

# Fung Kam Street Sports Centre and Praya Street Sports Centre reopened

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (September 17) that Fung Kam Street Sports Centre in Yuen Long District and Praya Street Sports Centre in Islands District have been reopened.

The sports centres were temporarily closed earlier on for use as temporary shelters operated by District Offices of the Home Affairs Department.

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## The Launch of Faster Payment System

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced the launch of the Faster Payment System (FPS) today (September 17).

The FPS is one of the seven initiatives announced by the HKMA in September 2017 for preparing Hong Kong to move into a new era of Smart Banking. The FPS operates on a round-the-clock basis and connects banks and stored-value facility (SVF) operators on the same platform. It enables the public to transfer funds anytime, anywhere, across different banks or SVFs with funds available almost immediately. Fund transfer will become very user-friendly with the use of mobile number or email address as account proxy for the payee. In addition to the Hong Kong Dollar (HKD), the FPS also supports Renminbi (RMB) payments.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Norman Chan, said, "The FPS is a unique platform as it supports instant payments in the HKD and the RMB with the use of mobile phone numbers, email addresses or Quick Response codes (QR code), and achieves full connectivity among banks and SVF accounts. It makes retail fund transfers and payments much quicker and easier. The launch of the FPS signifies the payment system, which forms the core part of the Hong Kong's financial infrastructure, will enter into a new era. While it will bring new opportunities to the retail payment industry, it will also promote innovation in financial technology, providing greater convenience and new experience to the public."

Starting from today, the public can make use of the mobile app of participating banks and SVFs to register their mobile phone number or email address with the FPS as an account proxy for receiving funds. And from September 30, the public can make transfers or receive funds using the FPS.

Currently, a total of 21 banks (including most retail banks) and 10 SVFs in Hong Kong have participated in the system to provide FPS services for their customers at launch (see Annex for the list).

Similar to the HKD Clearing House Automated Transfer System (CHATS) and RMB CHATS, the HKD FPS and RMB FPS are subject to the HKMA's oversight under the Payment Systems and Stored Value Facilities Ordinance (PSSVFO). The PSSVFO also provides statutory backing to the finality of settlement for transactions made through the HKD FPS and RMB FPS by protecting the settlement finality from insolvency laws or any other laws.

In addition, to promote the adoption of QR code payments in Hong Kong, the HKMA announced the Common QR Code Standard for Retail Payments in Hong Kong together with the launch of an associated mobile application tool. A free mobile application tool, namely "Hong Kong Common QR Code" (HKQR), is released today, which can be used for converting multiple QR codes from different payment service providers into a single, combined QR code. This would facilitate merchants, especially small and medium enterprises, in using a single QR code to accept different payment schemes, instead of displaying multiple QR codes to their customers. The HKQR mobile application is available for download from Google Play Store and Apple App Store from today.

The public may contact their banks or SVF operators for more details of the FPS service as well as the common QR code. More information of the FPS and the Common QR Code can be found in the website [www.hkma.gov.hk/fps](http://www.hkma.gov.hk/fps).

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## Workplace safety urged after typhoon

The Labour Department (LD) urges responsible persons for workplaces and workers, in particular contractors, employers and employees of construction sites, factories and industrial undertakings, to be more vigilant, check their workplaces and take adequate safety precautions before resuming work after the typhoon for ensuring work safety.

A spokesperson for LD said today (September 17) that both the management and the workers should pay more attention to work safety as workplace conditions might have changed. All temporary falsework, supporting structures, scaffolds and hanging materials should be thoroughly inspected to prevent workers from being struck by falling materials or objects.

For all work processes, machinery and equipment with potential hazards, duty holders should conduct advance checking, and prepare and implement necessary safety measures.

All scaffolding, working platforms, lifting appliances (such as tower cranes), temporary power supplies, confined spaces, sewage work and

excavations should be inspected by competent persons to ensure that they are in safe condition before resuming operation or putting them into use again.

Workers should also be fully advised and instructed to follow safety precautions when working at height or engaging in lifting operations, tunnelling works, electrical work and other hazardous work situations.

To prevent work accidents, the spokesperson urged contractors and employers to step up monitoring of their workplaces to make sure that they are safe for work after the typhoon.

He pointed out that the general duty provisions of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require contractors and employers to provide safe working environments, safe plant and safe systems of work for their employees. Failing to comply with this requirement can result in a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Meanwhile, employees should co-operate by following the safety instructions and by using safety equipment.

For enquiries on occupational safety and health, please contact the department's occupational safety officers at 2559 2297.

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## [Hong Kong Customs combats illicit cigarette activities in Sham Shui Po District](#)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an anti-illicit cigarette operation codenamed "Iron Knot" in Sham Shui Po District from September 3 to 15 and seized about 80 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with a total estimated market value of about \$190,000 and a duty potential of about \$150,000.

