

Ping Wo Fund to launch anti-gambling publicity campaign

The following is issued on behalf of the Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee:

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) and the Ping Wo Fund will launch a territory-wide anti-gambling publicity campaign called Stop Gambling. Be the Wise Man of the Match! in mid-June. The campaign aims to raise public awareness of gambling-related problems and promote no-gambling messages during the UEFA European Football Championship 2024 period.

The Fund will organise a range of district-level and territory-wide events and publicity activities from mid-June to mid-July, including an anti-gambling fun day and a football skills workshop to promote no-gambling messages to the community and share the joy of playing football with members of the public. A "Stop Gambling. Be the Wise Man of the Match!" thematic exhibition will also be held at different locations. The Fund has strengthened its publicity efforts on online media and traditional media, such as promoting anti-gambling messages on TV broadcasts before and after live broadcasts of matches to remind the public to stay away from gambling while enjoying the football matches.

Sponsored by the Fund and managed by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Even Centre, the Anti-Gambling Ping Wo Truck will also tour the territory and pay visits to schools to educate the public on the harm caused by a gambling addiction through a multimedia exhibition and interactive games.

In addition, the four counselling and treatment centres for gamblers financed by the Fund will step up their services, such as extending their service hours to answer the Gambling Counselling Hotline (183 4633) and respond to text messages received online or from instant messaging applications, and organise more outreach activities, so that those in need can receive timely and appropriate assistance.

The establishment of the Ping Wo Fund aims to finance public education and other measures to prevent or alleviate problems relating to gambling; provide counselling, treatment and other remedial or support services for gamblers with a gambling disorder and those affected by them; and conduct research and studies into problems and issues relating to gambling. The Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee is a non-statutory body to advise the HYAB on the use and application of the Fund.

For details of the anti-gambling publicity campaign, please visit the Fund website at www.donotgamble.org.hk.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 12, 2024 is 106.4 (same as yesterday's index).

LCQ6: Developing tourism projects with local characteristics

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

There are views that recently a film about the Kowloon Walled City, which receives critical acclaim and box office success, has once again demonstrated Hong Kong's strong cultural foundation, and given that Hong Kong enjoys the country's unequivocal support to develop into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, the HKSAR Government should draw on the experience and proactively develop tourism projects with local characteristics in order to pursue the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated last month that it planned to support exhibitions and promotional activities related to the Kowloon Walled City through the Film Development Fund, how the Government allocates the relevant resources to ensure that they are used effectively and are able to continuously promote the internationalisation of Hong Kong films and the development of local cultural tourism;

(2) of the strategies or measures in place to enhance the international image of Hong Kong's characteristic cultural tourism and capitalise on the diversity of Hong Kong's culture in order to attract more international tourists to come to Hong Kong to experience its unique history and culture; and

(3) under the strategy of promoting "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", whether the Government has plans to introduce "educational tours" to further diversify Hong Kong's tourism industry and promote the characteristics of the HKSAR under "one country, two systems", so as to tell the good stories of Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

Under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong is positioned as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has been driving cultural tourism based on the principle of "shaping tourism with cultural activities and promoting culture through tourism". The Government will join hands with the trade to implement the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong's tourism industry and fully explore and make good use of Hong Kong's rich tourism resources.

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Tang Fei, the reply is as follows:

(1) The movie "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In" has been very popular, rendering many visitors eager to know more about the story of Kowloon Walled City and the story behind the production of the movie. As such, the Government is in discussion with the film company to explore the possibility of displaying the film related materials such as stills, video footage and props of the film so as to attract visitors and drive tourism industry.

In fact, the Government has been supporting exhibitions and activities that promote film culture and film-related intellectual property rights through the Film Development Fund (FDF). We have also been actively promoting the internationalisation of Hong Kong films in recent years by participating in Mainland and overseas film festivals and organising and subsidising Hong Kong film programmes. These not only help to increase the exposure of Hong Kong films, but also enrich Hong Kong's tourism elements. For example, this year we have led delegations from the film industry, bringing their films to the world's leading film festivals to promote Hong Kong films and tell the good stories of Hong Kong. The Government will continue to strengthen support to Hong Kong film industry through the FDF, increase the exposure of the Hong Kong film industry in the Mainland and global film markets, and leverage the cultural influence of films to strengthen tourism promotion and attract more visitors to Hong Kong. Besides, the Government just launched the new phase of the "City in Time" tourism project, which also incorporates film elements, allowing locals and visitors to enjoy classic Hong Kong film clips at filming locations as well as past appearance of Hong Kong.

