

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on June 11 to noon today (June 12), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 193 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 58 388 samples of food imported from Japan (including 37 729 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 14 540 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ8: The “1+” mechanism for approval of new drugs

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

The new "1+" mechanism for approval of new drugs ("1+" mechanism) announced in the 2023 Policy Address formally came into effect on November 1 2023. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of applications for registration of new drugs under the "1+" mechanism that have been received, approved and rejected since the mechanism came into effect, and the main reasons for the applications being rejected;
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the total number of patients who have benefited from the new drugs approved for registration and use in Hong Kong under the "1+" mechanism; and
- (3) how the authorities will further promote the "1+" mechanism in the future?

Reply:

President,

"The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" (Policy Address) announced that the Government will leverage the medical strengths of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) with the long-term objective of establishing an authority that registers drugs and medical devices (medical products) under the "primary evaluation" approach, i.e. to directly approve applications for registration of drugs in Hong Kong based on clinical trial data without relying on registration approval from other drug regulatory authorities, and start approving applications for registration of medical devices. All these aim at accelerating the clinical use of new medical products so as to enhance healthcare standards, and foster the development of industries relating to the research and development (R&D) and clinical trials of medical products, developing Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

In the past six months or so following the announcement of the Policy Address, the HKSAR Government has implemented measures in all respects and achieved results.

Firstly, with the support and guidance of the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA), Hong Kong, China has become an observer of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) on October 31, 2023. This allows Hong Kong to familiarise itself with the latest developments in the drug regulation and take forward the development of the drug regulatory regime in Hong Kong, to further align Hong Kong with the World Health Organization (WHO)-Listed Authority.

Secondly, the HKSAR Government implemented a new mechanism for the approval of new drugs (the "1+" mechanism) on November 1, 2023. Under the "1+" mechanism, holders of registration from one of the reference drug regulatory authorities (instead of two) for new drugs could apply for registration in Hong Kong, on the condition that they could provide local clinical data that complies with the requirements and information recognised by local experts.

Thirdly, the HKSAR Government has established the Preparatory Office for the Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation (CMPR) under the Department of Health (DH) on June 5 this year. The Preparatory Office for the CMPR will comprehensively study and plan a regulatory and approval regime for medical products suitable for Hong Kong; and put forward proposals and steps for the establishment of the CMPR.

The HKSAR Government will continue to actively follow up on the relevant work, to attract more medical products enterprises, both locally and from around the world, to conduct R&D and clinical trials in Hong Kong, and build the capacity, recognition and status for ensuring that the eventual approval mechanism of medical products in Hong Kong would be widely recognised internationally and by the Mainland, and develop Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

In consultation with the DH and the Hospital Authority (HA), the reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong in relation to the "1+" mechanism is as follows:

(1) Under the "1+" mechanism, applications for registration of new drugs in the HKSAR that are beneficial for treatment of life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases, and are supported with local clinical data and scope of application recognised by local experts, are only required to submit approval from one reference drug regulatory authority (instead of the two).

The requirements for local clinical data and recognition by experts for application for registration (i.e. the "+" under the "1+" mechanism) will continue to ensure all drugs approved for registration fulfil the stringent requirements of safety, efficacy and quality. It will also strengthen the local capacity of drug evaluation and enhance the development of relevant software, hardware and expertise.

Since the commencement of the "1+" mechanism from November 1, 2023, till May 31, 2024, two new drugs for treating cancer have been approved under that mechanism. They are oral targeted drugs in different dosages for treating

metastatic colorectal cancer, for treatment of patients for whom conventional chemotherapy has been ineffective or inapplicable. Besides, the DH has received over 210 enquiries involving around 70 pharmaceutical companies. Several of these companies have expressed interest in applying for registration under the "1+" mechanism. Applications would be submitted once the necessary information is ready. At present, no new drug applications under the "1+" mechanism have been rejected.

(2) As at May 31, 2024, 19 patients in the HA are already using abovementioned new drugs for treating metastatic colorectal cancer registered under the "1+" mechanism. The HA will encourage drug manufacturers or suppliers to apply for local registration of unregistered drugs with ongoing needs and continue to liaise closely with the DH in the light of the "1+" mechanism. Through the "1+" mechanism, the number of drugs successfully registered would increase, thus enabling clinicians to enjoy a wider choice of drugs to support their service needs. Clinicians may initiate application for new drug listing on the HA Drug Formulary to the HA Drug Advisory Committee according to the clinical service needs. In addition, when a new drug can be registered in HKSAR under the "1+" mechanism and listed on the HA Drug Formulary and is proven to have significant clinical benefits, it may be considered to be covered by the Samaritan Fund or the Community Care Fund.

