

Supply of two storage type electric water heaters and two induction cookers forbidden in HK

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (March 24) removed two storage type electric water heaters and two induction cookers from the record of listed models under the Energy Efficiency (Labelling of Products) Ordinance. Supply of these products are no longer allowed in Hong Kong with immediate effect. Details of these products are as follows:

Storage type electric water heater

Importer/ Hotline/ Email	Brand	Model	Reference number
Hang Tat Heating Systems Consultant Co Ltd 2363 2334 sales@berlin1967.com	berlin	UHP-6.5	E200018
Hanbo Technologies Company 3174 5909 rdphk2021@gmail.com	Royal de Pro	RPN-18	E190252

Induction cooker

Importer/ Hotline/ Email	Brand	Model	Reference number
Hong Fu Trading Limited 2753 9916 admin@summe.com.hk	SUMME	IC-S3001	I190135
Novel Basics Limited 2487 1500 info@novelbasics.com	LoyoLa	LC3203	I190062

The EMSD administers the Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme in accordance with the Ordinance and selects samples of the listed models regularly for conducting compliance monitoring tests to check whether they conform with the energy efficiency and performance characteristics submitted to the EMSD. As the test results of the products concerned showed that they failed to reach the energy efficiency and/or performance characteristics submitted to the EMSD for assignment of reference numbers at the time, the EMSD has decided to remove these products from the record of listed models.

The EMSD has served notices under the Ordinance to the importers concerned. The importers have published newspaper notices respectively today

announcing the termination of the supply of their products concerned.

Members of the public can contact the above importers for enquiries.

Government completes enforcement action on compulsory testing notices at two buildings in Central and Western District

The Central and Western District Office together with the Central District of the Hong Kong Police Force, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health and the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) conducted an enforcement operation today (March 24) at two buildings in Central and Western District, which were included in compulsory testing notices earlier. The operation started at around 7am and ended at around 10.30am today.

Starting from around 7am today, residents of The Grand Panorama Block 1, 10 Robinson Road, Central & Western District and Po Hing Mansion, 2-8 Po Hing Fong, Sheung Wan, were requested to provide the SMS notification received through a mobile phone or related certification containing the results of COVID-19 tests, to show that they had taken such tests as required pursuant to the compulsory testing notice of the two buildings within the specified period issued by the Government earlier on. The Government arranged for staff to verify the testing certifications of the residents at the entrances/exits of the two buildings, and conducted checks in the buildings to verify whether residents had undergone testing in compliance with the requirements.

During the operation conducted at The Grand Panorama Block 1, test records of around 290 residents were checked. Among them, two persons were found to have violated the compulsory testing notice. As for the operation conducted at Po Hing Mansion, test records of around 270 residents were checked. Among them, eight persons were found to have violated the compulsory testing notice. The Government has issued compulsory testing orders to them, requiring them to undergo testing within a specified period. Non-compliance with a compulsory testing order is an offence, and offenders are liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety. Persons subject to testing under a compulsory testing notice should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and

maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

The Government wishes to thank the many residents who had complied with the compulsory testing notice for their co-operation to fight against the virus together. The Government will continue to enforce the law strictly. All persons subject to compulsory testing should comply with the compulsory testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notice may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Non-compliance with the order is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Central and Western District Office is grateful for the support and co-operation of the Police, the CHP and the AMS to enable the enforcement action to be carried out smoothly. The Government understands that the enforcement process may cause some inconvenience to the residents, but hopes that the residents can understand.

LCQ11: New railway projects

Following is a question by Dr Hon Lo Wai-kiok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 24):

Question:

“The Railway Development Strategy 2014, which was released in September 2014, recommends that the Government implement the projects of (i) the Tuen Mun South Extension of the West Rail and (ii) the Northern Link and Kwu Tung Station from 2019 to 2022 and from 2018 to 2023 respectively. Nevertheless, according to a paper recently submitted to this Council by the Government, the works of the two railway projects are not expected to commence until 2023. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the reasons for the delay in the implementation dates of the aforesaid two railway projects, and the measures to be put in place to prevent the occurrence of similar situations in other railway projects;

(2) of the latest details of the two railway projects, including the estimated costs and the completion dates of the works;

(3) given that the intake of residents of the housing development projects in the Kwu Tung North New Development Area is expected to commence in 2026, but

the works of the Kwu Tung Station are expected to be completed by 2027 at the earliest, of the Government's measures to ensure that adequate public transport services are available to meet the demand of those residents who have moved into units of the development projects concerned before the commissioning of the Kwu Tung Station; and

(4) of the latest progress of the implementation of the proposal for establishing the Railways Department under the Transport and Housing Bureau?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to various parts of Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) Railway projects involve huge capital investment, and the Government has to plan in a prudent manner. The new railway projects proposed in the Railway Development Strategy 2014 (RDS-2014) have different degrees of complexities. As clearly stated in the RDS-2014, the taking forward of individual proposed railway projects set out in the Strategy will be subject to the outcome of detailed engineering, environmental and financial studies relating to each project, as well as updated demand assessment and other factors. Moreover, for railway projects which are mainly intended to complement new development areas and new housing developments, the implementation timetable for the development areas and new housing developments in question will be an important planning parameter for the railway projects. Therefore, the indicative implementation windows recommended in the RDS-2014 may be adjusted having regard to any change in circumstances.

