

## **Import of poultry meat and products from areas in US suspended**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 19) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Miami-Dade County of the State of Florida, Delta County of the State of Colorado and Lenoir County of the State of North Carolina in the United States (US), the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 37 770 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 83.84 million poultry eggs from the US last year.

"The CFS has contacted the American authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

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## **Queue ticketing system for driving licensing-related services to be implemented at TD's Licensing Offices from March 13**

The Transport Department (TD) said today (February 19) that the trial queue ticketing system for driving licensing-related services implemented at the Kowloon Licensing Office will be extended to the Licensing Offices in Admiralty, Sha Tin and Kwun Tong from March 13.

A spokesman for the TD said, "For driving licensing services and driving test applications processing over the counter, if no prior appointment has been made online or by phone, applicants are required to obtain a same-day queue ticket on-site before using the counter services. A total of 980 same-day queue tickets will be distributed on every working day among the four Licensing Offices at 9am and 2pm. Details are at the Annex. There is no need for same-day queue ticket holders to stay and wait at the Licensing Offices. They can check the latest queue ticket numbers being distributed and called

at the Licensing Offices by scanning the QR code on the ticket or via the TD's website ([www.td.gov.hk/qts](http://www.td.gov.hk/qts)), return to the Licensing Office in a timely manner and follow the instructions of staff to join a designated queue for counter services."

Apart from replacing the walk-in counter services by the same-day queue tickets, all service arrangements regarding driving licensing-related services of the Licensing Offices remain unchanged. The Licensing Offices will continue to provide counter services to members of the public who have made a prior appointment online or by phone. The TD will closely monitor the implementation of the queue ticketing system for driving licensing-related services. Depending on the experience and feedback after the implementation, and the service demand of the public upon the introduction of the electronic vehicle licence initiative later, the TD will consider the feasibility of extending the queue ticketing system to vehicle licensing-related services.

The TD spokesman said, "The TD expects that the waiting environment of the Licensing Offices will be improved after the implementation of the queue ticketing system for driving licensing-related services (include applications for driving tests). Those who are unable to get a queue ticket or do not have an appointment can submit their driving licensing-related applications through non-counter channels, such as online or drop-in boxes.

"The TD has all along encouraged members of the public to use online licensing services as far as possible, allowing them to submit applications anytime and anywhere without the need to attend and queue at the Licensing Offices in person for processing of applications. Upon receiving a duly completed application, the TD in general completes processing within 10 working days and sends the licences/permits to the applicants by registered mail. To cope with the anticipated increase in the number of applications received online or through drop-in box, the TD will strengthen its manpower to process."

Since September 2022, the TD has been extending its online services in phases to cover applications for learner's driving licences, probationary driving licences, full driving licences, driving instructor's licences, applications for duplicates of driving licences/driving instructor's licences, and also international driving permits. Members of the public who have registered for "iAM Smart+", which comes with a digital signing function, or are holding a valid personal e-Certificate, can submit applications online for the above various driving licences through the website: [www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/drivinglicense/onlineservices.htm](http://www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/drivinglicense/onlineservices.htm). The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer has set up mobile registration teams at Licensing Offices to help members of the public register for "iAM Smart+".

To avoid unnecessary delays, applicants should allow sufficient time and submit applications for the required licences/permits as early as possible. Regarding the renewal of a full driving licence, the TD will send a "Full Driving Licence Renewal Notice cum Application Form" (TD578) to licence holders about three months before expiry of their licences, which includes a

renewal password for online application and serves as a reminder to them to renew their full driving licences in a timely manner. Licence holders can use the renewal password to apply online for renewing full driving licences after completing the relevant online form.

Apart from online applications, members of the public can also submit their applications through drop-in boxes or by post. The TD advises applicants to make appointments online for counter services before the expiry of their licences through the website [www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/drivinglicense/abs.htm](http://www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/drivinglicense/abs.htm) or by calling 3763 8080. To bring greater convenience to applicants, the appointment booking for TD Licensing Office counter services has been extended to applications for a Certificate of Driving Licence Particulars and change of personal particulars (for driving licence holders only).