(3) After the announcement of the Policy Address, the HKSAR Government has been actively seizing various opportunities to publicise the initiatives related to the development of Hong Kong as an international health and medical innovation hub (including the "1+" mechanism) to counterparts locally and in other places.

Last year, the HKSAR Government attended the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Medical Products Administration Conference held in Zhuhai and the GBA Health Cooperation Conference held in Nansha, Guangzhou, respectively, and organised the 18th Joint Meeting of the Senior Health Officials of the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao in Hong Kong, as well as led a delegation to visit various ministries and commissions in the Mainland, including the National Health Commission and the NMPA.

On international exchanges, the Secretary for Health led a Hong Kong team as members of the Chinese delegation to attend the 77th World Health Assembly held by the WHO in Geneva, Switzerland, at the end of May this year. During the visit, the Secretary for Health visited two multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare enterprises, as well as met with the Director for Regulation and Prequalification of the WHO and representatives from the Clinical Trials Centre of the University Hospital Zurich, to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages and the latest development of health and medical innovation. The multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare enterprises welcomed the HKSAR Government's initiatives to develop into an international health and medical innovation hub.

At the same time, the DH has been actively promoting the "1+" mechanism through various channels and handling enquiries and expression of interest by the trade. In the past few months, the DH has issued letters to notify stakeholders (including relevant pharmaceutical associations and holders of

registration of pharmaceutical products) and organised briefings (seven online sessions and one session in on-site and online mixed mode have been conducted so far, with more than 500 participants from relevant pharmaceutical associations and stakeholders) for introducing the requirements and details of the new "1+" mechanism. The DH will proactively follow up on each and every enquiry and facilitate the trade in submitting applicants under the new mechanism.

LCQ21: Prevention and treatment of liver cancer

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

According to the data of the Hospital Authority (HA) in 2021, liver cancer is the fifth most common cancer in Hong Kong and the mortality rate is the third highest. Regarding the prevention and treatment of liver cancer, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that liver cancer patients are currently required to undergo oesophagogastroduodenoscopy before receiving drug treatment with Atezolizumab and Bevacizumab and the current annual demand for such screening service for liver cancer patients is approximately 600 to 800 attendances, accounting for only about 0.67 per cent to 0.89 per cent of the total number of such screening service provided by public hospitals in 2022-2023 based on the estimation of patient groups, but the existing waiting time for screening in public hospitals is very long, whether the authorities will consider setting up a waiting list for liver cancer patients or adopting a public-private partnership approach to help them get screened within three months, so that they can take medication as early as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it has been reported that as pointed out by doctors, hepatitis B can develop into cirrhosis or liver cancer if left untreated, and according to the survey results of the Department of Health last year, about 410 000 people in Hong Kong are infected with the hepatitis B virus, with over 40 per cent of them being unaware that they are carriers, and based on the information provided by patient groups, the cost of blood tests for hepatitis B is about \$30 each, whether the authorities will consider allocating additional resources to conduct at least one hepatitis B screening test for citizens born before 1986 in order to identify the carriers so that they can receive treatment as early as possible to prevent their conditions from deteriorating further and save public expenditure on liver cancer treatment;

if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Secretary for Health indicated that HA would explore new diagnostic and treatment options for liver cancer, including the introduction of technology for detecting the biomarkers of abnormal coagulation in a timely manner to provide patients with optimal treatment, whether the Government knows the timetable for the introduction of the relevant new detection technology by HA, and whether HA will arrange time this year to meet with stakeholders, including relevant experts, service providers and representatives of patient groups, etc., on such matters; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

The Government has been attaching great importance to the prevention and treatment of liver cancer. On the prevention of liver cancer, the Government set up the Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis (SCVH) in 2018 to advise on overall policy, targeted strategies and resource allocation for the prevention and control of viral hepatitis. Having examined the local situation and international experience, the SCVH recommended focused risk-based testing to start scaling up hepatitis B screening in Hong Kong. The six priority populations for testing who are at higher risk of hepatitis B infection include people who inject drugs, people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers, people in custody, and family members and sexual partners of people with chronic hepatitis B infection. According to the SCVH's recommendation, hepatitis C testing should be offered to relevant persons where appropriate.

