

TD's response to media reports

In response to media reports on the importation of drivers by Citybus Limited to operate non-franchised bus (NFB) services, the Transport Department (TD) today (April 25) clarified that the Labour Importation Scheme for Transport Sector – Public Light Bus (PLB)/Coach Trade (the Scheme), which was launched in June last year, covers both the PLB and the NFB trades and does not apply to franchised bus drivers. Applicants for the Scheme must be either PLB operators or NFB operators (i.e. holders of passenger service licenses for the relevant services).

In addition to operating two bus franchises, Citybus Limited is also a holder of relevant passenger service licences to provide NFB services, residents' services, employees' services, etc, and is therefore eligible to import drivers to operate its NFB routes under the Scheme. Citybus Limited has earlier applied and been approved to import 20 NFB drivers. The number of imported drivers fulfills the manpower ratio of imported labour to local labour of not more than 1:2 for each employer. In this case of application, the basis of calculation is limited to the Citybus Limited's manpower provision under its passenger service licence for the provision of NFB services. The manpower provision for its franchised services will definitely not be taken into account. The TD has made it clear to Citybus Limited that the imported NFB drivers under the Scheme are not allowed to take up other duties outside the Scheme, including driving franchised bus routes. The TD will step up its monitoring in the future. If the company concerned is found to be in breach of the regulations, the approval granted to the imported drivers will be revoked. They will not be allowed to participate in the Scheme for the following two years.

The Government is very concerned about the employment and remuneration package of local drivers. To safeguard the interests of local drivers, employers participating in the Scheme must accord priority to employing local drivers and commit to providing training to fill job vacancies. Relevant employers, who wish to participate in the Scheme, must advertise for local drivers for 14 consecutive days and show that they cannot recruit suitable drivers in Hong Kong four months prior to the submission of application. Employers can only apply for quotas to import drivers through the Scheme to fill the vacancies if they are experiencing genuine difficulties in recruiting suitable local drivers. In addition, an employer can only apply to import a maximum of one driver while recruiting every two full-time local employees, and the salary of an imported driver must not be lower than the median monthly wage of the relevant post as set by the Government. The importation of drivers should not result in the layoff of local drivers in service. In case of layoff, the employer should prioritise laying off the imported driver.

The TD will strictly review all applications in detail to ensure that each application meets all requirements in the Scheme, including whether priority is given to employ local drivers, the failure to recruit suitable drivers in Hong Kong, etc. Finally, quota application will be approved or

rejected after taking into account the advice provided by the interdepartmental liaison group. Ineligible applications will not be approved.

Upon arrival, imported drivers must be directly employed by the same employer and perform the duties specified in the Standard Employment Contract. They must work for fixed routes or pre-assigned and specified routes and vehicles registered under the specified passenger service licence. Under the existing legislation, NFB drivers imported under the Scheme are not permitted to undertake other duties outside the Scheme. Employers who contravene the legislation in Hong Kong may be prosecuted. Any employers found to be in breach of the Scheme or the relevant regulations under the Standard Employment Contract or other relevant legislations may also be subject to administrative sanctions (i.e. the approval obtained for the imported drivers will be cancelled, and the employers will not be allowed to participate in the Scheme for the following two years). The above arrangements fully protect the rights and interests of local drivers. The Government will monitor the situation to ensure that the employers and imported drivers comply with the relevant legislation in Hong Kong.

Upon the approval of imported drivers' quota, employers will arrange the drivers to come to Hong Kong in good time for pre-service training and driving test in order to obtain the relevant full driving licence. After the completion of route training, imported drivers will be ready for service. Imported drivers under the Scheme must comply with and pass the same arrangements and standards of the relevant driving tests as those for local drivers. In other words, all persons taking the relevant driving tests must meet the uniform standards set by the TD to achieve passing results in order to ensure road safety.

