

Government decides to withdraw Bills for introducing Special Rates on unsold first-hand units and franchised taxis

The Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) announced today (October 19) that, taking into account the latest economic situation, views of the community and previous comments made by the relevant Bills Committees, the Government has decided not to proceed with the work in relation to the introduction of Special Rates on vacant first-hand private residential units and franchised taxis in this legislative session. The Government will withdraw the two Bills later.

The Rating (Amendment) Bill 2019 aims to implement the proposed Special Rates with a view to encouraging a more timely supply of first-hand private residential units. As for the Franchised Taxi Services Bill, it seeks to introduce franchised taxis to meet the new demand in the community for personalised and point-to-point public transport services of a higher quality with an "online hailing" feature.

A spokesman for the THB said, "At the two Bills Committee meetings of the Rating (Amendment) Bill 2019 held in June this year, Members expressed very divergent views on the proposed introduction of Special Rates. Besides, there are strong and differing views in the community in this regard. Moreover, taking into account the latest economic situation, the Government has made the decision to withdraw the Bill after balancing various considerations. The Government will continue to closely monitor the property market, and give due consideration in light of the upcoming economic situation and views in the community. We do not rule out the possibility of reintroducing the proposal in due course when necessary.

"As regards the Franchised Taxi Services Bill, there were also diverse views at the Bills Committee. While some believed that the introduction of franchised taxis could enhance competition, quite a number of members were concerned that introducing franchised taxis would further aggravate the operating difficulties faced by the trade amid the economic downturn. Having considered the latest economic situation and the views received at the Bills Committee earlier, the Government considers that it is not an opportune time to introduce franchised taxis now. The Government will review the franchised taxi proposal and the way forward in the light of public views and relevant circumstances. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to maintain close communication and collaboration with the taxi trade to work together to enhance taxi service quality."

The THB will withdraw the Rating (Amendment) Bill 2019 and the Franchised Taxi Services Bill later in accordance with the relevant Rules of

Procedure of the Legislative Council, and has issued a letter to the Chairman of the House Committee in this regard.