Baseline and targeted regular hepatitis B and hepatitis C testing and management for people with HIV attending the designated HIV clinics of the DH and the HA have been in place for years. Babies attending Maternal and Child Health Centres of the DH who are born to mothers infected with hepatitis B have been offered post-vaccination serologic testing since January 2022. With effect from April 2022, all MSM and sex workers attending Social Hygiene Clinics of the DH are offered hepatitis B and hepatitis C screenings as part of the comprehensive screening for sexually transmitted infections. With effect from July 2023, the DH has launched risk-based viral hepatitis screenings at its Elderly Health Service, Woman Health Service, Families Clinics and Methadone Clinics. Members of the public may also consult their family doctors for arranging testing.

To enhance the overall management capacity of hepatitis B in Hong Kong, the HA and the DH formulated the Management of Adult Patients with Chronic Hepatitis B in Primary Care in September 2023, and a collaborative approach between primary healthcare and specialty for the management of hepatitis B

was piloted in the HA. The Primary Healthcare Office under the Health Bureau (being progressively transformed into the Primary Healthcare Commission) will also make reference to the strategies put forward by the SCVH, and continuously review the relevant services provided by the District Health Centres, so as to provide evidence-based, effective and efficient primary healthcare services to the community under the principle of district-based medical-social collaboration.

The SCVH will continue to keep in view local and international situations and advise the Government on feasible, sustainable and effective strategies related to the prevention and control of chronic hepatitis.

As for the treatment of liver cancer, the HA currently provides laboratory testing services to support clinical specialties on clinical diagnosis and monitoring of various diseases including liver cancer. The HA also provides oesophago-gastro-duodenoscopy (OGD) (commonly referred to as gastroscopy) services and treatment to liver cancer patients with clinical needs as necessary and appropriate. For liver cancer patients who need to receive drug treatment with Atezolizumab and Bevacizumab, the HA will generally arrange them to undergo the OGD to reduce the risk of complications when receiving the relevant drug treatment. At present, the HA will arrange relevant investigation as soon as possible according to the patient's treatment need and schedule, and will, subject to the patient's condition, start treatment early during the waiting period for the investigation to avoid delay. Patients may also choose to undergo relevant investigation in the private sector.

When introducing new laboratory testing services, the HA will take into account relevant factors such as clinical benefits, safety and efficacy of the new technology, availability of manpower and expertise, capacity and technical adaptability of the laboratory. The HA will explore new diagnostic and treatment options, including the feasibility and suitable timing of introducing technology for detecting the biomarkers of abnormal coagulation (PIVKA-II) in order to provide patients with optimal treatment. When new diagnostic or treatment option is launched, the healthcare team will liaise with suitable patients in a timely manner for relevant follow-up.

When exploring new Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programmes, the HA will, based on its service demand and in line with the Government's direction of healthcare development, explore the need and feasibility of introducing other PPP programmes according to the principle of strategic purchasing of healthcare services, so as to meet the public's demand for healthcare services. In the process, the HA will communicate with the public and patient groups, work closely with the stakeholders, and consider various factors such as evolving service demand, potential complexity of the PPP programmes, capacity and readiness of the private sector, and the impact on public healthcare manpower and private healthcare charges.

LCQ4: New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Carmen Kan and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

On December 19 last year, the Government announced the details of the new Capital Investment Entrant Scheme (CIES). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that under the requirements of the new CIES, each eligible applicant must invest at least \$30 million in permissible investment assets, of which \$3 million must be invested in the CIES Investment Portfolio set up and managed by the Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited (HKIC), how HKIC selects investment targets for the Portfolio, and whether HKIC will match the funds it manages with the Portfolio for investment in the Portfolio;

(2) of the number of enquiries received and the respective numbers of applications received and approved by the authorities since the launch of the new CIES in March this year, together with a breakdown by the applicants' place of domicile; the average time taken to vet and approve such applications; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that the new CIES requires the co-operation of stakeholders such as financial institutions, of the progress made by the authorities in interfacing with various stakeholders and the work that has been done in terms of international promotion, publicity and explanation, and set out the relevant information in a table?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK), the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited (HKIC), the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme (New CIES) has been launched for application from March 1, 2024, with the aim to further enrich the talent pool and attract new capital to Hong Kong. Eligible applicants must invest a minimum of HK\$30 million in the permissible investment assets, including investing a minimum of HK\$27 million in the permissible financial assets, non-residential real estate (subject to a cap of HK\$10 million), and placing HK\$3 million into a new Capital Investment Entrant Scheme Investment Portfolio (the Portfolio).

