

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected endangered cartilages of softshell turtles worth about \\$5 million \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 1 400 kilograms of cartilages of softshell turtles suspected to be endangered species, with an estimated market value of about \$5 million, at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound on January 11.

Through risk assessment, Customs on that day selected a container, arriving from Bangladesh and declared to be containing dried seafood, for inspection. Upon examination, Customs officers found the batch of suspected endangered cartilages of softshell turtles inside the container.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs yesterday (January 12) arrested a 63-year-old male director of the consignee company suspected to be connected with the case.

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

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).



[Yellow fire danger warning](#)

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Yellow fire danger warning

The fire danger situation today (January 13) is yellow and the risk of fire is high. People are urged to prevent fires breaking out and hikers should also be vigilant.

[Territory-wide flag day today](#)

New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association has been issued a Public Subscription Permit to hold a territory-wide flag sale from 7am to 12.30pm today (January 13), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permits have been published on the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/ngo/controlofc/flagdays) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

[SLW taps talent attraction strategies in Shanghai visit \(with photos\)](#)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, today (January 12) started his visit to Shanghai.

Accompanied by the Director of Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE), Mr

Anthony Lau, Mr Sun first paid a courtesy call on member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Fudan University Committee Mr Xu Jun and the University's management this afternoon, and exchanged views on issues including nurturing talent as well as building an education and talent hub. They also explored the way forward of deepening talent exchange and co-operation between Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Mr Sun said that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is implementing a number of talent admission schemes to proactively attract talent from different sectors and professional backgrounds to Hong Kong. Among them, one of the major targets of the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) is graduates of top universities around the world, including the Mainland. Of the 185 eligible universities/institutions, there are now 13 Mainland universities including Fudan University. As of end-2023, the TTPS had received some 65 000 applications and approved nearly 51 000, with nearly 2 000 approved applicants being graduated from Fudan University. Mr Sun welcomes Mainland youths to develop their careers in Hong Kong via suitable talent admission schemes, and the recently established HKTE will provide the necessary information and support services for talent interested in coming to Hong Kong and those who have arrived.

Mr Sun and his delegation then visited ShanghaiRanking Consultancy and met with its founder, Dr Cheng Ying, to learn more about the ranking agency's work for the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). They also discussed how various economies adopt the ARWU in formulating talent recruitment policies to meet their social development needs. The aggregate list of eligible universities of the TTPS also comprises four world university rankings including the ARWU.

This evening, Mr Sun called on the Director General of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, Mr Kong Fuan, at a dinner gathering and updated him on the latest situation of Hong Kong's endeavours in attracting talent and the local labour market. Mr Sun will continue his visit to Shanghai tomorrow (January 13).



Second phase of XBB COVID-19 vaccination arrangements to start next Thursday

The Government today (January 12) announced that the second phase of vaccination arrangements of XBB mRNA COVID-19 vaccine will start on January 18, and appealed to members of the public, especially high-risk groups, to be vaccinated as soon as possible in order to enhance personal protection. The Government reiterated that, all currently available COVID-19 vaccines, including inactivated, mRNA ancestral strain or bivalent, and XBB vaccines are effective in preventing severe illness and death. To protect personal health, eligible persons may continue to choose to receive any currently available COVID-19 vaccines.

The first phase of XBB COVID-19 vaccination arrangements has been rolled out on December 14 last year, with resources focused on providing vaccination services for adult residents at residential care homes (RCHs) and the elderly aged 65 or above. The vaccination figure increased visibly after the launch of the first phase, with a total of about 45 000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines being administered as of yesterday (January 11), among which about 31 000 doses were XBB mRNA vaccine. As the vaccination figure of the above-mentioned group has stabilised, the Government will roll out the second phase of the XBB COVID-19 vaccines arrangement, which will be extended to cover other high-risk priority groups, including persons aged 50 to 64, adults aged 18 to 49 with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers.

Starting from 9am on January 18, all high-risk priority groups (i.e. persons aged 50 or above, adults aged 18 to 49 with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers) can make a booking through the Government online booking system at booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp. They can receive XBB COVID-19 vaccine for completing their initial or booster dose from that day at relevant vaccination venues. If necessary, eligible persons can seek assistance for making online bookings from post offices (except mobile post offices).

The Government has been striving to facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccines for high-risk priority groups, and is progressively increasing the number of vaccination venues in view of the second phase vaccination arrangement, including a general outpatient clinic (GOPC) under the Hospital Authority (HA) (Tin Shui Wai (Tin Yip Road) Community Health Centre), as well as five Private Clinic COVID-19 Vaccination Stations (PCVSs) in Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong and Southern District. Also, non-member elderly people aged 65 or above can also make appointments at Wan Chai Elderly Health Centre (EHC) and Lek Yuen EHC. Together with the vaccination venues of the first phase, there are 19 PCVSs, one Children Community Vaccination Centre, 11 designated GOPCs under the HA, and two designated EHCs

of the DH. Venues providing XBB vaccination can be found at the Annex.

In addition, designated specialist outpatient clinics of the HA and designated EHCs of the DH will continue to provide XBB COVID-19 vaccines to attending patients and members respectively. The Government will also continue to provide vaccination for adult residents at RCHs for the elderly and RCHs for persons with disabilities through outreach services under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme.

As Hong Kong has entered the influenza season and the local COVID-19 activity has also increased significantly, the Centre for Health Protection of the DH strongly urged high-risk groups to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) and COVID-19 booster as soon as possible to lower the risks of serious illness and death. High-risk persons can receive a COVID-19 booster at least six months after the last dose of COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later). For the sake of convenience, COVID-19 vaccine can be co-administered with SIV. Details of receiving both COVID-19 vaccination and SIV are available online (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html).

A Government spokesman said, "The COVID-19 vaccines available in Hong Kong are all safe and effective, and fulfil quality requirements. The key to maintain the protection conferred by the vaccine is to receive suitable doses in a timely manner according to the vaccination schedule. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the CHP reiterated that all currently available COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing severe disease and death. The World Health Organization (WHO) also said that high-risk persons should receive booster doses at appropriate times to lower the risks of serious illness and death."

The Government noted the manufacture and supply of inactivated vaccine (i.e. CoronaVac/Sinovac) and reiterated that the local stock of relevant vaccine is adequate to cope with the expected use this year. The expert group of the WHO will have a meeting in March this year and it is anticipated that the meeting will discuss the recommendation on the use of COVID-19 vaccines, including variants to be covered by vaccines and the use of vaccines from different technology platforms.

â€‹Details of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme can be found at the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html).