

SCED urges WTO members to preserve a well-functioning WTO

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, urged members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to preserve a well-functioning WTO by lifting the blockage to the Appellate Body appointment at the WTO Informal Ministerial Gathering in Davos, Switzerland, today (January 25, Davos time).

Held on the margins of the World Economic Forum, the Informal Ministerial Gathering provided an opportunity for participating ministers to discuss ways to advance the trade agenda and to preserve the relevance and credibility of the multilateral trading system, including ideas for reforming the WTO.

"That the WTO has imperfections to fix is no excuse to shut down its engine and grind its core functions to a halt," Mr Yau said.

"Hong Kong stands ready to discuss the WTO's imperfections, and appreciates the good intentions of all the WTO reform proposals for improving the dispute settlement mechanism," he said.

The dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO that keeps the multilateral trading system going will stall by the year's end if new Appellate Members are not appointed in the coming months.

Mr Yau added that attempts to negotiate new rules on e-commerce, domestic regulations and fisheries subsidies should move forward in parallel.

Before the Informal Ministerial Gathering, Mr Yau also attended the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Electronic Commerce in which participating ministers shared their views on the topic "How can WTO negotiations capture opportunities offered by electronic commerce for all WTO Members?"

He said it is important that the negotiations cover all essential elements for building a predictable and conducive e-commerce environment for global trade and the outcome should lead to a set of trade rules which give both suppliers and consumers the confidence they need to engage in and reap the benefits of e-commerce.

Mr Yau will return to Hong Kong tomorrow (January 26).

Tung Chung Swimming Pool temporarily closed

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 25) that Tung Chung Swimming Pool in Islands District has been temporarily closed for cleaning and superchlorination following the discovery of a small amount of vomit in the pool.

It will be reopened at 6.30am tomorrow.

The department appeals to swimmers to be considerate and to keep the swimming pools clean. They are advised not to swim after a full meal and should use the toilet facilities if necessary before swimming.

Lunar New Year Thematic Lantern Display "Glittering Peacocks in Full Bloom" to light up Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza from today (with photos)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will present a Lunar New Year thematic lantern display entitled "Glittering Peacocks in Full Bloom" at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) Piazza from today (January 25), featuring colourful peacocks, a symbol of good fortune in Chinese culture, to celebrate the advent of the Lunar New Year. Admission is free.

The exhibition will showcase various eye-catching peacock lanterns. A giant peacock lantern over 5 metres tall and 15m long will be the centrepiece, with its long glittering tail forming an archway between the two pools. In addition, more than 10 lanterns of peacocks, elegant vases and colourful peonies will also be on display, wishing the public abundance and success in the New Year.

The "Glittering Peacocks in Full Bloom" lantern display will run until February 24 and the lanterns will be lit up from 6pm to 11pm daily.

Apart from the lantern display, the LCSD will also hold three lantern carnivals featuring a variety of cultural programmes to celebrate the coming Spring Lantern Festival. They will be held at North District Park on February 17 (Sunday), at Tin Shui Wai Park and Ginza Square on February 18 (Monday), and at the HKCC Piazza on February 19 (Tuesday).

For more details, please call 2591 1340 or visit the website at www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/eo/territoryevents/lunarnewyearlantern/lunarnewyearlantern2019.html.



HA's Corporate Plan and Budget for 2019/20 endorsed

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

At the Housing Authority (HA) meeting today (January 25), the HA endorsed the Corporate Plan for 2019/20, the 2018/19 Revised Budget and the 2019/20 Proposed Budget, and also noted the Financial Forecasts for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

In 2019/20, the HA will continue to focus its efforts on providing quality homes, promoting sustainable living, optimising and rationalising the use of public resources, and enhancing the attractiveness of its commercial properties. Based on the above four main themes, the Corporate Plan covers a total of 51 key activities and 19 key performance indicators of the Authority's work in the year.

"The 2019/20 Corporate Plan provides a platform on which the HA will direct its work and concentrate its efforts in the face of multiple challenges. The HA will continue to seek the Government's provision of suitable sites for developing both public rental housing (PRH) units and subsidised sale flats (SSFs). The HA will also continue with the efforts in increasing the supply of Home Ownership Scheme and Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme flats based on the revised pricing mechanism and tightened alienation restrictions to address the home ownership aspirations of Green Form applicants and low to middle-income families. Having regard to the housing policy initiatives announced by the Chief Executive in the 2018 Policy Address, the HA will also consider introducing new measures to make more effective use of existing public housing resources (including PRH and SSFs)," a spokesman for the HA said.

"We will also continue to study ways to further enhance the buildability and productivity of public housing developments, assist those who are in financial hardship, and make cost-effective use of resources," the spokesman added.

On the basis of the prevailing assumptions, the cash and investment balance of the HA is projected to decrease slightly from about \$45 billion at the beginning of April 2018 to about \$41 billion by the end of March 2023. It is also projected that the HA will have the necessary financial resources to meet its recurrent expenditure and implement its current public housing construction programme and maintenance programme during the budget and forecast period.

"The HA's proposed budgets and forecasts are projected on the basis of a series of assumptions. If and when there are changes to any of the assumptions, the projected financial position will be different. According to the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2018 announced by the Government last month, the public housing supply target for the 10-year period from 2019/20 to 2028/29 has increased by 35 000 units, from 280 000 units announced last year to 315 000 units. The impact arising from the change in the relevant target will be reflected in the annual rolling five-year budgets as appropriate. The Government stands ready to increase spending on public housing and has set aside about \$82.4 billion as the Housing Reserve to provide financial support to the HA. According to the existing mechanism, the HA will conduct the annual rolling five-year budgeting process and assess its financial position and future funding requirements," the spokesman said.

Meetings of Legislative Council and

its Committees

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) and its Committees will hold 14 open meetings and a closed meeting during the week from January 28 to February 1 in the LegCo Complex. Details of the meetings are available in the meeting schedule attached.

The information in the meeting schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the "LegCo Calendar" on the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk) for the latest details of meetings.

Members of the public are welcome to observe open meetings of LegCo and its Committees. Interested individuals and groups are advised to make advance booking of seats by calling the LegCo Secretariat at 3919 3399 during office hours. Members of the public can also listen to or watch all open meetings via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website.