(2) Hong Kong is a cultural melting pot of East and West. Our traditional and foreign festivals attract tourists from all over the world. Hong Kong also has many rich and vivid resources of the intangible cultural heritage such as the Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade, Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, etc., which all feature very unique characteristics. Riding on different festivals, we will organise various activities to attract visitors such as the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races this weekend (June 15-16), Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival in September, and the International Chinese New Year Night Parade in the Lunar New Year, for visitors to experience the lively atmosphere of traditional festivals. Besides, we have different activities to celebrate foreign festivals, including the "Hallo"

Hong Kong Halloween in Halloween, featuring themed decorations at various tourist hotspots; the Hong Kong WinterFest and the Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations at the end of each year, to celebrate the festive seasons with everyone. Through the "Pilot Scheme for Characteristic Local Tourism Events", we also provide funding support for arts, culture and festive events with local characteristics or unique appeal of Hong Kong such as Yu Lan Cultural Festival, Hong Kong Dragon and Lion Dance Extravaganza, etc., with a view to enriching travel experience in Hong Kong.

Cultural events could help promote the development of tourism. As the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, the Government has been committed to showcasing Hong Kong's cultural and artistic vibe and vitality to the world by curating distinctive and unique cultural activities that attract visitors. This year for the first time, the CSTB launches Art March as a brand to promote multiple events organised, funded, or supported by the Government, to provide citizens and visitors with an enriched artistic journey. Meanwhile, we strive to curate cultural programmes that highlight the distinctive culture of Hong Kong. For example, we have launched an annual Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival since 2023, to attract the participation of locals and visitors through pop concerts, thematic exhibitions, film screenings, outdoor activities and outreach events etc. Traditional Chinese culture is a great attraction around the world. Starting this year, we organise the annual Chinese Culture Festival between June and September, offering more opportunities for both locals and visitors to appreciate Chinese culture. This year, Hong Kong will serve as the host city for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival for the first time, allowing locals and visitors to experience the unique cultural charm of Hong Kong and different regions. Besides, the inaugural edition of Asia+ Festival was successfully held last year, with a focus on Asia and celebrating the cultural diversity of Asia and the Belt and Road regions.

In addition, the Government has also stepped up its efforts to promote characteristic tourism so that visitors can experience the unique local culture. We have launched the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" campaign in Old Town Central, Sham Shui Po and West Kowloon, and introduced quite some thematic walking routes to visitors. We also launched the Temple Street promotion last year to attract visitors to travel around local communities in Yau Ma Tei and Jordan to experience the most authentic side of Hong Kong. The Government has also been encouraging the trade to design more itineraries with different themes, covering cultural heritage, and has provided subsidies to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong in 2023 to organise the "Deeper into Hong Kong: Creative Itinerary Design Competition". We will continue to stage signature creative arts and cultural tourism projects with local elements such as the "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival", "Design District Hong Kong" (#ddHK).

Meanwhile, the Government will continue to organise "Hong Kong Week" in the Mainland and overseas to showcase the unique East-meets-West arts and cultural ambience of Hong Kong. Our Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland and overseas will also strengthen their promotion work on arts and culture, deepening cultural exchanges and promoting people-to-people bonds.

(3) The tourism industry of Hong Kong is mature. There are travel agents in the market providing different inbound tourism products in the serve of study tours.

In the above-mentioned "Deeper into Hong Kong: Creative Itinerary Design Competition", some winning itineraries included study tour such as the Hong Kong Manufacturing Study Tour, the Archaeology&Tour in Cheung Chau. We will continue to promote the winning itineraries and encourage the trade to develop more unique tourism products covering study themes.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has also consolidated study-related information to provide inbound study tours with references on different learning experiences and activities. The HKTB is also planning to invite travel trade partners to visit Hong Kong in the second half of the year to learn more about the relevant tourism resources to help the trade develop more study tour products with Hong Kong characteristics.

We will continue to make best use of Hong Kong's characteristics as a cultural melting pot of East and West and proactively develop tourism projects with local characteristics so as to provide visitors with diversified travel experiences, and reinforce and strengthen Hong Kong's position as "the best tourism destination".

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on June 11 to noon today (June 12), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 193 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 58 388 samples of food imported from Japan (including 37 729 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 14 540 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ8: The "1+" mechanism for approval of new drugs

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

The new "1+" mechanism for approval of new drugs ("1+" mechanism) announced in the 2023 Policy Address formally came into effect on November 1 2023. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications for registration of new drugs under the "1+" mechanism that have been received, approved and rejected since the mechanism came into effect, and the main reasons for the applications being rejected;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the total number of patients who

have benefited from the new drugs approved for registration and use in Hong Kong under the "1+" mechanism; and

(3) how the authorities will further promote the "1+" mechanism in the future?

Reply:

President,

"The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" (Policy Address) announced that the Government will leverage the medical strengths of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) with the long-term objective of establishing an authority that registers drugs and medical devices (medical products) under the "primary evaluation" approach, i.e. to directly approve applications for registration of drugs in Hong Kong based on clinical trial data without relying on registration approval from other drug regulatory authorities, and start approving applications for registration of medical devices. All these aim at accelerating the clinical use of new medical products so as to enhance healthcare standards, and foster the development of industries relating to the research and development (R&D) and clinical trials of medical products, developing Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

In the past six months or so following the announcement of the Policy Address, the HKSAR Government has implemented measures in all respects and achieved results.