During the operation, a total of 22 men and four women, aged between 27 and 86, were arrested.

Hong Kong Customs reiterates that it will continue to combat illicit cigarette activities on various fronts, including through close contact and timely joint operations with the Police and other law enforcement agencies.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette

activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

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## Speech by CE at Hong Kong Qualifications Framework International Conference 2018 opening ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework International Conference 2018 opening ceremony today (September 17):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be here today for the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework International Conference, and to speak to such a distinguished audience of qualifications' framework authorities, especially those coming from overseas, vocational and professional education and training specialists, academics, industry practitioners and business leaders.

As the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I have to say that I am proud of the fact that we could continue to meet here. It's a clear indication of the robustness of our city management, noting that it was only some 12 hours ago that we were hit by a super typhoon.

This Conference marks the proud 10th anniversary of our Qualifications Framework (QF). We have come a long way here in Hong Kong, with the acronym QF now being recognised by many people, but I hope today's Conference will point us the way forward in a rapidly changing environment.

Looking back, our goal has not changed since we established the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework in 2008, which is to upgrade the quality of our human capital. At that time, we had a proliferation of qualifications, but they lacked clear and common benchmarks in terms of quality and progression. What we needed was a transparent and credible qualifications system, one in which learners enjoy easy access to information about the standard and quality of education and training programmes, and the qualifications those programmes would lead to. We also needed a platform for industries, learners and service providers to work together, to ensure that our education and training programmes were relevant and responsive to our manpower and community needs.

I'm pleased to say that, thanks to the concerted efforts of industries,

professional bodies, labour and our training providers, we've created a Qualifications Framework, which has become the common benchmarks for quality assurance in 23 industries over this past decade. Legislative amendments have also been made to ensure that the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, our accreditation authority, operates with transparency and quality assurance.

The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework is now a credible qualifications system in the academic, vocational, professional and continuing education sectors, and is widely implemented in recruitment, training and promotion by companies from a wide range of businesses. Educational institutions, professional bodies and the labour sector have also embraced it, designing programmes accredited under the Qualifications Framework, while encouraging learners to seek those qualifications. Even training schools within the civil service such as the Police College, the Immigration Service Institute of Training & Development, the Correctional Services Department Staff Training Institute and the Civil Aid Service Training School have adjusted or developed in-house programmes to align with the QF giving trainees better recognition and opportunities for further advancement.

We are also enhancing our profile internationally, gaining recognition of our qualifications by our overseas counterparts. With the support of our overseas partners including some of you here today, we have completed four comparability studies with the qualifications' framework of the European Union, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand. The studies demonstrate the high standards of our Framework and quality assurance system, boosting their credibility and recognition world-wide. It now stands as a solid foundation in Hong Kong's progressive development as a knowledge-based economy.

The theme of today's Conference – "QF in the Next Decade: Quality, Progression and Recognition" – spotlights the mission of my Government in respect of education: to continually improve the quality of our education system, to drive progress and to promote recognition for our students and learners. Education and training lie at the heart of Hong Kong's progress, and are essential to the long-term planning of our social and economic development. My vision is to improve our quality of education, to create a stable, caring, inspiring, high-quality learning environment for our younger generation. I'm determined that they have everything they need to explore their potential, to cultivate their interests and to find their future.

I regard spending on Education as the most meaningful investment for our future development. Therefore, in my first week as the Chief Executive a year ago in July, I announced an immediate increase in Hong Kong's recurrent education expenditure of HK\$3.6 billion, covering the spectrum of our educational system, from kindergarten and special education to post-secondary education. In our 2018-19 financial year, total government expenditure on education is projected to reach a historic high of HK\$113 billion, an increase of 28 per cent over the previous year and accounting for one-fifth of Hong Kong's total government expenditure. We are prepared to further invest, as we have earmarked another HK\$3.4 billion recurrent expenditure for education, and we are engaging professional experts through various task

forces to come up with the best recommendations in consultation with our education stakeholders.

As for the QF, we are injecting HK\$1.2 billion into the QF Fund. The money will strengthen its development, enhance recognition of qualifications for various industries and provide our youth with quality-assured pathways for further studies and career development. I am confident that the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework will continue to play its part in equipping our youth with the knowledge and skills to realise their potential, and keeping Hong Kong's competitive in this fast-changing world.

My thanks to the Education Bureau and the Qualifications Framework Secretariat for organising this Conference. My thanks as well to the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, and to our supporting organisations: the European Commission, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership.

I wish you all a very rewarding Conference. Thank you very much.