[CHP investigates local case of dengue fever](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (April 25) investigating a local case of dengue fever (DF), and hence again urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

The patient is a 28-year-old man with good past health. He developed a fever on April 20 and visited a private doctor the following day. He presented with generalised skin rash on April 22. He sought medical attention at St Paul's Hospital on April 23 and 24 and attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital on April 24, and was admitted for treatment. He is now in stable condition. His blood

sample was tested positive for dengue virus upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient lives in Cheerful Garden in Siu Sai Wan. He had no travel history within the incubation period and recalled no history of mosquito bites in the past three weeks. His home contacts are currently asymptomatic and have been put under medical surveillance.

"The DH is working closely with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to assess and prevent possible spread of infection. The FEHD's vector investigations, surveillance and control are ongoing. The CHP's epidemiological investigations will continue," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Officers of the CHP has inspected the patient's residence and will conduct field investigations to neighbouring residents by questionnaire surveys.

Persons who have been to Cheerful Garden in Siu Sai Wan with DF symptoms should call the CHP's hotline (2125 2371) which will operate from 9am to 5pm from tomorrow (April 26) to April 28, and from 9am to 5.30pm starting from April 29, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) for laboratory investigation or referral as appropriate. Furthermore, the CHP will hold a health talk jointly with the FEHD at 10.30am on April 27 at Siu Sai Wan Community Hall, during which the CHP will also conduct free DF antibody test for people in the district with relevant symptoms.

"Letters will be issued to local doctors and hospital to alert them to the latest situation," the spokesman added.

This is the first local DF case recorded this year. Meanwhile, 19 imported DF cases had been recorded so far this year.

"Apart from general measures, travellers returning from areas affected by DF should apply insect repellent for 14 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET

to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

*For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the DF page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

[Appeal for information on missing woman in Tuen Mun \(with photos\)](#)

Police today (April 25) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Tuen Mun.

Tang Oi-yee, aged 57, went missing after she left her residence in Tsz Tin Tsuen yesterday afternoon (April 24). Her family made a report to Police on the same day.

She is about 1.5 metres tall, 41 kilograms in weight and of thin build. She has a pointed face with yellow complexion and short straight black hair. She was last seen wearing black glasses, a black mask, a black jacket, blue jeans, black sports shoes and carrying a black bag.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Persons Unit of New Territories North on 3661 3113 or email to rmpu-ntn-1@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



EPD's response to media enquiries

â€‹In response to media enquiries on how the regulation of disposable plastic tableware is applied to the provision of food in supermarkets and food courts, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (April 25) gave the following response:

Some business premises mainly focusing on retail (e.g. supermarkets, department stores) also sell pre-packaged food for immediate consumption (e.g. boxed sushi, sandwiches). The relevant products are placed on the shelves for customers to choose, and also for facilitating customers to take them away from the premises. This business model is considered as takeaway and therefore plastic cups and plastic food containers can be used. Where the customers consume the product is not relevant.

The mode of operation of food courts in shopping malls/large department stores is different. Food stalls in food courts usually prepare and serve food (e.g. stir-fried noodles) on the spot according to the orders placed by customers, and there are dining areas in food courts for customers to dine in. This business model is basically the same as that of regular restaurants, hence food stalls in food courts are required to comply with the regulatory requirements on tableware for dine-in service. Similar to other restaurants, if customers purchase food for takeaway, this will not be regarded as providing dine-in service and plastic cups and plastic food containers can be used.

If food courts offer pre-packaged food for immediate consumption (e.g. boxed sushi, sandwiches) on shelves or through vending machines that allow customers to make purchases and facilitate them to take the products away from the premises, based on the above principle, this is also considered as

takeaway, and therefore the products can be packaged in plastic food containers.

If the cooked food section of a supermarket serves food (e.g. stir-fried noodles) prepared on the spot according to the orders placed by customers, and there are dining areas for customers to dine-in, this situation is similar to the mode of operation of a food court, and no different from that of a regular restaurant. Under this circumstance, it has to comply with the regulatory requirements on tableware for dine-in service. The above is consistent with the explanation on the situation of supermarkets given by the EPD at its earlier training seminar for the retail and service sector.

As far as customers are concerned, the purchase and use of certain disposable plastic products will not violate the law under any circumstances.

