

Students invited to enrol in flower show drawing competition

Primary and secondary school students interested in joining the Jockey Club Student Drawing Competition of the Hong Kong Flower Show 2019 are invited to enrol through their schools by January 8.

Organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the competition will be held on March 15 at Victoria Park.

The competition will be conducted in four categories: Junior Section in Primary School (Primary One to Primary Three), Senior Section in Primary School (Primary Four to Primary Six), Junior Section in Secondary School (Form One to Form Three) and Senior Section in Secondary School (Form Four to Form Six).

The competition for the primary school categories will be held from 9am to noon, while that for the secondary school categories will be held from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.

The competition will feature students' drawings of floral exhibits or garden displays in the showground with a view to enhancing awareness of conserving plants and the natural environment. Participants may draw or paint to illustrate the theme of this year's drawing competition, "When Dreams Blossom".

The prospectus and entry form can be downloaded from the flower show webpage at www.hkflowershow.hk/en/hkfs/2019/drawing.html. Completed forms should be signed by the principals of the participating schools and sent to the Chairman of the Fringe Activities Sub-committee, Hong Kong Flower Show 2019, at 7/F, Kwun Chung Municipal Services Building, 17 Bowring Street, Jordan, Kowloon, or submitted by fax (2314 2205) on or before January 8.

For enquiries, please call 2267 6577.

This year's flower show will be held in Victoria Park for 10 days from March 15 to 24 featuring "When Dreams Blossom" as the main theme and with the Chinese hibiscus as the theme flower. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is supporting the flower show for the seventh consecutive year and has been the Major Sponsor of the flower show since 2014.

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

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

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

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected smuggled frozen meat (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs today (January 3) conducted an anti-smuggling operation and detected a suspected smuggling case using fishing vessel in the waters off Lamma Island. About 100 300 kilograms of suspected smuggled frozen meat with an estimated market value of about \$1.5 million were seized.

Customs officers spotted a suspicious fishing vessel near Lamma Island leaving Hong Kong at high speed at dawn today. Officers then took immediate action and intercepted the fishing vessel for examination. The batch of suspected smuggled frozen meat were seized.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested two 50-year-old male crew members and detained the fishing vessel for further investigation.

Investigation is ongoing.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Hong Kong Customs will continue to take stringent enforcement action to combat sea smuggling activities.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Government to move motion on implementing toll adjustment proposals for traffic rationalisation among the three road harbour crossings

The Government announced today (January 3) that it will move a motion (see Annex) at the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on January 23, 2019 relating to the proposal to adjust the tolls of private cars, taxis and motorcycles for using the three road harbour crossings with effect from January 1, 2020 (Toll Adjustment Proposal).

Since the Chief Executive's announcement of the Toll Adjustment Proposal in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government has introduced it to the community through various channels. In addition to attending meetings of LegCo's Panel on Transport and a number of district councils, the government officials concerned have also met with various stakeholder groups. In parallel, the Government has provided the general public with information relating to the Toll Adjustment Proposal, including the study report and the projected effects of traffic re-distribution for various tolling scenarios, through blog posts, social media and the Transport Department's dedicated website (www.td.gov.hk/en/benefit_traffic_dist_3hc/index.html).

"There is general consensus on the direction to rationalise traffic among the three road harbour crossings, and that the Proposal received support from many stakeholders including academics, professional institutions, and the taxi and transport trades," a Government spokesperson said.

The implementation of the Toll Adjustment Proposal is expected to bring about the following four benefits:

(1) The Proposal can effectively alleviate cross-harbour congestion, shorten the aggregated peak-hour traffic queues at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (CHT) and the Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC) from 10 per cent to over 40 per cent, and reduce travelling time for crossing the tunnels by as much as 13 minutes;

(2) The Proposal can release 10 traffic junctions which are currently obstructed by traffic queues on the connecting roads of the CHT and EHC, reducing the impact on passengers of non-harbour-crossing public transport vehicles and other vehicles;

(3) The Western Harbour Crossing (WHC) Toll Compensation Scheme can freeze the WHC tolls. From 2020 until the expiry of the WHC franchise, drivers of private cars and motorcycles as well as taxi passengers would be relieved from the pressure of WHC toll increases;

(4) The Proposal will bring benefits to society as a whole. Apart from bringing convenience to drivers, the Proposal can save 19,400 hours of daily commuting time of citizens using public transport, generate about \$800 million of social cost savings per year, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles by about 3,800 tonnes per year, which is equivalent to the effect of air quality improvement by planting 160,000 trees.

"Since the implementation of the Toll Adjustment Proposal involves a legislative exercise and a funding application, as well as finalising a formal agreement with the WHC franchisee, we need to affirm the support of LegCo before taking forward these follow-up tasks. By moving this motion, we aim to facilitate a thorough discussion of the Proposal by LegCo, and hope that Members will support the motion for the overall interest of Hong Kong," the spokesperson added.

After obtaining LegCo's support for the motion, the Government will shortly introduce subsidiary legislation into LegCo to amend the toll levels of the CHT and EHC, and submit a funding application to the LegCo Finance Committee for the WHC Toll Compensation Scheme. At the same time, the Government will work with the WHC franchisee on the detailed agreement.

DH investigates suspected illegal possession of unregistered proprietary Chinese medicine (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) is today (January 3) investigating a shop at Plover Cove Garden Arcade in Tai Po for suspected illegal possession of an unregistered proprietary Chinese medicine (pCm) called Namman Muay Cream.

Acting upon intelligence, the DH conducted a field investigation and seized the above unregistered pCm. Preliminary investigations revealed that the product concerned had been imported from Thailand for local sale. Its label claimed that the product is to be used for relieving muscle pain. According to the record of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK), the English name of the above product is the same as that of another locally registered pCm (registration number: HKC-16527). However, the product concerned is not a registered pCm in Hong Kong.

"Unregistered pCms may pose threats to public health as their safety, quality and efficacy are not proven. Our investigation is ongoing. So far, no related adverse reports have been received," a spokesman for the DH said.

According to section 119 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap 549), no person shall sell, import or possess any pCm unless it is registered. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment. The DH will seek advice from the Department of Justice on prosecution matters upon completion of the investigation. In addition, the DH will also consider referring the case to the relevant law enforcement agency to follow up on other suspected offences.

Members of the public who have purchased the above unregistered pCm should stop using it immediately. Those who have used it and are feeling unwell should seek advice from healthcare professionals. People who have the product can submit it to the DH's Chinese Medicine Division on 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, during office hours for disposal.

"The public should not buy or use products of doubtful composition or from unknown sources. All registered pCms should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the product label in the format of 'HKC-XXXXX' or 'HKP-XXXXX'. The list of registered pCms is published on the website of the CMCHK (www.cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/#main_listpcm.htm) for public reference," the spokesman added.

