeting received positive feedback from both side who agreed to take swift follow-up actions.

Mr Chan expressed gratitude to the Central Government, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government at the meeting for their concern and staunch support all along to the prevention and control of the epidemic, and compassion and consideration for the needs of Hong Kong society. He was also grateful to them for continually maintaining efficient operation of cross-boundary transport of goods between Guangdong and Hong Kong and ensuring the stable and sufficient goods supply by land to Hong Kong under the implementation of various epidemic prevention and control measures.

The fresh food supply from the Mainland to Hong Kong has gradually stabilised and the overall wholesale price of vegetables has dropped under the speedy co-ordination between the two governments. To further stabilise the supply by land transportation, in view that many cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers have been temporarily removed from the exemption list because COVID-19 cases are reported in their residential estates and/or buildings, with effect from February 16, the Guangdong Provincial Government has shortened the duration of removal from the exemption list to 14 days. The scope of the removal from the exemption list has also been narrowed, previously applicable to drivers living in at-risk area and now only to those living in the buildings with COVID-19 case(s). In addition, cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers transporting fresh food with a negative nucleic acid test result in the Mainland are exempted as well to alleviate the shortfall of manpower, even if they live in the buildings with COVID-19 cases.

Meanwhile, in view of the Mainland's epidemic prevention work, the Transport Department (TD) will strengthen the control of cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers to reduce the risk of the epidemic transmission caused by cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers entering the Mainland. Starting from February 7, cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers between Guangdong and Hong Kong must present proof of a negative result of nucleic acid test conducted

within 24 hours, and take a nucleic acid test at the boundary control point before entering Mainland. TD has also sternly requested transportation companies to ensure their drivers have conducted COVID-19 rapid test on their own and secured a negative result before entering Mainland. The Governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) will continue to explore other temporary measures to improve the manpower situation of cross-boundary transport.

In addition, the HKSAR Government, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government have agreed to further study on a number of contingency plans, including opening up Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point as an additional temporary fresh food control point for emergency use, adding channels for receiving fresh food, and deploying water transportation.

Both sides also agreed at the meeting to improve the current arrangements for disseminating information on the supply and prices of fresh food from the Mainland to Hong Kong, so that the public can better grasp relevant information. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will update and publish information on fresh food supply on a daily basis. For the latest information on the daily supply and wholesale prices of fresh food, please visit:
www.afcd.gov.hk/english/agriculture/agr_fresh/agr_fresh.html.

The THB will continue to closely monitor the situation of goods supply from the Mainland and to work closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government to put forward and implement various measures in ensuring the stability of goods supply.

The members of the Task Force of Supplies from the Mainland of the HKSAR Government include representatives from the THB, the Food and Health Bureau, the Security Bureau, the TD, the Customs and Excise Department, the AFCD, the Centre for Food Safety, and the Immigration Department.