Charge for each import and export declaration capped at $200 from August 1

With effect from August 1, the charge for each import and export declaration (TDEC) will be capped at $200 to further lower the cost of importing and exporting high-value goods to and from Hong Kong. The new measure will apply to goods imported, exported or re-exported on or after August 1.

The Legislative Council passed the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 2018 (Amendment Regulation) today (June 20) to impose the cap of $200 on each TDEC.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, thanked the Legislative Council for the passage of the Amendment Regulation. He said, "The capping of TDEC charges will directly benefit the local trading and logistics industry through lowering the operating cost of import and export, encouraging the industry to move up the value chain and supporting the further development of businesses in trading, storage, logistics and distribution of high-value goods in Hong Kong, thereby strengthening Hong Kong's position as a trading hub.

"The cap on TDEC charges is expected to save the trade about $458 million a year and benefit about 900 000 TDEC cases each involving goods at a value above $1.644 million."

The arrangements for the lodgement of TDECs and payment of charges will remain unchanged. For enquiries, please contact the Customs and Excise Department (hotline: 2707 7748, email: customsenquiry@customs.gov.hk), the Census and Statistics Department (hotline: 2877 1818, email: trade-declaration@censtatd.gov.hk) or the three Government-appointed service providers of Government Electronic Trading Services (namely Brio Electronic Commerce Limited, Global e-Trading Services Limited and Tradelink Electronic Commerce Limited, with contact information available at www.cedb.gov.hk/citb/en/Policy_Responsibilities/gets_sp.html).

CSSA caseload for May 2018

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in May showed a drop of 124 cases, representing a decrease of 0.1 per cent compared with that of April, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics

released by the Social Welfare Department today (June 20).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of May stood at 231 419 (see attached table), with a total of 333 241 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 1.4 per cent to 4 068 cases. Both unemployment cases and ill health cases dropped by 0.3 per cent to 12 580 cases and 23 517 cases respectively. Old age cases slightly slipped by 0.1 per cent to 144 151 cases.

Single parent cases edged up by 0.4 per cent to 25 784 cases while permanent disability cases increased slightly by 0.1 per cent to 17 024 cases.

LCQ10: Water works carried out in villages

Following is a question by the Hon Cheng Chung-tai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 13):

Question:

As of March last year, a total of about 400 residents in 19 villages are not yet supplied with tap water. Recently, several residents of Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun have revealed that they have been using water from water tanks and streams nearby. These water sources dried up last month due to the hot weather. Therefore, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) needed to transport potable water to the residents in that village. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance or complaints received regarding the supply of tap water from the residents of the above 19 villages in the past two years, broken down by village name;

(2) whether the authorities conducted any technical feasibility study and economic assessment on laying water mains to the above villages in the past two years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) this Council and the relevant District Council members have made repeated requests to the authorities for constructing tap water supply systems for the above villages, but the authorities have been declining these requests due to low cost-effectiveness for the relevant works and very high per capita

capital costs. Have the authorities reviewed if cost-effectiveness for these works should outweigh the basic living needs of the residents?

Reply:

President,

At present, the treated water supply networks cover about 99.9 per cent of the population of Hong Kong. Areas that do not have treated water supply are mainly remote villages with sparse population. Although these villages do not have treated water supply, they have access to systems that supply stream or well water for domestic consumption. These supply systems have been in use for many years. Most of them are under the maintenance of the Home Affairs Department (HAD). The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department also regularly monitors and tests the quality of the stream or well water in these villages to ascertain their suitability for potable consumption. In the event of these water sources becoming depleted or insufficient, the Government will provide assistance. For example, the HAD will transport potable water to villages with water shortage to meet the needs of villagers. The Water Supplies Department (WSD) will also provide necessary assistance such as providing water tanks and potable water.

For the case of Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun, there are about 750 residents in Tsing Shan Tsuen according to estimate of the Tuen Mun District Office. The treated water supply network of the WSD currently covers about 700 residents. The remaining 50 residents are living in locations at a higher terrain of the village where the water pressure of the water supply system is insufficient for delivering treated water supply there. However, the WSD is studying the feasibility of extending the existing water supply network in Tsing Shan Tsuen and enhancing the water pressure to cover the entire village.

The reply to the Hon Cheng Chung-tai's question is as follows:

(1) In the past two years, the WSD received requests for provision of treated water supply from 10 remote villages, including Tai Long (South Lantau), Nim Shue Wan, Cheung Sha Lan, Tso Wan (Northeast Lantau), Po Toi Island, Yi O (West Lantau), Mui Tsz Lam, Tung Ping Chau, Wong Chuk Yeung and Sham Chung. In addition, for some villages that are covered by the water supply network of the WSD, those residents who are living in the locations at a higher terrain where the pressure of the water supply system is insufficient for delivering treated water supply there have also requested the WSD to provide treated water supply, such as Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun.

