

# EDB to provide subsidies to schools and students to fight against epidemic

The Education Bureau (EDB) announced today (February 20) the provision of additional subsidies to kindergartens (KGs), primary and secondary schools and their students to alleviate the burden of schools and parents in defraying extra expenses during the fight against the epidemic and class suspension.

The Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, said that to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus in schools and protect the health of students, all schools have temporarily suspended classes starting from early February. With schools' support, students continue to learn at home during the class suspension period.

"We understand that many parents have to make the usual education-related payments for their children during the class suspension. Some may have to pay for reading and learning materials or e-learning devices for their children. To alleviate parents' burden, a funding of about \$900 million will be allocated from the Anti-epidemic Fund to be set up shortly to provide an additional \$1,000 to each recipient of the Student Grant for the 2019/20 school year, i.e. increase from \$2,500 to \$3,500. This measure will benefit parents of about 900,000 students. No extra applications are necessary," he added.

"We are already processing applications for the Student Grant in accordance with the original schedule. It is expected to effect payment of the first batch of the Student Grant of \$3,500 within a week after the setting up of the Anti-epidemic Fund, followed by subsequent batches." The Education Bureau has announced earlier that the deadline for schools to submit application forms of students would be extended to two weeks after the resumption of classes.

On supporting schools, the EDB has indicated earlier that the bureau will continue to act on medical advice and take into account schools' readiness and the supply of protective equipment in the community in making further assessment and deciding on the date of class resumption. Schools will be informed of the date as soon as possible so that they can make appropriate arrangements in advance.

However, schools should get prepared to guard against future epidemic. In this regard, the EDB will deploy existing resources to provide a one-off grant to all schools offering full and formal curriculum (i.e. all public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, private primary and secondary schools and KGs) to help them replenish their epidemic prevention equipment (such as masks, thermometers, etc) or clean their school premises and pay for other expenses related to epidemic prevention. The provision is estimated to be \$42 million, benefitting some 2,200 schools.

The subsidy rate ranges from \$10,000 to \$ 25,000 per school, depending on the type and size of the school. Details are as follows:

(i) KGs – the amount to be received by KGs joining the KG education scheme (Scheme-KGs) is determined by the number of students, specifically, KGs with 66 or less half-day students will receive \$10,000 (one full-time student to be counted as two half-day students); 67 or more will receive \$15,000. Each non-Scheme-KG will receive \$12,500

(ii) Primary and secondary schools in the public sector (including special schools) and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme – the amount to be received by each school is determined by the number of approved classes. Specifically, schools with 11 classes or less will receive \$15,000; those with 12 classes to 23 classes will receive \$20,000 and those with 24 classes or more will receive \$25,000

(iii) Boarding sections of special schools – the amount to be received is determined by their approved boarding capacity. Specifically, schools with a boarding capacity less than 40 will receive \$15,000; those with a capacity from 40 to 60 will receive \$20,000 and those with a capacity from 61 or more will receive \$25,000

(iv) Private primary and secondary schools (including private schools offering full and formal curriculum, international schools, private independent schools and schools under the English Schools Foundation) – each school will receive \$20,000

Furthermore, the boarding sections of aided special schools have been operating to cater for students in need of boarding service during class suspension. To enhance the support for the boarding sections to guard against the epidemic and to reduce the risk of the spread of the novel coronavirus, the EDB will provide separately a one-off additional grant for 21 special schools with a boarding section. The amount of the special grant is determined by their approved boarding capacity. Specifically, schools with a boarding capacity less than 40 will receive \$50,000; those with a capacity from 40 to 60 will receive \$100,000; those with a capacity from 61 or more will receive \$150,000. The additional expenditure is estimated to be \$2.25 million.

