

EMSD announces test results of LPG quality in March 2020

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (April 9) announced that the department collected 10 liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) samples from auto-LPG filling stations and LPG terminals on a random basis in March 2020 for laboratory tests. The results showed that the LPG quality of all these samples complied with auto-LPG specifications.

The detailed test results are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/rl/lpg_sample_analysis_simple). Enquiries can also be made to the EMSD's hotline on 2333 3762.

In addition, the EMSD has been vetting independent third-party test reports submitted by LPG supply companies for each shipment to ensure that the quality of imported LPG complies with the specified requirements.

Government further strengthens support for enterprises

To strengthen support for enterprises facing operational difficulties amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government will further enhance the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund) and the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF). The Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation (HKECIC) has also launched a new round of measures to support the export trade of Hong Kong. All the new enhancement measures will be rolled out within this month to provide timely assistance to enterprises.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said, "Hong Kong's economy is in a severe situation. The US-China trade conflict since 2018, the social incidents in the latter half of 2019 and the COVID-19 outbreak together pose unprecedented challenges to the business environment. Notwithstanding that the Government has since last year launched several rounds of relief measures and substantially raised funding support to help shore up affected enterprises, having regard to the rapidly deteriorating business environment, we consider it necessary to introduce further support measures to tide enterprises over this difficult time and get well prepared for long-term economic development. The new enhancements represent the Government's positive responses to views put forward recently by the business sector."

For the BUD Fund, the cumulative funding ceilings for each enterprise to

undertake projects in the Mainland; and projects in other economies with which Hong Kong has signed Free Trade Agreements, are \$2 million respectively. The Government has decided to remove the two individual ceilings, so that enterprises can flexibly make use of the total funding of up to \$4 million to expand to new markets.

Due to the impact of the epidemic, virtual exhibitions have opened up a new avenue for business promotion. In this context, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council is organising Spring Virtual Expo in April, allowing enterprises to connect with worldwide suppliers and buyers more easily and efficiently. In view of this new development, enterprises participating in virtual exhibitions organised by Government-related organisations or reputable exhibition organisers with good track records will be eligible for funding support under the BUD Fund and the EMF.

In tandem, the HKECIC has immediately implemented a new round of support measures for one year to strengthen support for policyholders, in particular the Small Business Policy (SBP) holders, so as to provide greater protection to small and medium-sized exporters. The new measures include:

- Providing free pre-shipment cover on approved buyers for SBP holders in all HKECIC insured markets
- Increasing the credit limits of all buyers for SBP holders in all HKECIC-insured markets by 20 per cent, with a maximum of \$5 million
- Extending the premium payment period for SBP holders for one month
- Providing an extra 20 per cent discount on premiums for SBP holders, so that each SBP holder can enjoy a total of 50 per cent discount on premiums
- Waiving the annual policy fee of \$1,500 for all policyholders
- Extending across-the-board the payment period to 120 days for each approved credit limit (instead of 60 to 90 days in general)
- Waiving additional premium payments for changes to payment terms due to buyers' requests as a result of the pandemic situation
- Handling expeditiously claims payments of \$1,000,000 or below, with such cases processed within five days upon receipt of relevant documents
- Simplifying procedures and exercising flexibility in processing claims cases of payment difficulties
- Providing 10 additional free buyer credit assessments to all policyholders

These new measures of the HKECIC will benefit about 2 600 policyholders, including approximately 1 250 SBP holders (i.e. policyholders with annual sales turnover less than \$50 million).

This morning (April 9), Mr Yau chaired the Trade and Industry Advisory Board video conference to brief members on the above new measures and exchange views with them on other issues of concern.

Details of the enhancement measures of the BUD Fund and the EMF are available on the Trade and Industry Department's website (www.smefund.tid.gov.hk). Information on the new measures of the HKECIC can

be found on HKECIC's website (www.hkecic.com).

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected ketamine \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 5 kilograms of suspected ketamine with an estimated market value of about \$2.5 million at Hong Kong International Airport on April 4.

Customs officers inspected an air parcel arriving in Hong Kong from France on that day and found the batch of suspected ketamine concealed inside two pairs of boots.

Upon follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday (April 8) arrested a 25-year-old man suspected to be in connection with the case in Sheung Wan.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested man has been released on bail pending investigation.

Customs will maintain close contact with Hongkong Post and the logistics industries to step up action against drug trafficking through postal parcels and express courier channels.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Transcript of remarks by SLW on anti-epidemic measures and Employment Support Scheme

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on anti-epidemic measures and the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) after attending a radio programme this morning (April 9):

Reporter: Dr Law, can you explain what sort of measures will be put in place to make sure employers won't lay off staff after they get the subsidy for salary?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: The two conditions for the wage subsidy under the ESS are basically, one, they have to maintain the same headcount; secondly, all the fund that they receive for the wage subsidy should be given to the staff. So, if they have redundancy, which basically means they have a reduction in headcount, then the money will be clawed back and there will be some penalties. The details will be announced later.

Reporter: But does it involve a lot of manpower to actually check the companies?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: We are not checking on individual employee. We are checking on the headcount. Headcount is just counting the numbers and that should not be an enormous amount of administration work.

Reporter: In this round of assistance, why didn't the Government decide to assist all businesses, instead of just businesses which have been forced to make their employees go on unpaid leave? According to lawmaker the Dr Hon Fernando Cheung, that will actually help save a lot of money for the Government.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: If we are to examine the conditions of a particular company or employer before we provide the wage subsidy, that will take a lot of administration work and actually, we have to employ a lot of people to look at each individual transaction history of each employer. That will take a very long time and very heavy administration cost. Looking at the epidemic right now – its impact on almost all industries with some exceptions, it is very important for us to launch the programme as soon as possible. It is key to make it quickly so it must be quite simple. Otherwise, a very complex system requiring a long time to set up would not serve our present purpose.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Application period for Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme to end on April 12

The application period for the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme established under the first-round Anti-epidemic Fund of the Government will close on April 12 (Sunday). Retailers wishing to apply for the subsidy should submit their online application and relevant supporting documents through the Scheme's online application system (retailsubsidy.gov.hk) before the deadline.

The Scheme covers shops that sell tangible goods to the public for personal or household consumption or utilisation. No processing or transformation of the goods should be involved in the resale process. The Scheme was opened for application on March 23. As at 8am today (April 9), over 79 000 applications have been received.

Vetting of applications has already commenced during the application period. Disbursement of the subsidy to approved applicants through bank transfer will commence today. The vetting work is expected to be completed within May.

For enquiries concerning details and the application procedure of the Scheme, applicants can call the telephone hotline (1836 111) or email to enquiry@retailsubsidy.hk.