

Response to United States Department of State's report on human rights

In response to media enquiries, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (March 14) made the following response to the comments contained in the United States Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2018 relating to the HKSAR.

"Since the return to the motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising a high degree of autonomy and 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' in strict accordance with the Basic Law. The 'one country, two systems' principle has been fully and successfully implemented. Human rights and freedom in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other relevant legislation. The HKSAR Government is determined to safeguard them.

"Foreign governments should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR."

Subsidy of Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme for February ready for collection from March 16

The Transport Department (TD) today (March 14) reminded members of the public that commuters will be able to collect the public transport fare subsidy for February under the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme (the Subsidy Scheme) at over 1 800 locations in the territory from this Saturday (March 16).

"Based on the actual expenses of commuters under the Subsidy Scheme in February, the total amount of subsidy for this month is around \$120 million, involving over 1.9 million beneficiaries. It is believed that the smaller amount of subsidy in February as compared to that in January is attributable to the Lunar New Year holidays as well as fewer calendar days and working days in February," the TD spokesman said.

As regards the subsidy for January, the TD spokesman added that as of March 12, around 1.85 million commuters had collected around \$161 million of subsidy, which accounts for around 87 per cent of the total subsidy amount. As the subsidy for each month is valid for collection within three months and that there are still around 0.5 million commuters who have not collected the

subsidy for January, the TD recommended members of the public to collect their subsidy for January as soon as possible and before May 15.

Commuters can collect their subsidy via the following channels:

- the Subsidy Collection Points – installed at (1) all MTR stations and Light Rail Customer Service Centres; and (2) designated ferry piers and public transport interchanges (please refer to the annex for the locations);
- any outlet of 7-Eleven, Circle-K and Wellcome supermarket;
- through the Octopus App; and
- the Octopus Service Points

Commuters may check their record of public transport expenses and subsidy amount through the website of the Subsidy Scheme (www.ptfss.gov.hk), the Octopus App and the hotline of the Subsidy Scheme (2969 5500). Details of the Scheme are available at the website of the Scheme. For further enquiries, please call 1823.

[Hong Kong Flower Show to open tomorrow at Victoria Park \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Flower Show 2019 will be held at Victoria Park from tomorrow (March 15) until March 24, running from 9am to 9pm daily. This year's flower show features "When Dreams Blossom" as the main theme and the Chinese hibiscus is the theme flower.

Some 420 000 flowers, including about 40 000 Chinese hibiscus, will transform Victoria Park into a colourful wonderland throughout the show period.

Over 260 organisations including 104 exhibitors from 20 countries, namely Australia, China, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam, are taking part in the show. They will showcase exotic flowers, landscapes and floral art displays.

The colourful Chinese hibiscus is the spotlight of the Hong Kong Flower Show floral wall. Together with the colourful display of tulips and the fairies guarding the wishing balls among the flowers, the Chinese hibiscus flowers will surely be popular for photo-taking. There is a mosaiculture display with the theme of a sports meet, in which adorable sports ball

figures depict athletes participating in eight kinds of sports in the 7th Hong Kong Games.

At the centre of the showground, there is a spectacular display inspired by wishing stars and a wishing fountain. Passing the wishing fountain, visitors will encounter a scene of people from different parts of the world enjoying music and flowers under the same sky and wishing that all dreams may come true.

A Special Plants and Edible Plants Garden at the showground will display an array of special Chinese hibiscus cultivars to enhance visitors' understanding of the characteristics of the theme flower. These flowers come in single-petal and multi-petal varieties, some of which are over 18 centimetres in diameter. Their colours are rich and diverse, ranging from single colour and bi-coloured to multicoloured. Some common edible plants such as jaboticaba, lemongrass, loquat, tamarind, rosemary and strawberry will be on display for public viewing.

In the evening, there will be 10-minute light shows with music at 7.30pm and 8.30pm at the floral displays along the central axis of the showground to create a delightful ambience.

The Chinese hibiscus is an evergreen shrub that can grow to 4 metres in height and comes in single-petal and multi-petal varieties. It has large and trumpet-shaped flowers which are eye-catching with a common diameter of 6 to 10 centimetres, and its leaves are oval or narrowly oval in shape with serrate margins. In addition to its ever-blooming and multicoloured nature, the Chinese hibiscus adapts well to Hong Kong's climate and can grow in different types of soil and thrive with adequate sunlight, making it a commonly planted flower in parks and gardens.

This year's flower show has enhanced environmental protection measures and encourages concerted efforts by participating organisations, contractors, volunteers and the public under the slogan "Green Flower Show for All".

To support environmental protection, visitors are encouraged to bring their own bottles, cutlery and environmentally friendly bags. The showground will also have QR codes for obtaining information on the floor plan, the theme flower and the landscape displays.

Admission tickets are available for sale through the mobile application "Tap & Go" and at the entrances to the Victoria Park showground throughout the show period. Octopus can be used to pay for admission. Tickets are also available for sale at the District Leisure Services Offices of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) until March 22.

For enquiries, please call 2601 8260 or visit the flower show webpage www.hkflowershow.hk/en/hkfs/2019/index.html.

The flower show is organised by the LCSD. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is supporting the flower show for the seventh consecutive

year and has been the Major Sponsor of the flower show since 2014.



Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, March 14, 2019 is 103.3 (same as yesterday's index).

Twenty-seven building plans approved in January

The Buildings Department approved 27 building plans in January, with seven on Hong Kong Island, six in Kowloon and 14 in the New Territories.

Of the approved plans, eight were for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, nine were for commercial developments, four were for factory and industrial developments, and six were for community services developments.

In the same month, consent was given for works to start on 12 building projects which, when completed, will provide 86 500 square metres of gross floor area for domestic use involving 1 602 units, and 66 350 sq m of gross floor area for non-domestic use. The department has received notification of commencement of works for six building projects.

The department also issued 16 occupation permits, with two on Hong Kong Island, five in Kowloon and nine in the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation, the gross floor area for domestic use was 41 726 sq m involving 421 units, and 38 456 sq m was for non-domestic use.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in January totalled about \$2.6 billion.

In addition, nine demolition consents involving nine building structures were issued.

The department received 2 152 reports about unauthorised building works (UBWs) in January and issued 674 removal orders on UBWs.

The full version of the Monthly Digest for January can be viewed on the Buildings Department's homepage (www.bd.gov.hk).