

FS to visit US

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, will depart in the late evening of April 7 for a four-day visit to the United States to strengthen ties between Hong Kong and the US in innovation and technology (I&T).

He will begin his visit programme in Seattle on April 8 (US West Coast time) and head to San Francisco in the late afternoon of the following day.

During the stay, Mr Chan will visit I&T companies focusing on different areas, meet with the companies' senior management and US government officials to exchange views on promoting economic development through developing I&T.

Mr Chan will also attend a gala reception and dinner to mark the launch of direct flights between Hong Kong and Seattle, and speak on the latest I&T developments in Hong Kong in a business seminar.

Furthermore, he will take the opportunity to meet with members of the Hong Kong community in San Francisco.

Mr Chan will leave San Francisco in the early morning on April 12 (US West Coast time) and return to Hong Kong in the morning of April 13 (Hong Kong time). In his absence, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, will act as Financial Secretary.

Rates and Government rent due April 30

Demand notes for rates and/or Government rent for the quarter from April to June 2019 have been issued, and payment should be made by April 30, 2019.

The demand notes have reflected the rates concession for this quarter, subject to a ceiling of \$1,500 for each rateable tenement. Any unused portion of the concession in this quarter will not be used to offset the outstanding rates in any other quarter. The concession does not apply to payment of Government rent.

These demand notes show the rateable values following the 2019-20 General Revaluation. Members of the public wishing to object to the new rateable value may lodge a proposal in the specified form (R20A) with the Commissioner of Rating and Valuation not later than May 31. Objection can also be made by submitting an electronic form (e-R20A) using the Electronic Submission of Forms service provided on the department's website (www.rvd.gov.hk). Irrespective of whether an objection has been made, rates and/or Government rent must be paid by the last day for payment.

Payment can be made:

- (1) by using autopay or electronic means (such as PPS, bank automated teller machines or the Internet);
- (2) by uploading an e-Cheque/e-Cashier's Order via the "Pay e-Cheque" portal www.payecheque.gov.hk;
- (3) by sending a crossed cheque to the Treasury, P0 Box 28000, Gloucester Road Post Office, Hong Kong (please note that mail with underpaid postage will be rejected); or
- (4) in person at any of the post offices or designated convenience stores. For the addresses and opening hours of post offices, please call Hongkong Post's hotline (2921 2222) or visit www.hongkongpost.hk.

If demand notes have not been received, members of the public may call 2152 0111, fax 2152 0113, or visit the Rating and Valuation Department, 15/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon.

Members of the public can also visit the department's website at www.rvd.gov.hk to obtain replacement demand notes or enquire about the amount payable. For instant payment, payers may obtain a payment QR code from the Account Enquiries service at the website by using a mobile device and present it at any post office, 7-Eleven, Circle K or VanGo in Hong Kong. Members of the public may also take a demand note for any previous quarter to any of the following post offices, where replacement demand notes can be obtained and payment can be made (please note that this service is available up to June 30, 2019):

- (1) General Post Office, 2 Connaught Place, Central, Hong Kong;
- (2) Gloucester Road Post Office, 1/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong;
- (3) Kowloon Central Post Office, G/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon; and
- (4) Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office, G/F and 1/F, Hermes House, 10 Middle Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon.

A surcharge of 5 per cent will be imposed for late payment and a further surcharge of 10 per cent will be levied on the amount (including the 5 per cent surcharge) that remains unpaid six months after the payment deadline.

To support environmental protection, payers are advised to utilise the free eRVD Bill service to receive e-bills and make payments. They are also encouraged to settle bills by autopay or other means of e-payment (e.g. PPS, ATM, the Internet or e-Cheque/e-Cashier's Order) in order to save queuing time. Application forms for autopay are obtainable from the Rating and Valuation Department, District Offices and major banks in Hong Kong or by

telephoning 2152 0111. Payers may also download the form from the department's website.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority (HA) is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

In addition, the weekly bulletin "Surge in Brief" (appended) is issued every Thursday to illustrate the past month's trends of key service statistics in public hospitals. "Surge in Brief" can be accessed in the HA Winter Surge designated webpage (www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en).

Occupational Retirement Schemes (Amendment) Bill 2019 gazetted

The Government published the Occupational Retirement Schemes (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Amendment Bill) in the Gazette today (April 4). The Amendment Bill seeks to update the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance (Cap. 426) (ORSO) to prevent the misuse of Occupational Retirement Schemes (ORSO schemes) as an investment vehicle open to persons who are not employees of the relevant employers of the schemes.

Specifically, the Amendment Bill will:

(a) enhance the powers of the Registrar, i.e. the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority (MPFA), to ensure that schemes regulated under the ORSO are genuinely employment-based retirement schemes; and

(b) improve the governance of ORSO schemes.

"The regulatory regime of ORSO schemes is not designed for schemes which are open for non-employee participation. Allowing such misuse of ORSO schemes

would compromise the integrity of the regulation of investment products in Hong Kong. We therefore propose amending the ORSO to better reflect the original policy intent that only employment-based schemes should fall into the ambit of the ORSO," a spokesman for the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau said.

The Amendment Bill also proposes to improve the governance of ORSO schemes by enhancing the Registrar's regulatory powers and abolishing the current criterion for accepting new ORSO exemption applications for schemes that have not more than 10 per cent or 50 of the scheme's members, whichever is less, who are Hong Kong permanent identity card holders. Under the new proposal, prospective scheme employers will still be able to apply for exemption if the scheme is registered or approved by certain regulatory authorities outside Hong Kong.

"The stepping up of the regulatory requirements is essential for scheme member protection. It helps improve the ORSO regulatory regime in achieving the policy objective to ensure that ORSO scheme benefits will be paid when they fall due. In formulating the proposals, we have taken into consideration the views of various stakeholders, including employer groups. The Government will work closely with the MPFA in order to facilitate the industry's compliance with the new regulatory requirements," the spokesman added.

The Amendment Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council for first reading on April 17.

Tenders Period extended for Site Formation and Infrastructure Works at Wang Chau, Yuen Long – Contract 1

The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) today (April 4) announced that in response to requests from interested tenderers, the tender period for the contract for Site Formation and Infrastructure Works at Wang Chau, Yuen Long – Contract 1 has been extended to noon on May 3.

The CEDD invited tenders for the contract on February 15. The original tender period was scheduled to expire at noon on April 12.

The extension of the tender period was gazetted today. Details of the tender notice are available on the CEDD's website (www.cedd.gov.hk/eng/tender/contract/tender/index.html#CV/2017/07).

The CEDD has commissioned Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong Ltd to design and supervise the works. For enquiries, please call the company at 2268 3560

during office hours.