(2) According to the Project Proposals submitted by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the estimated capital cost of the Tuen Mun South (TMS) Extension is about \$11.4 billion (in December 2015 prices), while the estimated capital costs of the Northern Link (NOL) Phase 1 and Phase 2 are about \$3.5 billion and \$58.5 billion (in December 2015 prices) respectively. The Transport and Housing Bureau invited MTRCL to commence the detailed planning and design for TMS Extension and NOL respectively last year. The Government will further ascertain the cost estimates having regard to MTRCL's detailed planning and design. Having considered the time required for the detailed planning and design of the projects, the construction of TMS Extension may commence in 2023 for completion in 2030; the construction of NOL Phase 1 (i.e. Kwu Tung (KTU) Station on the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line) may commence in 2023 for completion in 2027 to support the first substantial population intake of the public housing in Kwu Tung North (KTN) New Development Area (NDA), while the construction of NOL Phase 2 (i.e. the Main Line connecting Kam Sheung Road Station with KTU Station) may commence in 2025 for completion in 2034 to provide impetus for growth in the area, covering San Tin, Ngau Tam Mei and Au Tau.

(3) The sites along the NOL are in different stages of development. NOL Phase 1 (i.e. KTU Station) mainly serves the residents of about 43 600 housing units (including about 28 000 public housing units) in the KTN NDA,

thereby meeting their transport demands. According to the plan, the population intake of public housing units in the NDA would commence progressively from 2026 onwards. By the time when KTU Station is expected to be commissioned in 2027, about one quarter of the public housing units (i.e. about 7 400) will have been completed. The Government will continue to follow up with the MTRCL to ensure that it will closely monitor the works progress, with a view to completing the project for providing services as soon as possible. Before the commissioning of KTU Station, relevant departments will coordinate to ensure that adequate public transport services will be provided according to the transport demand of the residents who will have moved into KTN NDA.

(4) As pointed out in the paper provided by the Government to the Panel on Transport Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in February this year, having regard to the current financial situation of the Government and the Chief Executive's general directive in her 2020 Policy Address, we propose to seek the approval of the Finance Committee of LegCo in the 2021-22 legislative session to establish the Railways Department in the 2022-23 financial year, so that the required manpower would be in place to fully implement the enhanced monitoring and control strategies before the projects under the RDS-2014 enter the construction stage progressively from 2023 onwards. In view of the complexity of the establishment of a new department, we will set up a preparation team in the Railway Development Office of the Highways Department in the second half of 2021 to make necessary arrangements for the new department.

Thank you, President.

Suspension of BioNTech vaccination

The Government received written notification from Fosun Industrial Co., Limited this morning (March 24) that as notifications of observed deviations in the vial seal of Comirnaty vaccine (BioNTech) product (batch 210102 (Expiry 06/2021)) were received, BioNTech and Fosun Pharma have initiated an investigation to identify the root cause of these packaging issues. For the sake of prudence, the concerned vaccination should be suspended immediately for the time being while investigation is ongoing.

So far, BioNTech and Fosun Pharma have no reason to believe that there is a risk to product safety. However, for the sake of prudence, vaccination of the batch 210102 should be suspended until the investigation is completed. Meanwhile, batch 210104, another batch of BioNTech vaccines procured by Hong Kong, should also be put on hold and not be administered. This is a precautionary measure to continuously ensure vaccine safety.

As BioNTech vaccines procured by Hong Kong belong to the above batches,

all Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) stopped vaccinating BioNTech vaccine with immediate effect today until further notice. Those who have made appointments to receive BioNTech vaccination from today onwards need not go to CVC for vaccination.

The Department of Health will hold an urgent meeting with Fosun Industrial Co., Limited today to obtain further details of the incident and discuss on the follow up measures.

LCQ10: Resumption of face-to-face classes of schools

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (March 24):

Question:

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Education Bureau (EDB) has, on several occasions, announced suspension of face-to-face classes of schools along with a shift to online teaching and learning. After the schools' Chinese New Year holidays this year, schools may arrange for no more than one-third of the total number of students of the school to return to school to attend classes on a half-day basis. In addition, where a school can arrange all its teachers and staff to undergo regular virus testing once every 14 days, it may apply to the EDB for whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face classes. It is learnt that the prolonged suspension of face-to-face classes has not only affected the learning progress of students, but also significantly affected the operation of support services related to school operation (e.g. school bus services provided by school private light buses, private school buses and non-franchised public buses). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective up-to-date numbers of applications from schools for whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face classes received and approved by the EDB, with a breakdown by school type (i.e. kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and tutorial school); the measures in place to encourage more schools to make applications;

