

Fifth project approved under Subsidy Scheme for Using Hotels and Guesthouses as Youth Hostels

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) today (October 23) approved the fifth project under the Subsidy Scheme for Using Hotels and Guesthouses as Youth Hostels to the Yan Oi Tong Limited.

To help further meet the housing needs of young people and assist with their development, the Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address that the Government will explore ways to increase the supply of youth hostels. To this end, the HYAB launched the Subsidy Scheme in early January 2023 to subsidise non-governmental organisations to rent suitable hotels and guesthouses for use as youth hostels.

The fifth youth hostel project approved under the Subsidy Scheme is located in the Regal Oriental Hotel, with a total of 80 rooms, providing up to 160 hostel places. The project, which is named YOT Hub, will be launched by the Yan Oi Tong Limited and the Regal Hotels Group. One of the features of the project is to help youth tenants enrich their understanding of the national development opportunities through trainings, exchange programmes and internship programmes. It will also provide young people with self-enhancement and support services in different aspects, such as financial management courses, career development workshops and mental health seminars. In addition, the Yan Oi Tong Limited will form a youth service team and invite young people to collaborate in organising community activities. Volunteer services will also be arranged regularly to encourage young people to contribute to the community and establish their sense of belonging to society and responsibility. For details about the project and the means of application, please visit the website of YOT Hub (yot-hub.yot.org.hk).

A spokesperson of the HYAB said, "YOT Hub is well connected by public transport with comprehensive community facilities in the vicinity. This project not only provides young people with a comfortable living environment but also enables them to broaden their horizons and achieve their personal development goals through various self-enhancement activities. We are delighted that the Subsidy Scheme continues to gain support from hotel and guesthouse operators to provide youth with an enabling environment and hope for the future. The HYAB will continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders who share our vision to take forward youth hostel projects."

Details about the Subsidy Scheme, including the guidelines to application and the application forms, have been uploaded to the HYAB website (www.hyab.gov.hk/en/policy_responsibilities/Social_Harmony_and_Civic_Education/youth_hostel_scheme.htm). Relevant organisations can submit their applications to the HYAB by post, email or other means.

Speech by FS at Bloomberg Global Regulatory Forum in New York (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Bloomberg Global Regulatory Forum in New York, yesterday (October 22, New York time):

Mike (Founder of Bloomberg L.P. & Bloomberg Philanthropies, Mr Michael Bloomberg), Mr Cotzias (Global Head of External Relations of Bloomberg, Mr Constantin Cotzias), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here, in New York City, in fall. And delighted to hear that baseball, more than politics, is still the talk of the town.

Well, baseball and finance. For that, for hosting today's Global Regulatory Forum, for consistently driving high-powered discussion on the future of global finance, my thanks to Bloomberg.

Last year's Forum took place for the first time in Hong Kong, when we discussed how to navigate complexity and unlock opportunities. A year on, many things in the financial world have changed, and I'm pleased to bring you some positive updates about our city.

Hong Kong: strong fundamentals

Despite several challenging years, from social violence to the pandemic, Hong Kong is back, back once again with a stable, welcoming and promising business environment.

Our strong fundamentals continue to be internationally recognised. Hong Kong ranks once again among the top three global financial centres, behind only New York and London.

Canada's Fraser Institute has again ranked Hong Kong the world's freest economy.

The International Monetary Fund and credit-rating agencies have reaffirmed Hong Kong's institutional framework, our quality regulation and economic and financial resilience.

These commendations are echoed by the global investor community. Total banking deposits in Hong Kong, for example, have grown 5 per cent, or US\$100 billion, this year to date, reaching more than US\$2 trillion.

Our asset-and-wealth-management sector is also growing. We are managing

over US\$4 trillion in assets, and over half of that value was sourced from investors outside Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland.

Coupled with easing interest rate cycles and the Mainland's stimulus package to inject liquidity to the banking sector and provide more support to the real estate sector, our stock market has gone on a rally, rising some 15 per cent in the past month or so.

From late September to early October, we have seen strong net buys from American and European investors, constituting some 85 per cent of the buy side by value. And 90 per cent of those investors are long-term fund managers and investment banks.

International investors have good reason to be confident in Hong Kong. Our singular "one country, two systems" arrangement is here to stay, here for the long term.

That clear and compelling commitment has been reiterated, time and again, by President Xi Jinping. Indeed, the arrangement was designed not for short-term expediency but for the long-term interests of our country. It is clear that the Mainland is fully embracing high-level opening up, evident in the conclusions of state and party meetings in Beijing in the past year or so. The Mainland will support Hong Kong in remaining as a "super connector", to assist in realising the country's vision.