The Portfolio will be set up and managed by the HKIC for making

investment in companies/projects with a Hong Kong nexus, with a view to supporting the development of innovation and technology industries and other strategic industries, particularly start-up projects, that are beneficial to the long term development of Hong Kong's economy. The HK\$3 million placed into the Portfolio will be subject to lock-up. Capital preservation and dividend distribution are not guaranteed. The arrangements for the Portfolio will be announced in the third quarter of this year.

(2) Under the New CIES, InvestHK is responsible for assessing whether the applications fulfill the financial requirements, and the ImmD is responsible for assessing the applications for visa/entry permit and extension of stay, etc. After InvestHK's verification that an applicant fulfils the Net Asset Requirement, the applicant may submit an entry application to the ImmD for visa/entry permit to enter Hong Kong for residence (entry application). After assessment from the immigration perspectives, the ImmD may grant "approval-in-principle" for the applicant to enter Hong Kong as a visitor for not more than 180 days for making the committed investment. Upon the applicant's completion of the committed investment and InvestHK's verification that the applicant meets the investment requirements, the ImmD may grant formal approval of the entry application for the applicant and his/her dependants to stay in Hong Kong for not more than 24 months. Thereafter, the applicant and his/her dependants may apply for extension of stay for not more than three years, which may be further extended for not more than three years upon the expiry of each period, provided that the applicant continues to meet the requirements under the New CIES. The applicant and his/her dependants, who upon a period of continuous ordinary residence in Hong Kong of not less than seven years, may apply for becoming Hong Kong permanent residents in accordance with the law.

Since the launch of the New CIES on March 1 up to end-May, InvestHK received over 3 000 enquiries (mainly from potential applicants and service providers) and over 250 applications. The Net Asset Assessment for over 100 applications was approved, including those from Europe, the United States and Singapore, etc. The ImmD granted "approval-in-principle" for over 40 applications, enabling the applicants to enter Hong Kong as visitors to make the committed investment. Details of the assessment of the applications are set out in Annex 1. If all applications received are approved, it is estimated that they will bring more than HK\$7.5 billion to Hong Kong, enhancing the developmental strengths of Hong Kong's asset and wealth management industry.

InvestHK and the ImmD will process applications expeditiously. The time needed for processing individual applications varies, depending on the information on the asset types as provided by applicants therein and the adequacy of supporting documents, etc. For applications for Net Asset Assessment, subject to sufficient information and supporting documents provided by applicants, InvestHK will generally complete the assessment in around three weeks. Regarding "approval-in-principle" for entry, upon receipt of all needed documents, the ImmD will generally complete the assessment in around three weeks.

(3) We are confident that the New CIES will be well-received by investors

interested in investing and pursuing development in Hong Kong, hence channelling funds to Hong Kong's capital market and strengthening Hong Kong's status as an international asset and wealth management hub. To connect with stakeholders such as financial institutions and facilitate their better understanding of the details of the New CIES, InvestHK has organised 24 briefings for around 2 000 participants from various sectors of the financial services industry, covering the banking, securities, funds and insurance sectors as well as the professional bodies of the accounting and legal sectors as detailed in Annex 2. Industry stakeholders generally welcome the launch of the New CIES. In particular, service providers for high-net-worth individuals or family offices are positive towards their business prospects brought by the New CIES. InvestHK will continue to address their questions and publish frequently asked questions on the New CIES website in promoting the effective implementation of the New CIES.

InvestHK will continue to co-ordinate with relevant Government departments in promoting the New CIES, including reaching out to various business associations, international stakeholders and family offices. In 2024-25, InvestHK will launch extensive publicity to target client groups through the Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses as well as the Talents and Investment Promotion Divisions (which base in the Economic and Trade Offices around the globe), and plans to further promote the New CIES to industry practitioners such as private banks, lawyers and accounting firms through the Private Wealth Management Association in the third quarter of 2024, thereby enhancing their awareness of the New CIES. InvestHK is also planning to promote the New CIES as well as Hong Kong's competitiveness and unique advantages as a family office hub by means of physical events and online seminars in the Mainland and overseas places.

Thank you, President.