For KGs, in addition to the above-mentioned grant for epidemic prevention for all KGs, the EDB will implement the following measures to assist the KG sector to tackle the current financial difficulty, including (i) using the number of students in January this year as the basis for calculation of the monthly subsidy for each Scheme-KG during the class suspension period to ensure that there will be no reduction of government subsidies due to withdrawal of individual students during the period; and (ii) providing a lump sum grant for all KGs, incurring an additional expenditure of about \$120 million. Details of the grant rate are as follows:

(i) Scheme-KGs

- KGs with long whole day session: if the number of students is 33 or less (if the school has half day students, two half day students are counted as one student), the grant will be \$120,000 and the grant for those with more than 33 students will be \$160,000
  - KGs with whole day session: if the number of students is 33 or less (if the school has half day students, two half day students are counted as one student), the grant will be \$100,000 and the grant for those with more than 33 students will be \$140,000
  - KGs offering half day course only: \$60,000 per KG
- (ii) Non-Scheme KGs: each KG will receive a grant of \$80,000

As regards student financial assistance schemes, in general, students' eligibility and the amount of subsidy obtained will not be affected by their absence during the school suspension period. However, for some individual schemes such as the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme, KG children are required to have attended school in the respective months in order to be eligible for the fee remission. As the number of school days and the attendance of students may be affected during the school suspension period, the EDB and the Student Finance Office will handle the cases with flexibility so that students' subsidy will not be affected by the school suspension.

The EDB will maintain close liaison with the school sector to continue to understand their concerns, follow up on the details of the above-mentioned measures and other matters, and to provide appropriate support.

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## **Traffic enforcement operation against illegal parking in New Territories South Region**

New Territories South Region will conduct a traffic enforcement operation against illegal parking in Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Sha Tin, Airport and Lantau police districts from February 24 to 26, with a view to ensuring road safety and smooth traffic flow.

Stringent enforcement action will be taken during the operation. The Police will issue fixed penalty tickets to drivers who park their vehicles illegally, particularly those involve double parking, parking at restricted zones (especially near bus stops and crossing facilities) and obstructing vehicle entrances.

The Police will issue multiple tickets and take summons action against

drivers who have contravened illegal parking regulations, obstructed traffic flow or caused danger to other road users. Illegally parked vehicles will also be towed away if necessary.

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## **Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority (HA) is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

In addition, to combat the epidemic of COVID-19, the HA had adjusted public hospital services to focus manpower and resources to tackle the epidemic. The publication of "Surge in Brief" for this season will cease today (February 20). HA will continue to monitor the service situation of public hospitals and to implement necessary operation arrangement and resources deployment.

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## **HKETO Berlin gathers with local partners and friends to share good wishes for Year of the Rat (with photos)**

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin (HKETO Berlin) gathered with friends of Hong Kong with a reception held in Berlin, Germany, on February 11 (Berlin time). Against the ongoing challenges in Hong Kong, the reception brought together like-minded people from government, political, business and cultural sectors, furnishing them with the latest updates about Hong Kong.

In his opening speech at the reception, the Director of the HKETO

Berlin, Mr Bill Li, looked back at a year of turbulences for Hong Kong and around the world, but expressed his confidence in Hong Kong's ability to ride out the storm, citing the example of Hong Kong's preparedness for handling the current outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

"With the lessons learnt during the times of SARS, avian flu and swine flu in the past, I dare to say that Hong Kong is one of the places in the world which is most prepared for epidemics. For the much you know about the Hong Kong style of efficiency, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus and protect the health of the community while maintaining Hong Kong's position as an international city and aviation hub," Mr Li added.

Despite the difficult times in the past months, Hong Kong has proven that its fundamentals and institutional strengths remained strong. Elaborating on Hong Kong's core values, Mr Li said, "the extensive media coverage on Hong Kong about the situation of the protests and development of the novel coronavirus is testimony that the freedom of the press in Hong Kong is well protected, and citizens of Hong Kong continue to enjoy civil liberties which are fully protected by the Basic Law and Bill of Rights Ordinance."

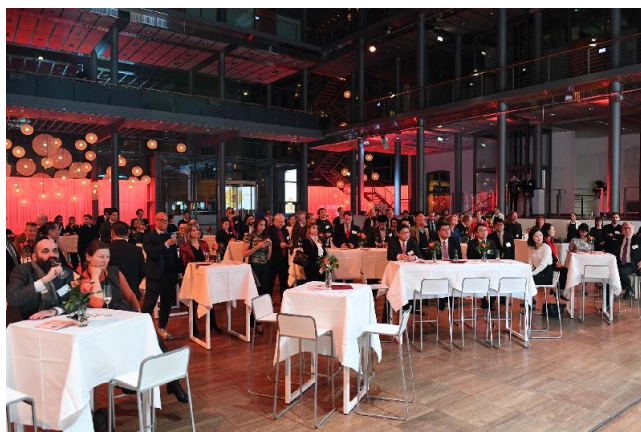
In terms of economics, Hong Kong's finance sector has remained a strong pillar of prosperity. Mr Li proudly presented that "the stock market has continued to attract IPOs and once again Hong Kong came first in the global rankings in 2019 – the seventh time in the past 11 years. The fintech and biotech sectors are growing fast. Our commitment to a green future also never wavers."

