

Housing Authority further reopens recreational facilities

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

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) announced today (February 18) that the HA will reopen more recreational facilities at its public housing estates starting from tomorrow (February 19).

"Facilities to be reopened tomorrow include soccer pitches, basketball courts, volleyball courts and chess tables in public housing estates. Applications for use of assembly/multipurpose halls and multipurpose activity rooms by organisations will commence from February 22," a spokesman for the HA said.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code before using the facilities of the HA and they should also wear masks and maintain social distancing. The number of people in group gatherings should not be more than that as stipulated by the law.

"We will step up cleaning of the reopened facilities. Estate staff will also check the usage of the facilities from time to time. When irregularities are found, appropriate action will be taken."

Children's play facilities of the HA will continue to be closed until further notice.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, February 18, 2021 is 100.6 (same as yesterday's index).

Public consultation on implementation of UN Convention Against Torture and

Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) is inviting public views on the implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) starting from today (February 18).

The Central People's Government (CPG) will submit China's seventh report under the Convention. The HKSAR Government will submit its report to the CPG on the implementation of the Convention in the HKSAR for incorporation as part of the report of the People's Republic of China.

In accordance with established practice, the Government has prepared an outline of the topics for inclusion in the report to facilitate public comment on relevant issues. Copies of the outline of the report can be obtained from the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of District Offices. It is also available on the CMAB website at www.cmab.gov.hk.

"Members of the public may submit their views to us by March 31 this year on the implementation of the Convention in respect of the topics in the outline, or suggest any additional topics that they consider we ought to include in the report of the HKSAR. We will consider carefully all the comments and suggestions received in drafting the report," a CMAB spokesman said.

Members of the public who would like to express their views can write to the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (Team 5), 12/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, or send their submissions by fax to 2840 0657 or by email to cat_consultation@cmab.gov.hk.

AFCD to launch dog inoculation campaign against rabies at fishing ports

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (February 18) that a dog inoculation campaign at various fishing ports in Hong Kong will be held. Fishermen can have their dogs vaccinated against rabies and microchipped and renew the licences.

AFCD mobile vaccination teams will provide the services at the following fishing ports according to the schedule below from 10am to 3pm:

Aberdeen	February 22
Sai Kung	February 23
Shau Kei Wan	February 24
Cheung Chau	February 25
Sam Mun Tsai	March 1
Sha Tau Kok	March 3
Castle Peak	March 5

The half-yearly dog inoculation campaign has been held since 1980 with the aim of providing licensing renewal and rabies vaccination services for dogs kept by fishermen who work on board fishing vessels most of the time. A fee of \$80 will be charged for each dog. To date, more than 7 300 vaccinations have been administered to dogs on fishing vessels.

An AFCD spokesman said that the services are part of the proactive measures to prevent rabies, a fatal disease that is transmitted to humans from animals. Dogs on board vessels that have visited overseas countries may have come into contact with other animals, making them more susceptible to rabies infection.

"Although Hong Kong has been free from animal rabies since 1987, we must remain vigilant to prevent any possible outbreak," the spokesman said.

Under the Rabies Ordinance, all dogs aged over 5 months must be vaccinated against rabies, licensed and microchipped. Dogs have to be revaccinated against rabies and their licences have to be renewed at intervals not exceeding three years. Dog owners who fail to do so are liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000.

CFS announces test results of targeted surveillance on use of sulphur dioxide in meat

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (February 18) released the test results of a targeted food surveillance project on the use of sulphur dioxide in meat. Among some 560 samples tested, except for two samples found to contain sulphur dioxide (a non-permitted preservative in fresh meat) which were announced earlier, all the remaining samples passed the test. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.6 per cent.

"In view of the detection of the preservative in fresh meat samples in the past, the CFS has conducted targeted surveillance projects regularly on

the use of the chemical in meat in recent years. Samples of beef, pork and mutton were collected from fresh provision shops, supermarkets, market meat stalls and online retailers for testing. The sampling locations also included meat shops and stalls which had previous records of selling meat containing sulphur dioxide," a spokesman for the CFS said.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried fruits, pickled vegetables and meat products such as sausages and grilled burgers. Under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD), it is not permitted in fresh or chilled meat. Nonetheless, individual meat traders were found illegally using sulphur dioxide to make meat look fresher. Sulphur dioxide is of low toxicity. As it is water-soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to sulphur dioxide may experience breathing difficulties, headaches and nausea.

Under the Regulation, the maximum penalty upon conviction of using sulphur dioxide in fresh or chilled meat is a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to comply with the law and not to sell fresh or chilled meat containing sulphur dioxide. Members of the public should purchase meat from reliable vendors (including market stalls, fresh provision shops and online retailers, etc) and avoid buying or consuming meat which is unnaturally red.