

Seven building plans approved in September

The Buildings Department approved seven building plans in September, with three on Hong Kong Island, one in Kowloon and three in the New Territories.

Of the approved plans, one was for apartment development, one was for commercial development, one was for factory and industrial development, and four were for community services developments.

In the same month, consent was given for works to start on nine building projects which, when completed, will provide 21 290 square metres of gross floor area for domestic use involving 132 units, and 27 975 sq m of gross floor area for non-domestic use. The department has received notification of commencement of superstructure works for six building projects.

The department also issued 16 occupation permits, with five on Hong Kong Island, five in Kowloon and six in the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation, the gross floor area for domestic use was 74 896 sq m involving 1 674 units, and 26 784 sq m was for non-domestic use.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in September totalled about \$5.2 billion.

In addition, nine demolition consents were issued.

The department received 3 370 reports about unauthorised building works (UBWs) in September and issued 656 removal orders on UBWs.

The full version of the Monthly Digest for September can be viewed on the Buildings Department's homepage (www.bd.gov.hk).

“M” Mark status awarded to FIBA 3×3 World Tour Hong Kong Final 2024

The following is issued on behalf of the Major Sports Events Committee:

The Major Sports Events Committee (MSEC) has awarded "M" Mark status to FIBA 3×3 World Tour Hong Kong Final 2024, which will be held at the Soccer Pitch, Victoria Park from November 22 to 24.

The Chairman of the MSEC, Mr Wilfred Ng, said today (November 21), "Invited by the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), Hong Kong will host the year-end event of the FIBA 3×3 professional season for the first time. We hope this major sports event will promote local sports development and bring athletes and spectators from around the globe to focus on Hong Kong, thereby attracting more international competitions to Hong Kong and further solidifying its status as the capital of sports events."

The "M" Mark System aims to encourage and help local "national sports associations" and private or non-government organisations to organise more major international sports events and nurture them into sustainable undertakings. Sports events meeting the assessment criteria will be granted "M" Mark status by the MSEC. Funding support will also be provided to some events.

For details of "M" Mark events, please visit www.mevents.org.hk.

Postal services to Norway return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (November 21) that, as advised by the postal administration of Norway, mail delivery services previously impacted by a train accident have returned to normal.

Owner convicted of overcharging subdivided unit tenants for water

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced that an owner of a subdivided flat on Shek Kin Street, Kwai Chung, New Territories, was convicted today (November 21) of overcharging its subdivided unit (SDU) tenants for water, in contravention of regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations. The owner pleaded guilty to 22 counts of offences at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts and was fined \$22,000.

This is the 23rd similar conviction since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$22,000.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance

2024 (the amended WWO) has strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreements, receipts or payment records for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of up to \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for the installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The water fee deposit and the charge for providing a meter for each separate meter installed under the Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Subdivided Units will be waived. Individual water bills will be provided for each water meter account. The first 12 cubic metres of water are free at four-month intervals. SDU tenants can contact the WSD to request separate water meters. Upon receiving such requests, the WSD will contact the landlords for the installation of separate meters. If the landlords refuse, the WSD may require them to provide information on the recovery of water charges from their tenants in suspected overcharging cases. Details of the scheme can be obtained from the WSD website

(www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html).

The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow-up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for the installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.

First batch of amendments to Dentists Registration Ordinance to take effect from January 1 next year

The Government announced today (November 21) that a new mechanism for the admission of non-locally trained dentists to Hong Kong will commence

under the Dentists Registration Ordinance (DRO) (Cap. 156) with effect from January 1 next year to address the demand for local dental services. In addition, other technical amendments will take effect under the DRO, including an update on the definition of "practising dentistry", to clearly specify the services that may only be provided by registered dentists, with a view to offering better protection for citizens' health.

Following the passage of the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 by the Legislative Council in July, the Government subsequently tabled the first commencement notice and the Dentists Registration (Fees) Regulation at the Legislative Council in October for negative vetting. The vetting period ended yesterday (November 20), enabling the amended provisions to be implemented in phases. Other amendments will take effect on later dates.

Admission of non-locally trained dentists

New pathways will be introduced under the DRO to admit qualified non-locally trained dentists, including limited registration (LR), which is open to all dentists and special registration (SR) targeting specialist dentists. Starting from January 1 next year, non-locally trained dentists who are selected for full-time employment in specified institutions, including the Department of Health (DH), the Hospital Authority, the University of Hong Kong and the Prince Philip Dental Hospital, may apply to the Dental Council of Hong Kong (DCHK) for LR or SR and, upon approval, directly practise in the aforementioned specified institutions.

Non-locally trained dentists who have worked in specified institution(s) for at least five years in aggregate and are certified by the institution(s) to have served satisfactorily by reference to the DCHK's criteria will be eligible to apply for migration to full registration. Among them, dentists with LR will need to take the clinical part of the DCHK's licensing examination. For dentists with SR, whether they are required to take that part of the examination will be subject to the DCHK's consideration on a case-by-case basis. Upon obtaining full registration, these dentists can practise in any institution in Hong Kong.

To dovetail with the aforementioned amendments, the DH has already launched recruitment exercises while working closely with the DCHK in a bid to enable the first batch of non-locally trained dentists to come to Hong Kong in the first quarter of next year to serve the public.

Temporary registration (TR) will also be introduced under the DRO. Starting from January 1 next year, any person may apply to the DCHK for having dentists from other jurisdictions conduct clinical teaching or research for him or her in Hong Kong for a period not exceeding 14 days. Dentists with TR cannot migrate to full registration.

Update on definition of "practising dentistry"

With effect from January 1 next year, the definition of "practising dentistry" under the DRO will be updated to bring the regulatory regime up to date. Among them, Schedule 2 to the DRO will clearly specify that only

registered dentists may provide another person with the following services: (1) the carrying out of dental bleaching or teeth whitening procedure; (2) the prescription of clear aligner; and (3) the carrying out of teeth veneering procedure.

Any person provides or attempts to provide the aforementioned services but not being a registered dentist will commit an offence. The offender will be liable on summary conviction to a fine at level 6 and to imprisonment for three years, or on conviction upon indictment to imprisonment for five years.

The Government urges citizens not to take lightly claims from unregistered persons about their ability to offer any so-called "dental services" for their own health. Citizens may check before choosing dental services against the List of Registered Dentists published by the DCHK online (www.dchk.org.hk/en/list/list.htm) to verify the qualifications of service providers. If in doubt, citizens should refrain from receiving such services to ensure safety.