

Postal services to Philippines subject to delay

Hongkong Post announced today (January 21) that, as advised by the postal administration of the Philippines, due to the impact of severe ashfall owing to the activity of the Taal volcano, all mail delivery services to the Philippines (including Speedpost) are subject to delay.

Temporary closure of North District Sports Ground turf pitch

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 21) that the turf pitch at North District Sports Ground will be temporarily closed from January 23 to February 5 for turf maintenance works, while the running track will remain open. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Fanling Recreation Ground or Kwu Tung Grass Soccer Pitch in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facility, the public may refer to the notices at the venue or contact venue staff directly.

Electoral Affairs Commission announcement

The following is issued on behalf of the Electoral Affairs Commission:

The Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) announced today (January 21) that, after taking into account practical circumstances, the preparation for the by-election to fill the two vacancies in the current term of the Legislative Council (LegCo) for the Hong Kong Island and New Territories East geographical constituencies is expected to take more than six months. According to the Legislative Council Ordinance, a by-election to fill a vacancy occurring in the membership of the LegCo is not to be held within the four months preceding the end of that Council's current term of office. As

such, the EAC will not be able to arrange a by-election to fill the two vacancies, arising from the determination of election petitions related to the 2018 LegCo by-election held in March 2018.

"Section 36(1)(a) of the Legislative Council Ordinance stipulates that the EAC must arrange for a by-election to be held on the making of a declaration as to the existence of a vacancy in the membership of the LegCo under section 35 of the Ordinance. However, Section 36(2) of the Ordinance also stipulates that the deadline for holding a LegCo by-election is four months preceding the end of LegCo's current term of office, i.e. before May 31, 2020," said a spokesman for the EAC.

"The 2019 District Council Ordinary Election (DCE) was completed orderly under very difficult situations and unprecedented challenges. Having taken account of the experience in the preparation for the recent DCE and having reviewed the practical circumstances, the EAC estimates that it will take more than six months to arrange a by-election to fill the two LegCo vacancies concerned. In other words, it is not possible to hold the by-election for the two geographical constituencies before the statutory deadline, which is four months preceding the end of the LegCo's current term of office."

The spokesman explained that the 2020 LegCo General Election to be held in the third quarter of this year is a large-scale election involving more than 4.1 million registered electors. The preparation involves an enormous amount of manpower and resources. The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) is putting in its full force to various preparatory work for the LegCo General Election. The recruitment of and training for additional electoral staff by the REO will also take considerable time to complete. On the other hand, with more than 1.7 million registered electors in Hong Kong Island and New Territories East geographical constituencies, if a by-election is to be held, the preparation for the by-election will overlap with that of the 2020 LegCo General Election. The current manpower of the REO is not adequate to prepare for two major public elections simultaneously. In addition, the REO is still handling follow-up work for the 2019 DCE.

The spokesman added that, apart from manpower, in deciding whether it is practicable to hold a by-election, other objective factors such as availability of venues for use as polling/counting stations and procurement of electoral materials are also taken into account.

"It is also noteworthy that under the current social situation, the REO needs more time and resources in the preparation and arrangements for the venues and the contingencies. Due to various practical factors, the REO is of the view that a LegCo by-election cannot be arranged before the statutory deadline. Based on a thorough assessment, the EAC agreed with the REO that it will not be reasonably practicable to hold the by-election to fill two vacancies in the current term of the LegCo for the Hong Kong Island and New Territories East geographical constituencies prior to the statutory deadline. As such, the EAC has decided not to hold a LegCo by-election to fill the two vacancies of the aforesaid geographical constituencies," he said.

The spokesman emphasised that the EAC is an independent, apolitical and impartial body which decides on public election matters in accordance with actual and objective considerations and related legislation.

The EAC and the REO will continue to devote their full efforts in preparing for the LegCo General Election this year to ensure that it is held in an open, honest and fair manner.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 is 105.8 (up 0.4 against yesterday's index).

Tao Arts Wan Chai – Community Arts Scheme to stage finale performances by Wan Chai District workshops in mid-February (with photos)

The Tao Arts Wan Chai – Community Arts Scheme (the Scheme) will present its final performances of "The Winter Melon Tale" on February 15 and 16 at the Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre. The performances will feature Cantonese opera and shadow puppetry by young participants to showcase their achievements in the Scheme's workshops.

The young performers are the participants of the Workshop on Cantonese Opera for Youngsters and the Workshops on Shadow Puppet-making and Puppetry for Youth. The performance will also include young Cantonese opera performers Kwan Hoi-shan and Wang Kit-ching, the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Cadet Corp and the Hong Kong Puppet and Shadow Art Center. Together, they will present an entertaining performance showcasing different folk and traditional performing arts.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) started the Tao Arts – Community Arts Scheme in 2019. Through enhanced collaboration between the LCSD, the District Councils, district non-government organisations and local professional arts groups, the Scheme aims to encourage more community participation and engagement in arts activities to help youth develop their own sustainable arts projects in different districts.

Tao Arts Wan Chai is jointly presented by the Wan Chai District Council and the LCSD, and is supported by the Causeway Bay Kaifong Welfare Advancement Association. Apart from the workshops, various activities are also organised such as performance showcases, post-performance experience sessions, joint rehearsals and more to provide further training and performance opportunities for the workshop participants.

"The Winter Melon Tale" will be staged at 3pm on February 15 and 16 at the Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre. Tickets priced at \$50 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For credit card telephone bookings, please call 2111 5999.

For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2591 1340 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/cpo/taoarts/wc.html.

