

Immigration Department and Public Security Police Force of Macao hold meeting about immigration arrangements on polling day of District Council election (with photos)

The Director of the Immigration, Mr Benson Kwok, held a video conference with the Commissioner of the Public Security Police Force of the Macao Special Administrative Region, Mr Ng Kam-wa, yesterday (December 5) to discuss the immigration arrangements on the polling day of the 2023 District Council Ordinary Election.

The two parties agreed in the meeting that immigration authorities of both sides will maintain close liaison to ensure smooth passenger traffic on the polling day, and will expedite the handling of cases of expired or lost travel documents relating to Hong Kong residents. The Immigration Department (ImmD) will also continue to exercise and maintain effective immigration control to facilitate the visit of genuine travellers and keep out undesirables.

Moreover, Mr Kwok also visited the Express Rail Link West Kowloon Control Point and held a video conference with commanders of control points on Monday (December 4) to understand the preparation works at control points for the polling day. The ImmD will arrange flexible staff deployment and operate extra clearance counters and kiosks on the polling day to enable voters returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland, Macao and overseas to cast their votes.

The ImmD appeals to voters to vote enthusiastically at the District Council election on December 10, fulfil their civic responsibility, and work together to build a better community for Hong Kong.





LCQ2: Support for students with special educational needs

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Lillian Kwok and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) implemented the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education (IE) in September 1997 with a view to enhancing the quality of IE and enabling students with special educational needs (SEN students) to attend ordinary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the EDB indicated in 2018 that it would implement the enhancement of the Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) in the 2018/19 school year subject to the availability of resources, of the details and latest progress of the relevant work;

(2) whether it will make SEMIS available for use by the Health Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Hospital Authority, so as to provide cross-departmental support for SEN students; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it knows, in the past three school years, the specific direction of the post-school transition arrangements (including pursuing further studies, seeking employment and admission to hostels) made by special schools for SEN students and their follow-up actions, as well as the number of SEN graduates and, among them, the respective numbers of those pursuing further studies, taking up employment and admitted to hostels?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the growth and development of students with special educational needs (SEN) and has all along been providing public sector ordinary schools and special schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to strengthen schools' support for their students with SEN. In recent years, the expenditure on integrated education has increased by 147 per cent from about \$1.5 billion in the 2017-18 financial year to about \$3.7 billion in the 2022-23 financial year. As for the expenditure on special education, it has increased by 44 per cent from about \$2.5 billion in the 2017-18 financial year to about \$3.6 billion in the 2022-23 financial year.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Lillian Kwok is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Special Education Management Information System (SEMIS) is a computerised information management system of the Education Bureau (EDB) for collecting and managing the information of students with SEN studying in public sector schools, including special schools, and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS schools). The system enables the EDB and schools to understand the needs of students for educational services and the support provided to students, so that corresponding policies and measures would be introduced to support students with SEN. The EDB continues to review and upgrade the functions of SEMIS taking into account the education policies, the development of support measures as well as students' needs so as to assist schools in identifying and supporting students in need as early as possible.

The EDB has enhanced the SEN information transfer mechanism since the 2019/20 school year. Under the enhanced mechanism, the pre-school rehabilitation service units subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) can log into an online platform provided by the EDB, prepare and store the electronic version of the Comprehensive Development Progress Report for Pre-school Children (Progress Report) with the consent of parents. The EDB will transmit the Progress Reports through SEMIS to the public sector or DSS primary schools based on their lists of Primary One (P1) students to ensure that the primary schools can understand the special needs of the students concerned as early as possible, so that appropriate support can be provided for their smooth integration into the learning environment of their primary schools. Schools should formulate support measures for the transition of P1 students and record them in the "Summary of Transition Support for P1 Students" in SEMIS. Through the relevant functions, officers of the EDB can understand from primary schools their planning of support measures and offer professional advice as appropriate. Moreover, the EDB established the SEN information transfer mechanism between secondary schools and post-secondary institutions under SEMIS in the 2021/22 school year, which allows public sector and DSS secondary schools to, with the consent of parents and students, directly transfer SEN information of school leavers to their recipient local post-secondary institutions or organisations through the "Transfer of SEN Information of Secondary School Leavers Online Platform" under SEMIS, thereby further enhancing the effectiveness of transition and

adaptation of secondary school leavers to post-secondary education. At present, SEN information that can be transferred through SEMIS includes SEN type, tier of support required, summary of the support rendered, recommendations on special examination arrangements and medical reports. In sum, SEMIS provides a platform for information transfer from the pre-school through primary and secondary levels to post-secondary institutions or organisations, thus ensuring that the schools or education organisations concerned can provide support for students with SEN at different stages of education effectively.

