

Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement between Hong Kong and United Arab Emirates enters into force

The Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) between Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will enter into force on March 6, bringing the total number of IPPAs in force between Hong Kong and foreign economies to 21.

Under the IPPA, the two sides undertake to provide investors of the other side with fair, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment of investments; compensation in the event of expropriation of investments; and the right to free transfers abroad of investments and returns. The IPPA also provides for settlement of investment disputes under internationally accepted rules, including arbitration. The IPPA will enhance the confidence of investors, expand investment flows between Hong Kong and the UAE and further strengthen the economic and trade ties between the two places.

The IPPA was signed in June 2019. Both sides have completed their respective internal procedures required for the entry into force of the IPPA.

The IPPA with the UAE is one of the four IPPAs that this term of Government has signed since taking office in July 2017. The other three are the investment agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Australia, which have already entered into force, and the one with Mexico respectively.

Apart from the economies mentioned above, the other foreign economies with which Hong Kong has signed an IPPA are Austria, the Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom. All the IPPAs, except for the one with Mexico, have entered into force.

Airmail services from Korea suspended

Hongkong Post announced today (February 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Korea, due to reduction of flights, airmail services (including Speedpost) destined for Hong Kong are suspended until further notice.

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (February 28) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming (see Note).

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach
Golden Beach
Silverstrand Beach

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Note: To tie in with the response level under the "Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance" having been raised to the Emergency Response Level and to encourage people to avoid gathering, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced that all beaches will continue to be temporarily closed until further notice.

Legal Aid Department resumes normal office hours next Monday

The Legal Aid Department (LAD) today (February 28) announced that LAD offices will resume normal office hours starting from March 2 (Monday) to provide normal public services including civil and criminal legal aid application and litigation services.

Office hours are as follows:

- Shroff Office

Monday to Friday: 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm

- Other Offices

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 1pm and 2pm to 5.45pm

Friday: 8.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 6pm

Members of the public may visit the LAD's website (www.lad.gov.hk) for more information or contact the LAD for enquiries through its 24-hour hotline (2537 7677), email (ladinfo@lad.gov.hk) or fax (2537 5948).

Immigration Department services arrangements

The Immigration Department (ImmD) announced today (February 28) that except for its passenger immigration clearance service, public services provided by the Department will resume as normal next Monday (March 2). According to the existing arrangements by the HKSAR Government, except for Hong Kong International Airport, Shenzhen Bay and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Control Points, passenger immigration clearance services in other immigration control points will remain suspended until further notice.

To avoid large gatherings of people when there is no urgent need, members of the public may consider submitting applications on later dates. Members of the public who have appointments during the service suspension period may proceed to relevant offices/registries/Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres without need of making another appointment. To shorten waiting times for services, those without appointments should make one prior to their visit.

For enquiries, please contact the ImmD by calling the enquiry hotline at 2824 6111 or by email to enquiry@immd.gov.hk.