We can, and will, continue to do just that, thanks to the advantages that define Hong Kong's international character: our common law tradition, a judiciary that exercises powers independently; the free flow of goods, capital, talent and information; a currency pegged to the US dollar; and business practices that align with the best international standards.

For so long, we have built our success as an international financial, trade and shipping centre on these merits, and they will continue to underpin Hong Kong's development in the future.

Robust financial regulation

But still, Hong Kong is a small, fully open and externally-oriented economy. That means we are prone to external shocks and volatility. The trials and tribulations in the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, and the market squeeze during the onset of the COVID pandemic, are good lessons to learn.

Each time we weathered a crisis, we grew more resilient, but the take home message for us is clear: first, we need to identify systemic weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and address them. Second, establish multi-sectoral risk detection and monitoring systems to raise alarm against potential crises. Third, build in a strong buffer to allow us to respond to the unknowns.

This is particularly valid for Hong Kong which implements a linked exchange rate system. Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar, and therefore we must have sufficient monetary depth to enforce our

convertibility undertakings and defend our currency board system. To ensure we have ample liquidity as we need it, we have a foreign exchange reserve of more than US\$420 billion at our disposal.

In light of rising geopolitical and economic challenges, we've established a high-level, cross-market, co-ordinated and round-the-clock monitoring mechanism. It covers all sectors of the financial market and gathers all financial regulators, allowing us to detect looming risks.

I'm glad to report that over the past few years, our financial markets have been functioning in an orderly manner, despite volatility that might appear from time to time.

The role of regulators in market development

Good regulation, of course, is only half the story. For the ultimate goal of regulation is to promote the healthy and sustainable development of the financial market. Good market development, in my view, is equally important, and it is the best means to future-proof our financial systems.

This requires the regulatory regime be agile and forward-looking. This requires the regime to respond to market and economic changes, embrace and empower technological innovation, and create the conditions for markets to thrive.

It's why in Hong Kong, regulators have been given a dual mandate, serving both as regulators and market enablers.

Our listing regime reform is a good case in point. Back in 2018, the Government and the financial regulators made bold decisions to allow pre-profit or pre-revenue biotech companies, and new economy companies with weighted voting rights structures, to list on our stock exchange. The idea was met with doubt initially. But today the facts speak for themselves: new economy companies constitute only 13 per cent of the total number of listed companies, but their capitalisation accounts for 26 per cent. These reforms have not only broadened our market's appeal but also put Hong Kong as a leading listing hub for innovative enterprises.

Reform is an ongoing process. For instance, last year we introduced a new Chapter in our listing rules to facilitate the listing of specialist technology companies.

Looking ahead, two key areas will be vital for Hong Kong's financial future: enhancing our financial connectivity with the world, and embracing innovation.

Enhancing Connectivity

Connectivity has always been the trump card of Hong Kong – although "trump" may be a word that you may now love or hate. For long, we have been the premier listing platform for Mainland companies going global. The launch of the "Stock Connect" 10 years ago was a landmark in forging close connectivity between the two markets. Its very significance was to allow

foreign investors to make use of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, and all the regimes, regulation and practices with which they are familiar, to access the Mainland's stock market. Today, over 70 per cent of the A-share holdings by foreign investors were acquired through the Stock Connect. The Scheme has been continuously expanding, now covering bonds, ETFs, derivatives such as swap contracts.

Just in April this year, the China Securities Regulatory Commission announced four further measures to expand the Connect Schemes, including enlarging the scope of ETFs Connect, covering REITs in Stock Connect, and more. Meanwhile, it also made clear that they will support leading Mainland companies to list on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Obviously our IPO market has seen a rebound. In the first nine months this year, we raised more than US\$7.1 billion, ranking fourth globally thus far.

Looking ahead, Hong Kong is also strengthening connections with other markets in the ASEAN countries, the Middle East and the Belt and Road countries. For instance, next week, we will be seeing the launch of two ETFs on the Saudi Stock Exchange investing in the Hong Kong Stock market.

So Hong Kong's role as a connector of markets will only grow stronger. And with this, our financial regulators will continue to make it their strategic priorities to enhance collaboration with regulatory counterparts for timely and effective responses.

Embracing innovation

Ladies and gentlemen, another area essential to our future is innovation.

In Hong Kong, we're taking a balanced regulatory approach to enable financial innovation.

For example, last year, we introduced a regulatory regime for digital assets, along the principle of "same activity, same risks, same regulation". The key feature is to put in place guardrails for investor protection, while enabling financial innovation to thrive in a responsible and sustainable manner.

So far, three firms have been issued with virtual asset trading platform licences, and we are expecting more in the next couple of months.