(2) as some school bus operators have relayed that since they still need to meet expenses such as salaries for drivers and escorts despite a substantial reduction of income due to a drastic drop of 90 per cent in the number of student passengers, and the subsidy provided by the Government is just a drop in the bucket, most of the operators have used up their savings and teetered

on the brink of closing down their businesses, what measures the Government has put in place to assist school bus operators in tiding over the difficult times, so as to ensure that adequate school buses will be available for providing services in the next school year;

(3) given that following the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, the epidemic may hopefully be mitigated, of the circumstances under which the EDB will announce the full resumption of face-to-face classes of schools; and

(4) given that some school buses have been left idle for a long time, whether, in order to ensure that such vehicles can resume operation safely, the Government will provide school bus operators with a "business resumption allowance " before the full resumption of face-to-face classes of schools, so that they can repair and maintain their vehicles to protect the safety of students, drivers and other road users; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been progressively increasing the time for face-to-face classes in a pragmatic, gradual and orderly manner, as far as the epidemic situation allows. We shall continue to follow this direction and strive to strike a balance between meeting the learning needs of students and preventing and fighting the epidemic, with a view to allowing more on-campus learning time for students. Regarding administrative arrangements such as school bus services, the EDB reminds schools, through various channels, to coordinate well with relevant operators and schools in the same district so as to properly arrange the schedules and routes of such services. Meanwhile, given that the class suspension arrangements arisen out of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have affected the school bus sector, the Government has provided appropriate support, including financial assistance, to the affected trades.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Frankie Yick is as follows:

(1) and (3) Starting from the period after schools' Chinese New Year holidays, schools are allowed to arrange students (capped at one-third of the total number of students of the schools) to return to campuses for resumption of face-to-face classes or examinations on a half-day basis. Besides, for an individual school that can arrange all its teachers and staff to take regular virus tests, there will be extra protection for the students and teachers and a safer learning environment will be created. The EDB will consider allowing these schools to arrange whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face classes. Up to March 19, 2021, over 1 400 schools had submitted applications for whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face classes. Among these schools, around 750 were kindergartens, around 500 were tutorial schools while around 160 were primary and secondary schools. The EDB has been encouraging schools to join the above scheme through different channels

(including issuing letters to schools, releasing information via the media, and communicating directly with stakeholders). The EDB has also been providing facilitation to the schools joining the scheme, allowing their teachers and school staff to undergo free virus tests at the 21 Community Testing Centres of the Department of Health.

Apart from the above, the Government announced on March 8 this year the inclusion of teachers and school staff as priority groups in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. The EDB has issued a letter to schools to explain the details and encourage teachers and school staff to get vaccinated actively to protect themselves, their families and the Hong Kong community as a whole. The EDB will continuously monitor the development of the epidemic, take into account health experts' advice, and maintain liaison with the school sector. When the epidemic situation has gradually shown signs of subsiding and schools are adequately prepared, we will consider further relaxation of face-to-face schooling arrangements.

(2) and (4) The Government understands that the continuous suspension has caused severe impact on the non-franchised bus student service and school private light bus trades. In response to the needs of the trades, the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Transport Department (TD) had previously introduced various one-off relief measures through the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) to help the public transport trades tide over the difficult time. In particular, to relieve the operating pressure caused to the trades, the TD provided a non-accountable subsidy of \$65,000 and \$55,000 in total to eligible owners of each non-franchised public bus and school private light bus respectively.

Moreover, to alleviate the financial difficulties of school bus drivers, school private light bus drivers and nannies due to the suspension of school bus services caused by the face-to-face class suspension, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved allocation of funding to the AEF thrice in April, September and December 2020 to provide financial subsidies to each eligible serving school bus driver, school private light bus driver and nanny who provide student transport services.

In addition to the subsidies under the AEF, the Government has also waived the vehicle licence fees and vehicle examination fees payable for commercial vehicles from December 30, 2019 to December 29, 2021, as well as provided rental concession for short term tenancies of government land to the trades for parking use from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2021, with a view to reducing the financial burden of the operators. Besides, the Government understands that a lot of non-franchised buses and school private light buses in the market are being idled due to insufficient operation and postponement of resuming face-to-face classes of schools. In response to the situation, after discussing with the Lands Department in early 2020, the TD has allowed idled non-franchised buses and school private light buses to be temporarily stored on a piece of land at Container Port Road South, Kwai Chung, while the Public Omnibus Operators Association has been commissioned to manage the temporary parking space. The temporary parking space allows for the storage of around 900 non-franchised buses and school private light buses

in total, and its operation date has been extended to April 30, 2021. The TD will consider further extending the storage period in light of the situation of the epidemic.

The Government will closely monitor the development of the epidemic, and consider and implement policies and measures targeting the non-franchised bus and school private light bus trades as appropriate.