At present, the main objective of SEMIS is to enable the EDB and schools to acquire the SEN information of students for educational purposes. As the related information involves students' personal data, the EDB cannot disclose it to any third parties, including other government departments, without the written consent from the parents concerned.

(3) The EDB is very concerned about the exit pathways of special school leavers and has been providing special schools with resources and support to help students make good preparation for post-school arrangements. Special schools will help their students plan for their post-school arrangements in accordance with their interests, capabilities and needs. To prepare students for their adjustment to daily lives after they have left school, special schools would design school-based curricula with unique features for students, such as community training, workplace practicum and pre-vocational training, to nurture students' independent living skills, develop their potential, and integrate into society. Furthermore, special schools will also provide additional training relating to interview skills, vocational skills assessments, social etiquette, work attitude, and completion of personal particulars and application forms, etc for their students according to their individual abilities and aptitudes, with a view to preparing them for their future pathways.

When students approach the senior secondary level, schools' multidisciplinary teams will discuss with the parents on their children's options for post-school services and assist them in applying for appropriate post-school services. Schools generally arrange for school social workers to follow up with the school leavers for two years through various means. The arrangements include liaising with the parents or carers concerned to keep track of school leavers' adjustment to daily lives and, depending on their needs, referring the school leavers to District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities or Integrated Family Service Centres subvented by the SWD, as well as helping them apply for Residential Respite Services under the SWD, while they are awaiting the services.

In the school years from 2019/20 to 2021/22, the numbers of special school students graduated from school upon completion of Secondary Six are 559, 584 and 516 respectively. According to information gathered from special schools, the numbers of their graduates pursuing further studies, including vocational training, in September of the following school year are 174, 197 and 175 respectively; the numbers of graduates being employed are 28, 30 and 14 respectively; the numbers of graduates receiving residential care service

are 45, 50 and 47 respectively; the numbers of graduates receiving vocational rehabilitation services or day training services are 217, 196 and 149 respectively. It is worth noting that the above figures only reflect the situation in September at the respective times. Many graduates will be gradually admitted to receive the various services mentioned above in the middle of the year.

The EDB will continue to provide special schools with resources and support for helping students transit to adult life smoothly after they have left schools.

Thank you, President.

Labour Department highly concerned about fatal accident that happened in Tseung Kwan O yesterday

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a fatal accident that happened in a residential building in Tseung Kwan O yesterday afternoon (December 5), in which a male worker, while carrying out electrical work in the building, was suspected to have received an electric shock. He was certified dead later in the hospital. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and expresses its deepest sympathy to his family.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors concerned, suspending electrical work in the building. The contractors cannot resume the work process until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risks have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete the investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the relevant provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years on conviction on indictment; or \$3 million and imprisonment for six months on summary conviction.

In regard to yesterday's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert

through its website and by email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, and reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, December 6, 2023 is 104.6 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

LCQ13: Assisting women in preventing breast cancer

Following is a question by the Hon Nixie Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

It is learnt that breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among females in Hong Kong. A study has pointed out that 10 per cent to 15 per cent of breast cancer cases are attributed to hereditary factors, and there is a downward trend in the age profiles of such patients. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the cumulative number of breast cancer patients, (ii) the number of patients diagnosed with breast cancer and (iii) the number of breast cancer deaths in each of the past five years;

(2) given that the Department of Health (DH) has implemented the Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme (the Pilot Programme) since 2021 to provide breast cancer screening services to eligible women, and DH is now preparing for Phase 2 of the Pilot Programme, of the enhancement measures the Government plans to introduce for the Pilot Programme; whether it will make reference to the practices in other regions and gradually expand the target recipients of the Pilot Programme with a view to ultimately achieving breast cancer screening for all women in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as it is learnt that the Hospital Authority (HA) currently provides free genetic testing for ovarian cancer patients to identify those who are suitable for drug treatment, whether the Government knows if HA will consider extending the coverage of such testing to include breast cancer patients; if HA will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the details of the current publicity and education efforts to help the public prevent breast cancer?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to cancer prevention and control. This is an important strategy to prevent and control non-communicable diseases. In 2001, the Government established the Cancer Coordinating Committee (CCC) to formulate strategies on cancer prevention and control and to steer the direction of work covering cancer prevention and screening, surveillance, research and treatment. The CCC is now chaired by the Secretary for Health and comprising members who are cancer experts, academics, doctors in public and private sectors as well as public health professionals. The Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening (CEWG) established under the CCC regularly reviews local and international evidence and makes recommendations on cancer prevention and screening applicable to the local setting.

The reply, in consultation with the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA), to the questions raised by the Hon Nixie Lam is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Cancer Registry of the HA and the DH maintain the statistics for the numbers of new cases and registered deaths of female breast cancer but not for the number of accumulated numbers of breast cancer patients. The relevant numbers from 2018 to 2022 are tabulated below:

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| New cases (Note) | 4 618 | 4 761 | 4 956 | 5 565 | — |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Registered deaths | 753 | 852 | 751 | 791 | 792 |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

Note: Figure in 2022 is not yet available

(2) Based on the recommendations of the CEWG, the Government adopts a risk-based approach for breast cancer screening. Following this, the DH launched the Phase 1 of Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme in the latter half of 2021 to provide screening services for eligible women at three Woman Health Centres and 18 Elderly Health Centres, with an aim of detecting early breast cancer in women in the group defined by risk-based approach before any symptoms appear, so that treatment can be carried out early. The Primary Healthcare Office under the Health Bureau has also published the "Hong Kong Reference Framework for Life Course Preventive Care in Primary Healthcare" to provide guidance to healthcare professionals and enhance public awareness on self-health management including disease prevention and establishing healthy lifestyle where a risk-based approach for breast cancer screening is also included. The Government is now reviewing the experience and effectiveness of the phase 1 programme, views of the CCC and the latest recommendations of the CEWG to decide on the implementation details for the next phase of breast cancer screening programme. Relevant details will be announced in due course.

When considering recommendations for any disease screening, the Government will refer to the evidence-based risk assessment and views of relevant experts from the perspective of public health, and take into account the perspective of good utilisation of medical resources to determine the priority. Excessive screening under public health programme not only wastes resources for the overall public health, but also runs out of resources that can be invested on other projects in greater need, and may pose unnecessary health risks to individuals, often causing more harm than good.

(3) At present, clinicians may use genetic testing to provide more accurate and most optimal treatment options for a more personalised and precise disease treatment. Since the second quarter in 2021, the HA has been providing genetic testing services for ovarian cancer patients in need under professional judgement of doctors and clinical indications of the patients. The HA would keep abreast of the latest development of genetic testing technology and opinion of expert groups to explore the applicability and needs for genetic testing services in the treatment of other cancers in due course.

(4) The DH has been promoting healthy lifestyle (including avoiding alcohol consumption, having regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy body weight and waist circumference) as the primary strategy in cancer prevention. Meanwhile, the DH practises risk-based breast cancer screening to detect early breast cancer in women for timely treatment. The DH has been raising public awareness in breast cancer prevention and breast health through various channels, including publishing articles, producing Announcements in the Public Interest for broadcasting through television, radio, online platforms, social media, etc.

In addition, the DH has also produced health education materials such as posters and pamphlet on breast health awareness and breast cancer prevention, and provided health messages on breast cancer prevention and screening for ethnic minorities in at least six ethnic minority languages (including Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Thai, Bahasa Indonesia and Tagalog).

The Government will continue to strengthen the promotion of breast cancer prevention through various media channels, and collaboration with community partners and service providers.