Government is enhancing local dental services through multiple measures

The Health Bureau (HHB) stated today (April 25) that the Government attaches great importance to citizens' health and agreed that the quota of the dental General Public sessions has dropped significantly in 2022/23 due to the COVID-19 epidemic and the manpower shortage as pointed out in the Report No. 82 of the Director of Audit released by the Audit Commission yesterday (April 24). The HHB, the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority thanked the Audit Commission for the recommendations made in the Report regarding emergency dental services and elderly dental care support, and would study them thoroughly in order to enhance local dental services in an effective manner.

A spokesman for the HHB said that the Government had established the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care at the end of 2022 to comprehensively review the dental care services provided or subsidised by the Government. The Working Group suggested in its interim report released at the end of last year that the Government should develop primary dental services for citizens and assist citizens in managing their own oral health to put prevention, early identification, and timely intervention of dental diseases into action. The Working Group also suggested the exploration of pursuing development of appropriate targeted dental services for underprivileged groups it defined (persons with financial difficulties, persons with disabilities or special needs, and high risk groups). The ultimate goal is to enhance the overall level of citizens' oral health through retention of natural teeth.

The Government shared the same view with the Working Group and is now strenuously planning a series of measures to enhance the dental services, including the collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to

strengthen in next year the emergency dental services targeting the underprivileged groups with financial difficulties through expansion of service capacity, service points and service scope, thus promoting early identification and timely intervention of dental diseases. The target is to provide dental General Public sessions with additional service capacity which will be at least two times more than the current capacity. The HHB is finalising the programme details and will make announcement in due course.

Furthermore, the HHB is implementing a series of measures to enhance the dental care services for different age groups and target groups, including the Primary Dental Co-Care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents for adolescents aged 13 to 17 years old to be launched next year, and within this year the strengthening of special care dental services for people with disabilities or special needs currently provided by the DH, and enhancement to the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme funded by the Community Care Fund.

To ensure the availability of sufficient dental professionals to dovetail with the enhancement of dental services, the HHB has introduced the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 (the Bill) into the Legislative Council (LegCo) earlier this month to comprehensively amend the legislative framework that has been in place since 1959. The Bill proposes to create new pathways for admitting qualified non-locally trained dentists to practise in Hong Kong, and introduce an internship and a period of assessment to enrich the clinical experience of local dental graduates and non-locally trained dentists. In addition, the Bill updates the regulatory framework for dental hygienists and dental therapists to tie in with the Government's policy direction of promoting oral health and dental care.

In particular, the introduction of an internship for local dental graduates through legislation is by no means a newly deliberated add-on requirement. As a matter of fact, the Dental Council of Hong Kong (DCHK) conducted accreditation exercises on the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) programme of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) on several occasions, during which it had already repeatedly highlighted the need for enhancing the training of clinical skills and enriching the clinical experience of local BDS students. Through introducing the internship arrangement, the Government has addressed the views raised by the DCHK and the dental profession over the years on further enhancing the clinical skills and professional standards of dentists in order to better safeguard patients' safety. The DCHK, the DH and the HKU Faculty of Dentistry are planning the implementation details of the internship programme, under which local dental graduates will be arranged to work in various postings in the public sector or NGOs, including School Dental Care Service, dental clinics and General Public sessions under the DH, oral maxillofacial surgery and dental services in public hospitals, as well as NGO dental clinics serving the underprivileged. This will enable local dental graduates to gain first-hand experience in real-life work settings, learn how to handle patients with various clinical conditions who are not previously screened by the school, and co-operate with other dentists and professionals in performing tasks. Such first-hand experience cannot be emulated by the simulation of dental procedures in school settings, and will substantially better prepare newcomers for their future practice.

In all, the Bill will help boost the supply of dental manpower in Hong Kong to support public and subsidised dental services, and enhance the overall standards of dental professionals to better protect users of dental services. The Government will render full support to the LegCo in the scrutiny of the Bill to secure its early passage with a view to enabling Hong Kong citizens to enjoy dental services of a higher quality.