(2) & (3) The Government has been monitoring the water supply situations of the above remote villages. These remote villages have sparse populations and are far away from both urban areas and existing treated water supply network. If treated water supply systems are to be constructed for these remote villages, low water consumption may lead to stagnant water in water mains and hence resulting in the deterioration of water quality. Moreover, the per capita capital cost for the construction of treated water supply systems for

these villages would be high. The WSD has been continuously exploring possible options to solve the above issues and will regularly review the situations. In fact, the WSD has been completing treated water supply systems for remote villages in recent years, such as the water supply systems in Tung Ah, Tung Ah Pui, Ngan Hang and Nan Lai Wan in South District, Sham Ah Shui on Lantau Island and Yuen Tun Ha in Tai Po. The WSD will continue to closely monitor and regularly review the situations of the remote villages without treated water supply, such as the latest population and nearby developments, and will also study various options to address the problem of deterioration of water quality due to low water consumption, including exploring exploitation of water sources to supplement existing raw water sources. For those villages with treated water supply but it is unable to reach the residents who are living in the locations at a higher terrain due to insufficient water pressure, the WSD will study the feasibility of extending the existing water supply networks in these villages and enhancing water pressure to cover the entire villages.

Employers and employees should take precautions against heat stroke

As the Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning, the Labour Department (LD) reminds employers and employees to take appropriate precautions to prevent heat stroke when working in a hot or humid environment.

Heat stroke could occur if an employee works in a hot or humid environment for prolonged periods of time, as the body may fail to regulate its temperature by effective heat dissipation through sweating.

The early symptoms of heat stroke include feeling thirsty, fatigue, nausea and headache. Later, the victim may experience shortness of breath, rapid and weak pulse, dizziness, confusion or even loss of consciousness and convulsion.

For example, construction workers, cleaning workers, kitchen workers and porters are more prone to heat stroke when working for long hours in such an environment, especially if appropriate preventive measures have not been taken.

The LD reminds employers to arrange for a suitable assessment of the risk of heat stress in the work environment and take appropriate preventive measures. The LD has produced two leaflets entitled "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Construction Sites" and "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Outdoor Cleansing Workplaces" respectively. Employers engaged in construction or outdoor cleaning work are advised to refer to these

checklists in assessing the risk of heat stress at their workplaces. As for heat stress assessment at a workplace in general, employers can refer to a booklet entitled "Risk Assessment for the Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" produced by the LD.

The LD also reminds employers and employees to take the following precautions to prevent heat stroke:

Employers

(1) Take heed of the weather report and adopt shift work arrangements for employees to reduce their exposure to the hot environment, or arrange appropriate rest breaks for them during very hot periods;
(2) Avoid working under direct sunlight and set up temporary sunshade wherever possible;
(3) Provide cool potable water for employees at all times during work. If necessary, provide drinks containing minerals for employees to replenish loss of electrolytes during profuse sweating;
(4) Minimise physical demands by using tools or mechanical aids at work;
(5) Increase air flow by enhancing ventilation or air-conditioning as appropriate;
(6) Isolate heat-generating facilities at the workplace and use insulating materials to minimise heat dissipation to the other work areas; and
(7) Provide relevant information and training for employees on heat stroke such as preventive measures and first aid treatment.

Employees

(1) Wear clothing made of suitable materials (for example, cotton) that is loose-fitting and light-coloured to help heat dissipation, minimise heat absorption and allow sweat evaporation;
(2) Wear a wide-brimmed hat when working outdoors;
(3) Drink plenty of water or other appropriate beverages to replenish the fluids and electrolytes lost through sweating; and
(4) Whenever there are any symptoms of heat stroke, inform supervisors and take appropriate actions immediately.

Some employees may have difficulty in adapting to a hot working environment owing to their own health conditions. Employers should take this into account and consider the recommendations of their doctors when assigning work to these employees.

In addition to the publications on risk assessment, the LD has produced a leaflet entitled "Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment" for the public. The publications can be obtained free of charge from the offices of the Occupational Health Service of the LD, or downloaded from the department's webpage at www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_9.htm.

The LD organises occupational health talks in public places and at its own training venues regularly to raise employers' and employees' awareness of occupational health. Details of health talks on the prevention of heat stroke

at work in a hot environment in June to September are as follows:

(A)
Dates: June 26; July 9 and 24; August 2, 13 and 30; and September 13 and 24 (am)
June 22; July 5, 20 and 30; August 8 and 22; and September 5, 20 and 27 (pm)
Time: Half-day
Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Training Centre of the Labour Department, 13/F, Kolour·Tsuen Wan I, 68 Chung On Street, Tsuen Wan, New Territories

(B)
Dates: July 13 and 27 and August 10 and 20
Time: Half-day, morning
Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Centre of the Labour Department, G/F, Kwun Tong Community Health Centre Building, 60 Hip Wo Street, Kwun Tong (MTR Kwun Tong Station Exit A1)

(C)
Date: August 13
Time: 3pm to 4.30pm
Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon (MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station Exit E)

(D)
Date: July 16 and September 14
Time: 3pm to 4.30pm
Venue: Activity Room I, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
(Opposite Victoria Park, MTR Tin Hau Station Exit B)

For enrolment or enquiries about these occupational health talks, please call 2852 4040 or 2361 8240 (for talks organised at the Occupational Safety and Health Centre). Moreover, the LD also provides an outreach health education service and occupational health nurses will, on invitation, disseminate occupational health information at workplaces at a convenient time. Please contact the nursing officer at 2852 4062 for details. All these health talks are free of charge.

