

Requirement for civil servants appointed to civil service before July 1, 2020, to take oath or sign declaration

The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) issued a circular to all policy bureaux and departments today (January 15), promulgating the requirement for civil servants appointed to the civil service before July 1, 2020, to take an oath or sign a declaration.

A spokesman for the CSB said, "All civil servants who were appointed to the civil service before July 1, 2020, are required to sign a declaration that they will uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Basic Law), bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. Civil servants should sign and return their declaration within four weeks after the department issues the letter concerned. Civil servants appointed to senior positions such as Heads of Department will be additionally required to take an oath.

"Under the Basic Law and the Civil Service Code, it has consistently been the duty of civil servants to uphold the Basic Law, bear allegiance to the HKSAR, be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. This has all along been what the Government and the society expect and require of them. All civil servants should in no uncertain terms acknowledge and accept these basic duties. Taking an oath or signing a declaration is an open acknowledgement of the acceptance and a genuine manifestation of the responsibilities and expectations on civil servants, which will enable civil servants to have clearer awareness of the duties, responsibilities and requirements entailed by their official positions, thereby further safeguarding, strengthening and promoting the core values that should be upheld by civil servants, and ensuring in turn the effective governance of the HKSAR Government."

Taking into account that the content of the oath/declaration only reflects the basic duties of all civil servants with no additional requirement introduced, and the views of the civil service unions, the CSB decided to require all civil servants to comply with the requirement of taking the oath or signing the declaration in one go.

On October 12 last year, the CSB required all civil servants who joined the HKSAR Government between July 1, 2020 and that date to take an oath or sign a declaration, and all of them signed the declaration by the end of October last year. For those who received an appointment offer after October 12 last year, one of the conditions for appointment is that they must sign and return the signed declaration as part of their acceptance of the offer of

appointment. During the period from July 1 last year till now, a total of over 4 000 civil servants joined the HKSAR Government and duly made the declaration.

The HKSAR Government also held an oath-taking ceremony for civil servants at the Central Government Offices on December 18 last year. Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Department and directorate civil servants at the rank of D6 or above took an oath which was witnessed by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam.

"Negligence or refusal to take the oath or to duly sign and return the declaration by a civil servant casts serious doubts on his or her willingness to take up these basic duties and his or her suitability to remain in the civil service to continue discharging his or her official duties. The Government will, with regard to the specific circumstances of each case, decide whether to initiate action in accordance with the mechanisms under the Public Service (Administration) Order (PS(A)O) or the relevant disciplined services legislation as appropriate to terminate the service of the officer. The officer concerned will be given an opportunity to make representations in the process," the spokesman said.

"The Government has an established mechanism to handle disciplinary matters of civil servants. If a civil servant commits a misconduct which also involves a breach of the oath or declaration, the Government will, having regard to the specific circumstances of the case, take appropriate disciplinary action(s) against the officer for the misconduct committed in accordance with the established mechanism. In determining the punishment in accordance with the PS(A)O or the relevant disciplined services legislation, the Government will take into account the circumstances, nature and gravity of the case, etc, and will certainly also take into consideration the fact that the misconduct is committed by the civil servant even though the officer has taken an oath or signed a declaration to acknowledge the expectations and responsibilities brought by the official position on him or her."

[Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, January 15, 2021 is 100.7 (same as yesterday's index).

Outreach Music Interest Courses open for applications

The Outreach Music Interest Courses organised by the Music Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department are now open for applications. Members of the public are welcome to apply for the courses, which will be held from March to August.

A new course, Composition and Orchestration for Symphonic Band, will cover composing tips, melody writing and the American grading system for symphonic band music. The course will also introduce styles and orchestration of symphonic band music. The course, at a fee of \$480, welcomes school music teachers; symphonic band directors, composers and music arrangers; and adults possessing basic note-reading skills.

The Music Office will also offer adult courses including elementary courses on ukulele, classical guitar and keyboard; Western music theory (Grades 1 and 2); a yangqin enrichment course; and Western string ensemble training. The course fees range from \$400 to \$1,005.

All courses are conducted in small groups in Cantonese and will be held at different venues, namely the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Sha Tin Town Hall, and the Music Office's music centres in Wan Chai, Mong Kok, Kwun Tong, Sha Tin and Tsuen Wan.

Course prospectuses are now available at the Music Office website www.lcsd.gov.hk/musicoffice. Interested persons can enrol for the courses online. The deadline for applications is February 5. Oversubscribed courses will be processed by ballot.

For enquiries, please call 3842 7773, 2596 0898 or 2598 8335.

Some courses will be conducted online if affected by the epidemic or whenever necessary.

Centre for Food Safety announces test results on Lunar New Year food (first phase)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (January 15) announced the test results of a recently

completed seasonal food surveillance project on Lunar New Year (LNY) food (first phase). The test results of around 570 samples collected were satisfactory, except for a date sample found to contain a preservative at a level exceeding the legal limit and in breach of the food labelling regulation and a rice cake sample found with sodium content inconsistent with the declared content on its nutrition label, which were announced earlier.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The LNY is coming soon and the CFS is conducting this seasonal food surveillance project in two phases. During the first phase of the project, different types of LNY food including steamed puddings (e.g. turnip puddings and festive cakes), fried dumplings (e.g. sesame balls and crispy triangles), candies, glutinous rice balls, melon seeds and dried aquatic products were collected from different retailers (including online retailers) for chemical and microbiological tests as well as nutrition content analysis."

Chemical tests targeted preservatives, colouring matters, metallic contaminants and others. Microbiological tests covered different food poisoning pathogens. For nutrition content analysis, the contents of total fat, sodium and sugars of the samples were tested to see if the test results were consistent with the declared values on the nutrition labels.

The spokesman urged the food trade to observe the relevant laws and regulations in the preparation of food, follow Good Manufacturing Practice and use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner. Retailers should source food from reliable suppliers, and conduct quality checks of incoming materials and end products to ensure that ingredients used are within legal standards. In addition, the food trade should maintain proper records in accordance with the requirements of the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

The spokesman also advised consumers to buy LNY food from reliable retailers with good hygiene conditions; make sure the packaging of prepackaged cakes and snacks is intact and the products have not expired; refer to the nutrition labels on the sugar, salt (sodium) and fat content and more for healthy choices; and pay attention to the hygiene conditions of food containers and the personal hygiene of staff when buying loose-packed food (e.g. candied lotus seeds, nuts and melon seeds).

"Consumers should choose food products with natural colours. Bright white pistachios may have been bleached and melon seeds with an unnatural gloss may have had mineral oil added. Consumption of these food products can cause gastrointestinal discomfort," the spokesman said.

"Festive cakes that are not for immediate consumption should be kept refrigerated or stored according to the instructions on the package, and should be eaten before they expire. Reheat hot-served festive cakes thoroughly before consumption, consume them as soon as possible, and avoid keeping them at room temperature for a long time. Foods like nuts and melon seeds should not be kept for a long time. Those with mould or an abnormal smell or taste should not be eaten," he added.

The spokesman reminded the public to maintain a balanced diet and avoid foods that are high in energy, sugar, salt or fat during the LNY.

The CFS will continue to conduct surveillance on LNY food and the second-phase results will be released in a timely manner to ensure food safety.

SHA's Spring Reception 2021 cancelled

In view of the latest developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government today (January 15) announced that the Secretary for Home Affairs' Spring Reception 2021, which was scheduled for February, will be cancelled.

"Upon careful consideration of the latest epidemic developments, the Government has to call off the spring reception this year. The Home Affairs Bureau expressed gratitude to people from various sectors for their support for the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the past year," a Government spokesman said.