Firstly, with the support and guidance of the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA), Hong Kong, China has become an observer of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) on October 31, 2023. This allows Hong Kong to familiarise itself with the latest developments in the drug regulation and take forward the development of the drug regulatory regime in Hong Kong, to further align Hong Kong with the World Health Organization (WHO)-Listed Authority.

Secondly, the HKSAR Government implemented a new mechanism for the approval of new drugs (the "1+" mechanism) on November 1, 2023. Under the "1+" mechanism, holders of registration from one of the reference drug regulatory authorities (instead of two) for new drugs could apply for registration in Hong Kong, on the condition that they could provide local clinical data that complies with the requirements and information recognised by local experts.

Thirdly, the HKSAR Government has established the Preparatory Office for the Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation (CMPR) under the Department of Health (DH) on June 5 this year. The Preparatory Office for the CMPR will comprehensively study and plan a regulatory and approval regime for medical products suitable for Hong Kong; and put forward proposals and steps for the establishment of the CMPR.

The HKSAR Government will continue to actively follow up on the relevant work, to attract more medical products enterprises, both locally and from around the world, to conduct R&D and clinical trials in Hong Kong, and build the capacity, recognition and status for ensuring that the eventual approval mechanism of medical products in Hong Kong would be widely recognised internationally and by the Mainland, and develop Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

In consultation with the DH and the Hospital Authority (HA), the reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kuong in relation to the "1+" mechanism is as follows:

(1) Under the "1+" mechanism, applications for registration of new drugs in the HKSAR that are beneficial for treatment of life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases, and are supported with local clinical data and scope of application recognised by local experts, are only required to submit approval from one reference drug regulatory authority (instead of the two).

The requirements for local clinical data and recognition by experts for application for registration (i.e. the "+" under the "1+" mechanism) will continue to ensure all drugs approved for registration fulfil the stringent requirements of safety, efficacy and quality. It will also strengthen the local capacity of drug evaluation and enhance the development of relevant software, hardware and expertise.

Since the commencement of the "1+" mechanism from November 1, 2023, till May 31, 2024, two new drugs for treating cancer have been approved under that mechanism. They are oral targeted drugs in different dosages for treating metastatic colorectal cancer, for treatment of patients for whom conventional chemotherapy has been ineffective or inapplicable. Besides, the DH has received over 210 enquiries involving around 70 pharmaceutical companies. Several of these companies have expressed interest in applying for registration under the "1+" mechanism. Applications would be submitted once the necessary information is ready. At present, no new drug applications under the "1+" mechanism have been rejected.

(2) As at May 31, 2024, 19 patients in the HA are already using abovementioned new drugs for treating metastatic colorectal cancer registered under the "1+" mechanism. The HA will encourage drug manufacturers or suppliers to apply for local registration of unregistered drugs with ongoing needs and continue to liaise closely with the DH in the light of the "1+" mechanism. Through the "1+" mechanism, the number of drugs successfully registered would increase, thus enabling clinicians to enjoy a wider choice of drugs to support their service needs. Clinicians may initiate application for new drug listing on the HA Drug Formulary to the HA Drug Advisory Committee according to the clinical service needs. In addition, when a new drug can be registered in HKSAR under the "1+" mechanism and listed on the HA Drug Formulary and is proven to have significant clinical benefits, it may be considered to be covered by the Samaritan Fund or the Community Care Fund.

(3) After the announcement of the Policy Address, the HKSAR Government has been actively seizing various opportunities to publicise the initiatives

related to the development of Hong Kong as an international health and medical innovation hub (including the "1+" mechanism) to counterparts locally and in other places.

Last year, the HKSAR Government attended the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Medical Products Administration Conference held in Zhuhai and the GBA Health Cooperation Conference held in Nansha, Guangzhou, respectively, and organised the 18th Joint Meeting of the Senior Health Officials of the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao in Hong Kong, as well as led a delegation to visit various ministries and commissions in the Mainland, including the National Health Commission and the NMPA.

On international exchanges, the Secretary for Health led a Hong Kong team as members of the Chinese delegation to attend the 77th World Health Assembly held by the WHO in Geneva, Switzerland, at the end of May this year. During the visit, the Secretary for Health visited two multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare enterprises, as well as met with the Director for Regulation and Prequalification of the WHO and representatives from the Clinical Trials Centre of the University Hospital Zurich, to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages and the latest development of health and medical innovation. The multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare enterprises welcomed the HKSAR Government's initiatives to develop into an international health and medical innovation hub.

At the same time, the DH has been actively promoting the "1+" mechanism through various channels and handling enquiries and expression of interest by the trade. In the past few months, the DH has issued letters to notify stakeholders (including relevant pharmaceutical associations and holders of registration of pharmaceutical products) and organised briefings (seven online sessions and one session in on-site and online mixed mode have been conducted so far, with more than 500 participants from relevant pharmaceutical associations and stakeholders) for introducing the requirements and details of the new "1+" mechanism. The DH will proactively follow up on each and every enquiry and facilitate the trade in submitting applicants under the new mechanism.