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network results for 2017 released

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality

Monitoring Network released today (June 20) a report on its 2017 monitoring results, which showed continual improvement of the air quality in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) last year. Compared with the 2016 levels, the average annual concentration levels of sulphur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and carbon monoxide (CO) in the PRD in 2017 decreased by 8 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

While the average annual concentration levels of respirable suspended particulates (RSP) and fine suspended particulates (FSP) in 2017 increased by 7 per cent compared with 2016 levels, the long-term downward trend of pollutant levels is evident despite the short-term fluctuations. Compared with the 2006 levels, the annual concentration levels of NO_2, SO_2 and RSP in 2017 decreased by 26 per cent, 77 per cent and 34 per cent respectively. The figures reflect that the measures implemented by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in recent years have contributed to the improvement of air quality in the PRD. Nonetheless, the 2017 average annual concentration level of ozone (O_3) increased by 21 per cent and 16 per cent respectively compared with the 2006 and 2016 levels, indicating that further alleviation of the regional photochemical pollution is required. The pollution trends of the six air pollutants since 2006 are shown in the Annex.

To continually improve regional air quality and photochemical pollution, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government have long been committed to reducing key air pollutants emissions. The Guangdong and Hong Kong governments concluded in 2012 the emission reduction targets for 2015 and the emission reduction ranges for 2020. According to the results of the mid-term review study on emission reduction targets of air pollutants in the PRD region announced last year, both sides have achieved their respective 2015 reduction targets and have finalised the reduction targets for 2020.

Key emission reduction measures implemented in Hong Kong in recent years include further tightening the emission caps for power plants, reviewing the fuel mix for electricity generation, progressively phasing out pre-Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles, strengthening the control of emissions from LPG and petrol vehicles, tightening the sulphur content of locally supplied light diesel for vessels' consumption, regulating ocean-going vessels to switch to low-sulphur fuel when berthing in Hong Kong waters, progressively restricting the volatile organic compounds (VOC) content of various products and controlling the emissions from non-road mobile machinery.

Key emission reduction measures implemented by Guangdong in recent years include increasing the supply of clean energy; enhancing the structure of energy supply; introducing stringent environmental requirements for new projects; phasing out low-technology and polluting industries; embarking on programmes to reduce air pollution by adopting desulphurisation, low nitrogen-oxides (NO_x) combustion and de-NO_x technologies; designating restriction zones for combustion of highly polluting fuels; fully implementing restriction zones for highly polluting vehicles (commonly known as yellow-label vehicles); implementing National V emission standards for motor vehicles; supplying motor diesel and petrol at National V standards;

electrifying public transport; practising water-borne coating modifications of containers, and promoting remediation of VOC emissions in key industries and enterprises. In 2017, around 1 500 remedial measures were taken in Guangdong against construction materials industries, boilers and VOC, while 147 000 yellow-label vehicles were phased out. Ultra-low emission upgrading was largely completed for coal-fired generating units with generating power exceeding 100 kW. Desulphurisation equipment was installed in all sintering machines and pelletising machines, while de-NOx equipment was installed using a selective non-catalytic reduction method for all cement clinker production lines with a daily production capacity of 2 000 tonnes or above.

The Macao side is also taking forward a series of air quality improvement measures by continuously implementing legislation and formulating scientific standards under the ambient pollution control actions outlined in the Macao Environmental Protection Plan (2010-2020). The improvement measures include announcing the tailpipe emission standards of newly imported and in-use vehicles, implementing quality control of unleaded petrol and light diesel equivalent to Euro V standards, implementing subsidy schemes to phase out two-stroke motor vehicles, formulating plans to introduce and promote environmentally friendly vehicles, and putting forward the formulation of emission standards and regulatory legislation for stationary sources.

The monitoring network comprising 23 air monitoring stations located in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao monitors the six major air pollutants (i.e. SO2, NO2, O3, RSP, FSP and CO). The Guangdong Environmental Monitoring Centre, the Environmental Protection Department of Hong Kong (EPD), the Macao Environmental Protection Bureau (Macao EPB) and the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (Macao MGB) are responsible for the co-ordination, management and operation of the monitoring stations of the three sides, and will continue to release annual reports on the monitoring results and pollution trends of the PRD as well as quarterly statistical monitoring results. Members of the public can visit the website of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Regional Air Quality Monitoring Information System (113.108.142.147:20047) direct, or the websites of the Department of Environmental Protection of Guangdong Province (GDEPD) (www.gdep.gov.cn), the EPD (www.epd.gov.hk), the Macao EPB (www.dspa.gov.mo) and the Macao MGB (www.smg.gov.mo) to obtain the relevant annual reports and quarterly monitoring statistics.