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## [Hong Kong Observatory Open Day 2024](#)

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) will organise the HKO Open Day on March 23 and 24 (Saturday and Sunday) to showcase the work of the HKO.

Adopting the theme of the World Meteorological Day this year, "At the frontline of climate action", the exhibitions of the Open Day will promote public awareness on climate change and showcase how the HKO applies the latest technology to provide various services including weather forecasting, aviation weather, microclimate monitoring and radiation monitoring.

Online preregistration is required. Each applicant may request a maximum of four tickets free of charge. If there is an oversubscription, selection will be made by computer balloting. The online registration system ([www.hkoopenday.gov.hk/en/registration](http://www.hkoopenday.gov.hk/en/registration)) will accept applications from today (February 19) to noon on March 1. Successful applicants will receive tickets with a QR code by email on or before March 12.

HKO Open Day details:

Venue: Hong Kong Observatory Headquarters (134A Nathan Road, Kowloon)

Date: March 23 and 24 (Saturday and Sunday)

Time: 9.30am to 5pm

Remarks: The duration of each session is around one hour

For more information on the Open Day, please visit the HKO website: [www.hkoopenday.gov.hk/en/registration](http://www.hkoopenday.gov.hk/en/registration).

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## Government announces list of medical institutions under Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme (with photo)

The Government announced today (February 19) that seven medical institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) have been included in the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme (Pilot Scheme), offering eligible Hong Kong elderly persons additional options of services points for using the Elderly Health Care Vouchers (EHCVs) in the GBA. Among the medical institutions included in the Pilot Scheme, five of them provide integrated services including dental services while the other two are dental institutions. The pilot medical institutions are expected to gradually launch the relevant arrangements under the Pilot Scheme starting from the third quarter of this year and enable eligible Hong Kong elderly persons to use EHCVs to pay for services received. It is estimated that some 1.7 million eligible Hong Kong elderly persons will benefit from the Pilot Scheme.

Since the Chief Executive announced in his 2023 Policy Address the extension of coverage of the EHCVs to suitable medical institutions in the GBA, the Health Bureau and the Department of Health (DH) have been strenuously taking forward the relevant work, including conducting market research, seeking opinions and recommendations from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, and conducting site visits between last November and early February this year.

In the process of considering GBA medical institutions for the Pilot Scheme, the Government had taken into account eight key factors, namely physical locations, service quality, experience in management and operation, service scope, service capacity, fee standards and level, fair knowledge of the operation of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHVS) and availability of advantageous services. Seven medical institutions were included in the Pilot Scheme (see Annex 1 and 2 for details) and they are:

To provide integrated services (all with dental services)

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- \* The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou
  - \* Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University in Nansha
  - \* Zhongshan Chenxinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine in Zhongshan
  - \* Dongguan Tungwah Hospital in Dongguan
  - \* Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital in Shenzhen

To provide dental services only

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- \* Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital in Luohu District of Shenzhen
- \* Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen)/Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen) in Futian District of Shenzhen

Apart from using the EHCVs to pay for services provided by Hong Kong healthcare professionals enrolled in the EHVS, eligible EHCV Hong Kong elderly users will also be entitled to use EHCVs to receive services at nine GBA medical institutions in the future. These nine medical institutions include the two current service points operated by the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH) at its hospital and at the Huawei Li Zhi Yuan Community Health Service Center. The service scope eligible for claims for the EHCVs at the seven pilot medical institutions will be largely the same as that in the HKU-SZH. Elderly persons can use the EHCVs to pay for outpatient healthcare services they received at designated medical centres or medical service departments. However, EHCVs are not applicable to inpatient services, prepaid healthcare services and day surgery procedures. In addition, EHCVs can neither be used for the sole purchase of goods, medication, medical equipment and products, nor be redeemed for cash.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "The Pilot Scheme announced today marks breakthroughs of the EHVS in the Mainland in four areas: (1) the first time to have service points located beyond Hong Kong and Shenzhen, covering the core area of the GBA; (2) the first time to see participation of Grade III Class A high-quality Mainland medical institutions that do not involve any Hong Kong investments; (3) the first time for private medical institutions to enrol in the EHVS; and (4) the first time for professional dental institutions' enrollment. We have gone through a meticulous process in selecting the seven medical institutions with strategic planning in mind to cover the entire Pearl River Delta area for caring for Hong Kong elderly persons residing in the GBA.

