

FEHD to launch anti-rodent operation in designated target areas next Monday

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will launch the first round of an eight-week anti-rodent operation in designated target areas in various districts next Monday (May 4) to sustain the effectiveness of rodent prevention and control work at the district level and raise public awareness of rodent prevention and control.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The FEHD attaches great importance to rodent prevention and control work. In addition to the two phases of the territory-wide anti-rodent campaign conducted annually, the FEHD has since 2017 conducted two rounds of anti-rodent operations in designated target areas between the two phases of anti-rodent campaign. In view of the fruitful results of the previous anti-rodent operations in designated target areas, the FEHD continues to conduct two rounds of the operations this year to intensify the district rodent prevention and control work. The first round of the eight-week anti-rodent operations in designated target areas will commence from May 4."

Each District Environmental Hygiene Office of the FEHD, taking into account factors including rodent infestation rates, the number of rodent complaints received, views of the local community, the number of food premises and "three-nil" buildings, will identify target areas in each district and continue to adopt multi-pronged strategies including improving environmental hygiene and stepping up rodent disinfection and enforcement actions, for carrying out targeted rodent prevent and control work.

The spokesman said, "FEHD staff will enhance street cleansing services and cleansing of public markets and hawker bazaars in the target areas, including sweeping and cleansing of streets and rear lanes, emptying and cleansing of litter containers, and clearance of miscellaneous articles and waste in public markets and hawker bazaars, so as to keep the environment clean.

"We will also strengthen rodent prevention and control work at problematic spots such as rear lanes, refuse collection points, markets, hawker bazaars, cooked food markets and peripheral areas of construction sites by placing poisonous baits and traps, destroying rat holes and implementing rodent-proofing measures.

"Furthermore, inspections of food premises will be stepped up. Enforcement actions against food premises causing poor environmental hygiene conditions, scullery and food preparation at rear lanes, and improper handling and disposal of rubbish will be strengthened. We will also adopt a zero-tolerance approach against common public cleanliness offences and take stringent enforcement actions against illegal disposal of refuse and waste."

The FEHD will also strengthen public education and publicity on rodent prevention and control. Apart from the broadcast of TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interest and display of posters on public transport facilities, the FEHD will collaborate with District Councils and District Offices of the Home Affairs Department to organise anti-rodent promotional activities. The department will also arrange health talks for building management offices of private buildings, persons-in-charge of food premises, and market and hawker stall operators to provide information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control.

The spokesman appealed to the community for active participation in the anti-rodent activities as well as joint efforts to eliminate the three fundamental survival conditions of rodents , namely food, harbourage and passages, i.e. the elimination of the food sources and hiding places of rodents as well as blockage of their dispersal routes, so as to combat the rodent problem.

Water Supplies Department to resume public services

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced today (April 29) that its public services will be resumed from May 4 (Monday).

The H2OPE Centre (Water Resources Public Education Centre) will be reopened on that day (May 4). To avoid the gathering of crowds and to foster social distancing, special arrangements will be implemented at the Centre upon its reopening. The number of admissions to the Centre will be limited. If the number of visitors inside the Centre has reached the limit, admissions will only be allowed when visitors are leaving the Centre. All visitors are required to wear their own face masks and will be subject to temperature checks before admission. Children under the age of 12 will only be allowed to enter when accompanied by an adult. Interactive exhibits, "Water+Theatre" and guided tours of the Centre will be suspended. The WSD will step up cleaning measures at the Centre and review the above arrangements in due course.

ICAC to resume normal services on Monday

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Independent Commission

Against Corruption:

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) announced today (April 29) that starting from Monday (May 4), the Commission's Headquarters Building at 303 Java Road, North Point and all seven Regional Offices across the territory will resume normal services.

Meanwhile, the ICAC's 24-hour report corruption hotline 2526 6366 and all other enquiry hotlines will maintain their routine operation.

In the interest of public health, the ICAC will continue to put in place appropriate measures for social distancing and preventing the risk of the spread of COVID-19 virus. Such measures include:

- All ICAC staff and members of the public will have their body temperature checked when entering the ICAC Building and Regional Offices. Only those with normal temperature will be allowed access;
- All ICAC staff who need to perform duties involving face-to-face contact with the public will wear a mask. Members of the public entering ICAC Building and Regional Offices are also required to wear a mask;
- Cleaning and disinfection measures within the ICAC Building and Regional Offices will be stepped up;
- ICAC staff will adopt staggered working and lunch hours.

The ICAC will continue to review the actual situation and adjust relevant preventive measures as and when necessary.

[Proposed sewerage works for site formation and infrastructure works for public housing developments at Kam Tin South, Yuen Long approved](#)

The Chief Executive in Council has approved a scheme for the sewerage works for site formation and infrastructure works for public housing developments at Kam Tin South, Yuen Long. Approval of the sewerage scheme was gazetted today (April 29).

The sewerage scheme comprises the construction of gravity sewers of about 850 metres and associated manholes and other ancillary works.

Construction works for the scheme are to be carried out in conjunction with the proposed road works of site formation and infrastructure works for public housing developments at Kam Tin South, Yuen Long.

Details of the sewerage scheme were published in the Government Gazette on February 22, 2019, and March 1, 2019.