Besides, legislation will be introduced later this year for the regulation of stablecoins.

Then there's also AI (artificial intelligence), which is reshaping the financial services industry, driving new products and services that enhance efficiency, security and customer experience.

Like blockchain and other new technologies, we must address the potential challenges of AI, such as cybersecurity, data privacy and the protection of intellectual property rights.

To that end, we will publish a policy statement next week. We will work to provide a clear supervisory framework and create a conducive and sustainable market environment.

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, alongside changing global financial landscape comes far-reaching opportunity. Judging from Hong Kong's experience, capturing such opportunities calls for the mentality of policy makers to focus not just on regulation compliance but also market development. For some, this may require a paradigm shift. But in our view, it will be an essential path to future-proof our financial markets, ensuring their long-term sustainable growth.

Finally, I wish to convey my thanks again to Bloomberg for inviting me to this Forum. I wish you all the best of business and health in the coming year. Thank you.



[HKETO, Brussels hosts Hong Kong Film Night in Amsterdam \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels (HKETO, Brussels) held with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) a Hong Kong Film Night on 21 October in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Amsterdam time). Participants enjoyed a networking reception and the screening of the Hong Kong movie "Band Four", directed by young Hong Kong director Lai Yan-chi, in this film event.

Opening the event, Deputy Representative of HKETO, Brussels, Miss Fiona Li, outlined the vision to provide more exposure and opportunities for emerging filmmakers and other artists from Hong Kong in Europe. She said that this film event with the HKTDC was a targeted attempt "to create our platform to showcase Hong Kong productions, and to arouse more interests in our young

filmmakers and accomplished talent among the local arts, cultural and creative sectors in Europe, hence offering both sides more opportunities for possible collaboration".

Miss Li elaborated that through arts and culture, Hong Kong's advantages and soft power are better seen in Europe. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region strives to elevate Hong Kong's arts and creative industries to the international stage and to present Hong Kong talent globally, fostering the development of Hong Kong into an international cultural exchange centre.

For the film industry, the Government provides financial support to help promising Hong Kong filmmakers gain international visibility and to encourage international co-operation. One of the recent measures is the launch of the Hong Kong-Europe-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme under the Film Development Fund, which supports eligible film projects co-produced by filmmakers from European or Asian countries that feature Hong Kong, European and Asian cultures.



[First-day auction results for Victoria Park Lunar New Year Fair stalls](#)

A total of 175 wet goods stalls and four fast food stalls were all successfully let in an auction for stalls at the 2025 Victoria Park Lunar New Year Fair starting today (October 22).

Nearly 470 people attended the auction at the Assembly Hall, 2/F, Lai Chi Kok Government Offices, 19 Lai Wan Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon, from 9am to 7pm today, a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said.

The average bid price for the wet goods stalls was \$20,316, with the successful bids ranging from \$6,530 to \$75,000. The highest bid of \$75,000

was about 11.5 times the opening price of \$6,530.

The auction of wet goods stalls fetched a total of \$3,555,258 compared with \$5,182,204 last year.

The successful bids of the four fast food stalls ranged from \$120,470 to \$182,000 with an average of \$150,735 against an opening price of \$120,470.

The auction for the 216 dry goods stalls, including 166 regular size dry goods stalls and 50 large size dry goods stalls, will be held at 9am from tomorrow (October 23) to Thursday (October 24) at the same venue.

The spokesman reminded the successful bidders to comply with all the stipulations and provisions as set out in the licence agreement. Otherwise, the department is entitled to terminate the agreement and the licensee shall immediately vacate the stall.

One De Brazza's Monkey of Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens passes away

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced that the De Brazza's Monkey of the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens (HKZBG) which had been put under isolation since October 13 was found dead today (October 22). The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has conducted a necropsy on the animal body to ascertain the cause of death.

A total of 12 animals of the HKZBG have passed away since October 13. After receiving necropsy, pathological diagnosis and laboratory tests results by relevant government departments, and ruling out other possible causes of illness, it is confirmed that the cause of death of the 11 animals deceased earlier is sepsis induced by bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. Similar lesions were also found in the tissues of relevant organs of the 12th monkey that died today. Pathological diagnosis and testing are in progress.

The LCSD will continue to close the Mammals Section of the HKZBG to closely monitor the health conditions of the animals. At present, the health conditions of the 78 mammals are normal. The LCSD will also continue to provide protective gear and health monitoring for staff who take care of animals. The health conditions of staff concerned are normal.

The LCSD has all along been communicating with the AFCD and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, and has implemented appropriate protective measures and stepped up cleaning in accordance with

their recommendations.