[Rates and Government rent due October 31]

Demand notes for rates and/or Government rent for the quarter from October to December 2018 have been issued, and payment should be made by October 31, 2018.

The demand notes have reflected the rates concession for this quarter, subject to a ceiling of $2,500 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.

Payment can be made:

(1) by using autopay or electronic means (such as PPS, bank automated teller machines (ATMs) 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, PO 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 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:

(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;

(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 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.

Appointments to Endangered Species Advisory Committee

The Government today (October 5) announced the appointments to the Endangered Species Advisory Committee (ESAC) for the period from October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2020.

The ESAC was established in accordance with the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap 586) to advise the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation on the administration of the ordinance.

The following members will serve in the new term:

Professor Shaw Pang-chui (Chairman)
Mr Ken Chang Kin-ming
Dr Cheung Siu-gin
Ms Chiang Mei-ling
Ms Colleen Chiu Yuk-lin
Dr David Lau Tai-wai
Mr Ricky Leung Lak-kee
Dr Xoni Ma Kwan-ki
Professor Winnie So Wing-mui
Dr Sung Yik-hei
Ms Karen Tang Mui-fun
Ms Tsang Wing-wing
Mr Matthew Wong Yin-shun
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation with Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation as alternate Member
Commissioner of Customs and Excise with Assistant Commissioner of Customs and Excise (Boundary and Ports) as alternate Member
Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning) with Senior Administrative Officer (Nature

Conservation) as alternate Member
Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Conservation)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department expresses its gratitude for the service and valuable contributions of the outgoing members, Ms Ophelia Chan Chiu-ling, Mr Chan Wing-suen, Mr Cheung Chi-wah, Ms Gabriella Wong Siu-ling, Ms Yu Li-hua, and Professor Zhao Zhong-zhen.

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session after attending the special meeting of the Legislative Council House Committee today (October 4):

Reporter: Mr Chan, are you concerned that the project would be further delayed if the platform has to be …… opened for investigation?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As we understand as of now, there is certainly some kind of delay. How long is it? It's yet to be ascertained because we have yet to ascertain what is exactly being built, how is being built, and whether or not there would be necessary remedial corrections.

Reporter: Does ….. open the platform would further delay the project?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: We are not ruling out the need to open up the concrete slab, but whether or not we should do it would depend on the outcome of the MTR's investigation and their proposal to us.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

SCED speaks on trade issues

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session on matters relating to trade conflict between China and the United States (US) after meeting with representatives of major chambers of commerce and associations of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) today (October 4):

Reporter: How are the new measures going to help SMEs? Would you expect the trade war and Hong Kong economy to worsen?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: Coming back from the US and after discussing with the various chambers of commerce for the ninth time in the last seven or eight months, I think the general consensus is that the dispute between the US and China over trade is unlikely to be resolved in a short period of time. We therefore have to prepare for the worst and for this battle to be played long. That's why we have stepped up measures which would provide a timely relief to people in trade, in particular those small and medium businesses.

I have got the consent from the Financial Secretary to make improvements to the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme. This scheme has been running for a period of time. It is meant to be lapsed by next February, but we'll be extending this scheme, the 80 per cent loan guarantee, up to middle of next year as a first step. We have also introduced other improvement measures, including three parts. First, to raise the maximum loan amount from HK$12 million currently to HK$15 million, so as to make more room for guarantee for this scheme. The second part is to extend the maximum loan guarantee period from currently five years to seven years. This means the monthly repayment would be reduced immediately. The third improvement is to reduce the fee charged on people joining this scheme as a relief to SMEs.

We also see the need of diversification of markets as well as sourcing, so as to minimise the impact from the tariffs imposed by the US on China-made products. In this regard, we are happy to see that the improvements to the existing funding schemes, including the market development fund (SME Export Marketing Fund) and the SME branding, upgrading and development fund (Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales) (BUD Fund) are receiving more applications. In this regard, the market development fund (SME Export Marketing Fund) has been given a top up from HK$200 000 to HK$400 000 on a matching basis. The application (for August 2018) has increased by 30 per cent, representing that more people are looking for a wider market and using this government financing scheme to help them. As regards the BUD Fund for the ASEAN market, altogether 75 applications were already received in the last two months so far. This scheme originally allows funding to be spent in the Mainland for branding and upgrading, we have also seen a marked increase by 60 per cent in applications, meaning that some firms would like to expand the Mainland market as a way to diverse their sales as well. We are seeing that all these funds, the timely topping up, the shortening and streamlining of application procedures are bearing results already.

We will continue to step up our co-ordination with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and through the Trade and Industry Department to talk to people in the trade on ways and how to improve the origin rule application as well as further explore the market.

Reporter: Do you see the new trade deal between America, Canada and Mexico will exacerbate the difficult time that Hong Kong is having? Can you elaborate a little bit?

Secretary of Commerce and Economic Development: It's hard to comment on individual trade agreement. But as a matter of fact, I think the re-negotiated USMCA (the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) clearly is confined to facilitating trade among the three countries in North America. I believe this trade agreement will be viewed by the wider trade communities including WTO (World Trade Organization) members from the perspective of its content, on whether it is a shrinking of market access to countries outside this bloc, or would it be a building block towards connecting with further trading entities. I think in this regard we have to look very carefully into the content, and also how it's going to play out.

But one very clear indication is that the overall global trading environment is not in peaceful water. With the lacking of progress in the bilateral talk between China and the US, I think in a short and medium future, we'll continue to see a rough sea ahead of us. Hong Kong on two fronts, both as a trading entity and for our self-interest, we are worried whether there will be spill over and collateral damage; on a wider front as a member of the WTO and also as a long term advocate of free trade, we are having a systemic concern on whether protectionist measures in various forms would prevail, and therefore further dampening the advocacy and practice of free trade. These are areas that Hong Kong will not be shy from speaking up as a member of the WTO and the vanguard of the multilateral trading system.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Hong Kong Customs combats unlicensed money service business

Hong Kong Customs today (October 4) is investigating a suspected case of operating money service without a licence, in contravention of the Anti-money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance (AMLO).

Acting on information, officers of Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) raided a grocery shop in Tai Kok Tsui today and found a man and his wife offer remittance services to foreign domestic helpers without a licence from the Commissioner of Customs and Excise.

Investigation is ongoing.

Under the AMLO, a person who wishes to operate a remittance service and/or money changing service is required to apply for a licence from the C&ED. Any person who operates a money service without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of $100,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Members of the public may report any suspected unlicensed money service operation to the Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).