LCQ1: Assistance for intermediates for foreign domestic helpers

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (April 29):

Question :

It is learnt that in view of the global spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Philippine and Indonesian Governments have recently suspended, one after another, the vetting and approval of their nationals' applications for working abroad as workers. It is estimated that currently, over 10 000 foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) who have been offered employment are unable to come to Hong Kong to report for duty. For the approximately 3 000 intermediaries in Hong Kong providing placement services for FDHs, not only do they suffer a heavy blow to their business due to the epidemic, but they also need to deal with considerable amount of extra work concerning epidemic prevention and quarantine for FDHs. The approximately 10 000 employees engaged by these intermediaries also face financial difficulties. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will provide a cash subsidy or other assistance to the intermediaries to help them tide over their imminent difficulties; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as the Government has announced that it will flexibly consider applications from FDHs, whose contracts are terminated or due to expire on or before July 31 this year, for extending their limit of stay in Hong Kong as visitors to facilitate them to find new employers, but the persons-in-charge of some intermediaries have pointed out that providing free board and lodging for FDHs awaiting employment has further increased their financial burden, whether the authorities will offer support to such intermediaries and those FDHs awaiting employment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the Government will set up a dedicated department to assist the

intermediaries, FDHs and their employers in dealing with issues related to epidemic prevention and quarantine for FDHs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant policy bureaux and departments, my consolidated response to the Member's question is set out below :

(1) and (2) The COVID-19 epidemic has brought unprecedented challenges to various trades and industries in Hong Kong (including employment agencies (EAs)). In response to the needs of the public and society, the Government launched a total of three rounds of measures since the beginning of this year to assist affected industries and the public. These include :

(i) the first round of the Anti-epidemic Fund approved by the Legislative Council (LegCo) on February 21, 2020;

(ii) the relief package in the 2020-21 Budget announced by the Financial Secretary on February 26, 2020, including reducing profits tax; waiving rates for non-domestic properties; waiving registration fees for annual returns and business registration fees; providing a subsidy to eligible non-domestic household accounts to cover electricity charges; and introducing a concessionary low-interest loan under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme, under which a 100 per cent guarantee will be provided by the Government, etc.; and

(iii) the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund measures approved by LegCo on April 18, 2020, including setting up an Employment Support Scheme (the Scheme also covers eligible self-employed persons) to provide wage subsidies to eligible employers for retaining their employees; enhancing the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme, including raising the maximum loan amount, increasing Government guarantee commitment, extending the "principal moratorium", etc.; and automatically extending the deadline for payment of taxes by three months, etc.

EAs may benefit from the relevant measures among the many initiatives in support of enterprises under the 2020-21 Budget and the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund. The Government will continue to monitor the development of the epidemic and keep a close watch on its effects on various trades and industries in Hong Kong.

To assist foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and employers to cope with the special circumstances under the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government has implemented a number of facilitation measures, including: FDHs whose existing contracts are due to expire or are terminated on or before July 31, 2020 may apply to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for extension of limit of stay as visitors in Hong Kong (for a maximum period of one month); and FDHs who have previously been approved to defer home leave upon the start of their new

contract but need to further defer home leave may apply to ImmD for further extension of limit of stay for up to six months, subject to mutual agreement between FDHs and their employers. Besides, the prevailing flexible arrangement offered to FDHs and their employers remains unchanged in that if an FDH has reached an agreement with his/her existing employer to renew the contract, or has found a new employer after the expiry of his/her existing contract, the FDH may start a renewed contract with the same employer or start a contract with a new employer once ImmD's approval for the appropriate visa and home leave deferral is obtained.

In addition, the Labour Department (LD) has kept in close contact with the relevant consulates-general in Hong Kong to keep abreast of their governments' anti-epidemic measures and the impact of these measures on sending domestic helpers to Hong Kong. It is noted that the Philippine Consulate-General has partially resumed processing of FDH employment contracts since April 27, 2020.

(3) LD has kept in close contact with the Department of Health during the epidemic to assist in matters relating to FDHs, including handling enquiries on employment matters regarding the compulsory home quarantine arrangements. LD has also, in coordination with the relevant departments, disseminated information to FDHs, employers and EAs on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the community, including :

(i) undertaking a wide range of publicity to remind FDHs and their employers to comply with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and appeal to them to discuss rest day arrangements (including encouraging FDHs to stay home for rest or take their rest day on weekdays instead of on the weekend); and

(ii) issuing a press release on March 18 and 19, 2020 urging employers and EAs (if applicable) to make arrangements for FDHs undergoing compulsory home quarantine. While FDHs are expected to stay at their employers' residence, should an employer wish to arrange the FDH to stay out from his/her residence for the purpose of compulsory home quarantine, the employer should make appropriate arrangement (with his/her EA, if applicable) beforehand. The employer must comply with his/her obligations under the Standard Employment Contract, including bearing the accommodation expenses and providing food allowance to the FDH.

LD will continue to maintain close contact and cooperation with the Department of Health and other relevant departments. Should FDHs and their employers have enquiries on employment matters, they may seek LD's assistance through its dedicated email account for FDH matters (fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk) and the online form on its dedicated FDH portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk).