

[SED visits Japan to attend launch symposium on latest OECD PISA results in Asia](#)

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, will depart for Tokyo, Japan, tomorrow (December 5) to attend the launch symposium on the latest results of the Programme for International Student Assessment by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD PISA) in Asia. She will also attend the panel discussion session.

During the trip, Dr Choi will visit local schools and education units, and meet Hong Kong students studying in Japan.

Dr Choi will return to Hong Kong on Friday afternoon (December 8). During her absence, the Under Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, will be the Acting Secretary for Education.

[EDB announces arrangements on application for S1 discretionary places](#)

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (December 4) announced that parents of Primary Six (P6) students participating in the current (2024) cycle of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) who wish to apply for Secondary One (S1) Discretionary Places (DP) in government, aided and caput secondary schools as well as Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary schools participating in the SSPA System for their children have to submit the applications to the secondary schools concerned between January 2 and 16, 2024.

Digitalisation of SSPA

Parents who have registered as SSPA e-platform (eSSPA) (esspa.edb.gov.hk) users and bound their account to "iAM Smart+" may browse choice-making information starting from tomorrow (December 5), and submit DP applications and check application results via eSSPA at a later stage. The EDB encourages parents to register with "iAM Smart+" (www.iamsmart.gov.hk/en/reg.html) as early as possible and activate their eSSPA account using "iAM Smart+" for more convenient and faster electronic

services.

To cater for the needs of different parents, traditional paper application forms will continue to be accepted, and primary schools participating in the SSPA System have been informed to collect copies of the Application Forms for Secondary One Discretionary Places (application forms) and the Handbook for Application for Secondary One Discretionary Places (Handbook) tomorrow. Parents of P6 students will each receive two paper application forms from their children's primary school. For students not studying in primary schools participating in the SSPA System (including newly arrived children and dependants under various talent admission schemes who are eligible for participating in the SSPA), their parents can obtain the application forms at the School Places Allocation (SPA) Section of the EDB.

Submission of S1 DP applications

An EDB spokesman said, "Parents are encouraged to submit the application forms and other required documents to secondary schools via the eSSPA. If parents prefer submitting paper application forms and other necessary documents in person, they should note the school office hours."

The two electronic or paper application forms that parents will receive will show Order of School Preference 1 and School Preference 2 respectively. Order of School Preference 1 stands for the student's first-choice school and Order of School Preference 2 stands for the student's second-choice school. In all circumstances, primary and secondary schools should not request students or parents to disclose their order of preference. Likewise, applicants and their parents should not disclose their order of preference to schools.

The spokesman reminded parents to read carefully the Notes for Parents on Application for Secondary One Discretionary Places. Parents should not submit applications to more than two secondary schools participating in the SSPA no matter whether the applications are submitted via the eSSPA or in paper form. Otherwise, the DP applications of their children will be rendered void. In addition, parents should not submit duplicate applications via the eSSPA and in paper form for the same child.

The spokesman said, "The schools to which parents apply for DPs are not restricted by districts. Parents are strongly advised to consider the schools in all respects, such as their educational philosophy, tradition, religion, admission criteria, development and operation, and their children's characteristics, personalities, abilities and interests, so as to make a suitable school choice. Parents may refer to the relevant information in the Secondary School Profiles (www.chsc.hk/secondary) or school websites for reference.

"Students who are successful in the DP application stage will not be allocated a school place in central allocation (CA). Parents should, therefore, apply to schools of their preference. The EDB will match students'

preferences against schools' Successful/Reserve Lists for Discretionary Places. If a student is successful in both schools to which he or she has applied, allocation will be based on the student's order of preference."

Notification arrangements for successful DP applicants

The spokesman reminded that under the notification arrangements for successful DP applicants, if students are included by participating secondary schools in their Successful Lists for Discretionary Places, their parents will receive notifications from the schools on March 27, 2024. Parents who have registered as eSSPA users may also view notifications for successful DP applicants via the eSSPA starting from 10am on the same day. Parents do not need to reply to the schools whether they would accept the offers. The allocation results of DP and CA will be released at the same time on July 9, 2024.

Enquiries

For the list of secondary schools accepting DP applications and the number of DPs for application, parents may ask for the Handbook from primary schools for reference or obtain the latest version of the Handbook through the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk) and the fax service of the EDB's 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System on 2891 0088.

If parents have enquiries about DP applications, they are advised to consult their children's primary schools or the secondary schools to which they apply. For general enquiries, parents may contact the SPA Section of the EDB (Tel: 2832 7740/2832 7700; address: Office 2, 2/F, Manulife Financial Centre, 223 Wai Yip Street, Kwun Tong). The SPA Section will be relocated later this month. Details will be announced on the EDB website in due course.

[Opening remarks by Acting STL at Hong Kong Aviation Finance Forum 2023 \(English only\)](#)

Following are the opening remarks by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, at the Hong Kong Aviation Finance Forum 2023 today (December 4):

Stanley (President of the Hong Kong Aircraft Leasing and Aviation Finance Association, Mr Stanley Hui), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. First of all, may I extend my warmest welcome to each and every one of you to the Hong Kong Aviation Finance Forum 2023, organised by the Hong Kong Aircraft Leasing and Aviation Finance Association and supported by the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government. I know some of you have flown across continents to attend today's event, for which I am truly grateful. It has not been easy for us all over the past few years as the COVID pandemic caused disruption to travel and business, but I am proud to say that Hong Kong is back! With a proven edge and resilience, we gather here in Hong Kong for the first time after the pandemic. Today, I invite you to join Hong Kong's journey to explore the vast opportunities and potential that the aircraft leasing sector holds, while delving into the enhancement measures for Hong Kong's aircraft leasing preferential tax regime.

As we all know, the aviation industry plays a pivotal role in connecting the world, facilitating global trade, and driving economic growth. Aircraft leasing has a key function in making this happen, by providing flexible financing solutions, fostering fleet expansion, and supporting airlines in meeting their operational needs. We fully recognise the significance of the sector, and have therefore taken substantial steps to create an environment that facilitates the development of aircraft leasing in Hong Kong, and to attract industry players and investors alike to come and do business.

There are a host of factors contributing to the attractiveness of Hong Kong as an aircraft leasing platform. Our sound legal and banking systems, well-developed and diversified capital markets, and excellent aviation infrastructure and talent are some examples. Obviously, these are common features of the major aircraft leasing centres in the globe. What I wish to highlight is our proximity with the Mainland market, especially in terms of institutional ties. You may note that our current 5 per cent withholding tax rate with the Mainland on lease rentals derived from aircraft leasing businesses is lower than that of other major leasing hubs. This is one of the favourable treatments given by our Central Government, for Hong Kong to thrive as an aircraft leasing hub in the region and share the fruit of China's fast-growing aviation market. Equally if not more importantly, Hong Kong possesses the institutional strengths of "one country, two systems", and is the only common law jurisdiction within China. Leveraging our highly market-oriented and international business environment underpinned by the rule of law, we are confident in serving as the ideal connector and value adder between Mainland China and the world.

With all these strengths, we introduced an aircraft leasing preferential tax regime in Hong Kong in 2017 to provide competitive profit tax concessions to incentivise aircraft lessors to conduct businesses in Hong Kong. Since then, the aircraft leasing business has started to thrive here. The past couple of years have undoubtedly been a testing time for the aviation industry. But as we always say, with risk comes opportunity. Despite the unprecedented disruptions and uncertainties, aircraft leasing has continued to adapt to the changing environment and has seen potential for transformation and innovation. In particular, we have observed a shift in demand, as airlines seek to optimise their fleets and manage costs. Also,

aircraft leasing proves to be a versatile option for purposes that could go beyond flight operations.

Another key development that has influenced the aircraft leasing landscape is the ongoing discussions surrounding BEPS (base erosion and profit shifting) 2.0, the international tax reform proposals drawn up by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. You are all experts in the aircraft leasing business, and I am sure that I do not need to repeat the implications that the introduction of the minimum global effective tax regime will have on global aircraft lessors. In light of BEPS 2.0, Hong Kong is determined to act fast and review our policies. We understand the trade's concerns, and assure you that the Hong Kong Government is fully committed to fortifying Hong Kong's competitiveness in the global aircraft leasing industry.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that significant changes to Hong Kong's aircraft leasing preferential tax regime are underway. As some of you may be aware, we conducted a trade consultation at the end of 2022 on the proposed enhancement measures to strengthen the competitiveness of the preferential tax regime. Very positive feedback was received. As a start, the Government implemented two measures via administrative means in the first half of this year. The remaining enhancement measures require amendments to the Inland Revenue Ordinance of Hong Kong. Here is the good news – the relevant amendment bill was introduced into the Legislative Council for scrutiny last week. I understand some of these measures have been long wanted by the trade and are, in fact, revolutionary. To enable aircraft lessors to enjoy the enhanced regime as early as possible upon passage of the bill, the legislative amendments will take retrospective effect from the year of assessment beginning on April 1, 2023. Mr Benjamin Chan, our Deputy Commissioner of Inland Revenue, will provide you with more details later in this forum.

Hong Kong is a top-tier place for trade and business, and we have every confidence that this will continue with the support of our international partners. Our role as the Government is to provide and sustain a conducive business environment for you all. We hope that with the enhancement measures to our preferential tax regime, you will find the vast potential and benefits that Hong Kong has to offer. Together, let us navigate the winds of change, embrace the new realities, and build a brighter future for the aircraft leasing industry in Hong Kong.

Before I close, I wish to express once again my deepest gratitude to the Hong Kong Aircraft Leasing and Aviation Finance Association, and to all participants and speakers who have made this forum possible. I look forward to fruitful exchanges at today's forum on the opportunities that lie ahead, with existing partnerships consolidated and new ones established.

Last but not the least, for those friends who are Hong Kong residents, I would like to remind that the District Council Election will be held on the coming Sunday (December 10). Please cast your vote for a better community. Thank you.

[Centre for Food Safety announces test results on hot pot food samples \(with photo\)](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (December 4) announced the test results of a recently completed surveillance project assessing the food safety of hot pot cuisine. A total of 315 hot pot food samples were collected and all passed the tests.

A CFS spokesman said, "Hong Kong people like eating hot pot meals. As food additives such as colouring matters and preservatives may be used during the making of hot pot ingredients, beverages and sauces, the CFS conducted this project in a bid to provide timely food safety information to consumers and the trade."

The CFS collected different kinds of hot pot food samples, including meat and meat products (such as beef balls and pork balls), aquatic and related products (such as fish balls, shrimp balls and cuttlefish balls), bean products (such as dried bean curds, tofu and soya bean sticks), noodles, soup bases, beverages (such as juice and sour plum drinks) and sauces from restaurants, fresh provision shops, supermarkets, groceries, market stalls and retailers (including online retailers) for chemical and microbiological testing.

Chemical tests included testing for colouring matters, preservatives and metallic contaminants, while microbiological tests for ready-to-eat food included testing for *Bacillus cereus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Salmonella* and coagulase-positive staphylococci.

The spokesman reminded the public that food safety is a shared responsibility and all those involved in the food supply chain – from farms and food manufacturers to food handlers and consumers – should put in place safety measures. He advised the trade not to entertain orders beyond handling capacity. The trade should also comply with legal requirements, follow Good Manufacturing Practice, use permitted food additives in an appropriate manner, and check the quality of food and ingredients upon delivery.

Furthermore, the spokesman advised food handlers and consumers to apply the following Five Keys to Food Safety when handling and preparing food:

Choose wisely

* Patronise reliable shops and select fresh and hygienic foods for hot pot ingredients;

- * For prepackaged foods or soup bases, check whether the packaging is intact and if the selected foods are expired; and
- * For online purchases, buy from reliable online shops with licences, and pay attention to the nature and potential risk associated with food items purchased online.

Keep clean

- * Observe good food, environmental and personal hygiene when preparing foods. All food ingredients must be thoroughly washed;
- * Poultry meat, pork and beef should be washed and sliced into thin strips for easy cooking;
- * For shellfish like scallops and geoduck, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove the internal organs;
- * Before eating and handling food ingredients, wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds; and
- * If there is a wound on the hand, cover it properly with a waterproof bandage or put on a glove before handling food.

Separate raw and cooked food

- * When shopping for hot pot ingredients, buy prepackaged foods first and raw meat, poultry and seafood last;
- * When shopping for or delivering food, raw foods should be kept separately from other ready-to-eat foods or cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination; and
- * Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process. Use separate sets of chopsticks and utensils with different appearances to handle raw and cooked foods and avoid contact between raw and cooked foods on the table to prevent cross-contamination.

Cook thoroughly

- * During the whole eating process, take thoroughly cooked food out of the pot only when the soup is boiling completely. Whenever water or soup is added to the pot, wait until it is boiling hot before adding food for cooking;
- * Shrimps should be fully cooked until the shells turn red and the flesh turns white and opaque. Shellfish should be boiled until their shells open and boiled for a further three to five minutes afterwards. Shucked oysters should be cooked in the boiling water for at least three minutes before consumption;
- * Do not consume cooked foods that are mixed with unpasteurized raw eggs to prevent pathogenic or antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms; and
- * Condiments such as soy sauce, vinegar, wine, chili and wasabi cannot kill bacteria or parasites that may be present in hot pot ingredients.

Safe temperature

- * Most hot pot ingredients should be stored in a refrigerator at 4 degrees Celsius or below, while frozen foods should be stored in a freezer at -18 degrees C or below; and

* Do not thaw frozen foods at room temperature, as bacteria may multiply rapidly in food. It is preferable to defrost frozen foods in a refrigerator, microwave oven or under running water. Thawed foods should be cooked as soon as possible.

"People should also pay attention to the amount of food consumed and follow a balanced diet when having hot pot meals. To reduce fat intake, it is preferable to choose a clear soup base as it contains less fat than bone, satay and mala soup bases. Eat vegetables first to fill oneself up and then meat to prevent overeating. Members of the public should also eat more vegetables with high dietary fibre and less fatty meats and animal offal, and use less sauce and condiments. If there are nutrition labels for hot pot products, make healthier food choices by referring to their nutritional contents and choosing those lower in fat, sodium and sugars," the spokesman said.



[DH's Yau Ma Tei Integrated Treatment Centre commences operation](#)

The Department of Health (DH) today (December 4) announced that Yau Ma Tei Integrated Treatment Centre (YMTITC) under the Special Preventive Programme commenced operation today on 7/F, Yau Ma Tei Jockey Club Polyclinic.

After service resources consolidation, the Special Preventive Programme of the DH has relocated the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Counselling and Testing Service and the Therapeutic Prevention Clinic to YMTITC with a view to providing more comprehensive services on prevention of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/AIDS to members of the public. The centre also plans to launch a comprehensive plan in the first quarter of 2024, which will provide one-stop services of personalised prevention of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections for specific higher-risk groups.

Over the past 10 years, the AIDS Counselling and Testing Service has provided around 24 200 counselling services and conducted around 11 700 HIV antibody tests. Therapeutic Prevention Clinic has also provided around 27 900 preventive treatment services to those who have exposure risks to hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus and HIV.

Through the resources consolidation and comprehensive services, the DH aims to further achieve the goal of preventing the above-mentioned infections.

For the opening hours and service details of YMTITC, please visit www.aids.gov.hk/english/itc/main.html. For enquiries, please call 2195 6588 during the opening hours.