"We have two objectives for implementing this Pilot Scheme. Firstly, it aims to provide more convenience and flexibility for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Mainland cities in the GBA by providing more service point options for them to utilise EHCVs to meet their primary healthcare needs and improve health condition. Secondly, it is intended to allow eligible Hong Kong elderly persons to use their EHCVs for receiving dental services across the boundary at medical institutions in Shenzhen or even other Mainland cities in the GBA, with a view to addressing the pressing demand of Hong Kong elderly persons in seeking dental services.

"I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Health Commission of Guangdong Province and relevant health commissions/bureaux of various cities for their valuable advice in the process of pressing ahead the Pilot Scheme, ranging from selection of high-quality medical institutions to the Mainland regulations which are relevant and conducive to the future monitoring of areas concerning the healthcare quality and fee level."

The DH is working on the follow-up arrangements with various pilot medical institutions, such as personnel training, financial arrangements and

system configuration. The Government will also arrange for the HKU-SZH to share with all pilot medical institutions its experience and practical arrangements on the use of EHCVs in a bid to ensure smooth operation in the future. The Government expects that the pilot medical institutions will gradually launch the relevant arrangements under the Pilot Scheme starting from the third quarter of this year, with details to be announced in due course.

To ensure the proper use of public money, the DH will further examine the details of a monitoring mechanism for the Pilot Scheme so as to refine relevant arrangements. The DH will also keep in touch with the health authorities of the Mainland and solicit their assistance when necessary.

Launched by the Government in 2009, the EHVS currently subsidises eligible Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 and above with an annual voucher amount of \$2,000 (with the accumulation limit set at \$8,000) for them to choose in their own community private primary healthcare services that best suit their health needs. Last year, the Government successfully implemented three enhancement measures to the EHVS:

- (i) extended the coverage of EHCVs to audiologists, dietitians, clinical psychologists and speech therapists;
- (ii) allowed shared use of EHCVs between spouses; and
- (iii) rolled out the three-year Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme (Pilot Reward Scheme) to provide rewards as incentives for elderly persons to make good use of EHCVs on healthcare services such as continuous preventive care and chronic diseases management

The aforementioned shared use arrangements of EHCVs between spouses and the Pilot Reward Scheme are also applicable to the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme.

Members of the public may browse the EHVS website ([www.hcv.gov.hk](http://www.hcv.gov.hk)) or call the EHVS hotline (2838 2311) for more information on the EHVS.



# China Manned Space Exhibition period at HKMH extended

Jointly presented by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the China Manned Space Agency, and organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the China Manned Space Exhibition, which has been staged at the Hong Kong Science Museum (HKScM) and the Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMH) since its opening on December 1 last year, has received an overwhelming response from the local public and tourists. As of yesterday (February 18), the exhibition had welcomed more than 280 000 visitors, with the section at the HKScM closing on the same day.

To allow more members of the public to visit the exhibition, the exhibition period of the section being staged at the HKMH will be extended to April 1 with the inclusion of new exhibits, such as a training spacesuit of the country's first astronaut, Mr Yang Liwei, and the flag of HKSAR which was brought into space by the spacecraft Shenzhou I. Visitors can still witness the extraordinary journey in achieving China's manned space development goals. For details of the exhibition, please visit the website at [hk.history.museum/en/web/mh/exhibition/China-Manned-Space-Exhibition.html](http://hk.history.museum/en/web/mh/exhibition/China-Manned-Space-Exhibition.html) or call 2724 9042 for enquiries.

In addition, starting from today (February 19), the original opening hours of the HKMH will be resumed as follows:

Mondays, Wednesdays to Fridays: 10am to 6pm  
Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays: 10am to 7pm  
Closed on Tuesdays (except public holidays)