In closing his speech, Mr Li invited the guests attending the reception to stand by the close partnership with Hong Kong.

The Year of the Rat began on January 25. Following the Chinese New Year reception organised in Berlin, HKETO Berlin hosted two further receptions in Frankfurt and Hamburg. Another reception will be held in Vienna in March. Musical performances were staged to showcase the talents from Hong Kong. For instance, VSing, an a capella group, performed Cantonese and English songs for the guests at the receptions in Berlin and Frankfurt.

#### About HKETO Berlin

HKETO Berlin is the official Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government representative in commercial relations and other economic and trade matters in Germany as well as Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland.



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## Bottled pesto and prepackaged spring roll pastry may contain allergens

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (February 19) said that a kind of bottled pesto manufactured in Italy might contain an allergen, peanuts, while two kinds of prepackaged spring roll pastry manufactured in Singapore might contain an allergen, milk, but they were not declared on the products' food labels. Consumers who are allergic to peanuts or milk are advised not to consume the products concerned. The trade should also stop using or selling the products concerned immediately.

Product details are as follows:

(1) Product name: Jamie Oliver Green Pesto

Brand: Jamie Oliver

Place of origin: Italy

Distributor: Wilson International Frozen Foods (HK) Limited

Packing size: 190 grams per bottle

Best before date: All dates

(2) Product name: TYJ Spring Roll Pastry

Brand: Spring Home

Place of origin: Singapore

Producer: Tee Yih Jia Food Manufacturing Pte Ltd

Importer: The Dairy Farm Company Limited

Net weight: 240 grams/8.5 ounces per pack

Best-before dates: September 20, October 31, November 21, and December 20, 2022

(3) Product name: TYJ Spring Roll Pastry

Brand: Spring Home

Place of origin: Singapore

Producer: Tee Yih Jia Food Manufacturing Pte Ltd

Importer: Dah Chong Hong Limited  
Net weight: 275 grams/9.7 ounces per pack  
Best-before date: July 10, 2022

"The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System, noted a notice issued by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand that the abovementioned pesto product might contain peanuts, and that there were notices issued by the Food Standards Agency of the United Kingdom and Singapore Food Agency that certain kinds of spring roll pastry products (including the abovementioned two products) might contain milk. However, the ingredients were not declared on the food labels of the products concerned and they are under recall," a spokesman for the CFS said.

Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with major local importers and retailers. Preliminary investigations revealed that a distributor, Wilson International Frozen Foods (HK) Limited had imported some of the abovementioned affected pesto product which had been distributed to various retail shops, while the Dairy Farm Company Limited and Dah Chong Hong Limited had imported the abovementioned two affected spring roll pastry products which were on sale in their retail outlets. The importers concerned had stopped sale and removed from shelves the affected products and initiated a recall according to CFS' instructions. Enquiries about the recalls can be made to Wilson International Frozen Foods (HK) Limited (3678 0715), the Dairy Farm Company Limited (2299 1133), and Dah Chong Hong Limited (2216 8016) during office hours.

"Peanuts are a known food allergen. Those who are allergic to it may develop symptoms like vomiting, diarrhoea, asthma and rash upon consumption. In severe cases anaphylactic shock may even develop," the spokesman said.

"People who are allergic to milk may have immunologic response like vomiting, diarrhoea and rash upon consumption of food containing this allergen. In severe cases, anaphylactic shock may even develop. As for other members of the public, generally speaking, they would not be subject to such reactions when the food in question is consumed," he added.

The spokesman advised consumers who are allergic to peanuts or milk not to consume the products concerned. Those who feel unwell after consuming them should seek medical treatment.

The Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap 132W) require that all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong should list out the food's ingredients in its label. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.