LCQ9: Consolidating Hong Kong's position as international maritime centre

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

In April this year, the Transport and Logistics Bureau issued a post in social platform, pointing out that the comprehensive strength of Hong Kong's port is multidimensional and should not be measured solely by its container throughput ranking, and that Hong Kong remains a leading international

maritime centre. Regarding the consolidation of Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) apart from the 2023 Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Centre Development Index Report mentioned in the aforesaid post, whether the authorities have obtained other information relating to maritime or port rankings (including but not limited to the container throughput rankings of ports in various places provided by Lloyd's List, an authoritative media outlet in the international maritime industry, and Alphaliner, a maritime consultancy); if so, of Hong Kong's ranking in the past five years;
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the total number of port and maritime-related companies in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, together with a breakdown by scope of business;
- (3) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of maritime arbitration cases conducted in Hong Kong and the total amount in dispute involved in such cases in each of the past five years; whether it knows the ranking of the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre among arbitration institutions worldwide in each of the past five years;
- (4) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of local and overseas insurance companies engaged in marine hull insurance business in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, as well as the total amount of related premiums and their percentage in the total amount of related premiums worldwide;
- (5) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of ship finance transactions conducted in Hong Kong in each of the past five years and the total financing amount involved, as well as the percentage of such total amount in the total amount of ship financing worldwide;
- (6) whether it has compiled statistics on the gross tonnage of Hong Kong-registered vessels in each of the past five years; whether it knows Hong Kong's global ranking in terms of the number of vessels registered in each of the past five years;
- (7) whether it has compiled statistics on (i) the average number of international container liner services provided in Hong Kong per week, and (ii) the number of destinations worldwide connected by Hong Kong's international container liner services in each of the past five years;
- (8) as it has been reported that due to the realignment of global supply chains and shipping alliances this year, some shipping routes have ceased to call at the port of Hong Kong, whether the authorities have assessed the far-reaching implications of the adjustment of global shipping routes, and the targeted measures they intend to take to cope with the crisis facing Hong Kong's maritime industry; and
- (9) as it is learnt that the land leases of Container Terminals 1 to 9 in Kwai Tsing Container Terminals will expire in 2047, whether the authorities have negotiated with the terminal operators the arrangements after 2047 in order to plan the way forward for Hong Kong's development as an international

maritime centre; if so, of the progress and details; if not, the time planned to conduct negotiation?

Reply:

President,

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is committed to reinforcing Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area have shown express support to the position of the Hong Kong port and the development of high value-added maritime services in Hong Kong for better integration into the country's development course. The Transport and Logistics Bureau promulgated the Action Plan on Maritime and Port Development Strategy on December 20, 2023, which sets out 10 strategies and 32 action measures in four directions to support the sustainable development needs of the maritime and port industry in Hong Kong, enhance the long-term competitiveness of the industry, as well as consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre.

Having consulted the relevant departments, our reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok is as follows:

(1) Hong Kong was ranked fourth globally in the 2023 Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Centre Development Index Report, reflecting Hong Kong's comprehensive strengths as a leading international maritime centre, with a high-quality maritime services cluster, excellent business environment, and ideal port conditions. The relevant global rankings of Hong Kong's shipping and port industry are as follows:

Year	Lloyd's List Top 100 container ports in the world ranking (Note 1)	Alphaliner Top 30 container ports in the world ranking (Note 2)	Ranking of flag of registration of merchant fleet (Note 3)
2019	8	8	4
2020	9	9	4
2021	9	10	4
2022	9	10	4
2023	Not yet released (Note 4)	11	4

Note 1: Data from the Lloyd's List

Note 2: Data from the Alphaliner

Note 3: Data from the UN Trade and Development

Note 4: Based on the calculation method of the Lloyd's List, an authoritative media in the international maritime industry, it is estimated that Hong

Kong's container throughput ranked 10th in 2023 globally

(2) The number of port and maritime-related companies (by sector) is as follows (Note 5):

Sector	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022
1. Port and shipping	860	850	840	870	930
2. Maritime business services	280	290	300	290	280
Overall (Note 6)	1 140	1 140	1 130	1 160	1 210

Note 5: Estimated figures

Note 6: Figures may not add up to the total due to rounding

(3) The Baltic and International Maritime Council designated Hong Kong as one of the four arbitration venues in September 2020, alongside London, New York, and Singapore. A distinctive feature of arbitration is its confidential nature. In order to better safeguard the confidentiality of arbitrations, the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) restricts parties from publishing, disclosing or communicating any information relating to the arbitral proceedings or the award, unless where the parties agreed otherwise, where a party needs to protect or pursue own legal right or interest, or where a party discloses information relating to the arbitration when enforcing or challenging the award. In addition, maritime arbitration generally adopts the form of ad hoc arbitration, the procedures of which are wholly "administered" by the arbitrator(s) and the parties; if no party makes application to the court for enforcement or setting aside of arbitral award, any third party to the parties to the proceedings will not have any knowledge of the ad hoc arbitral proceedings that have been conducted. Therefore, public information and statistics concerning arbitration activities in Hong Kong are relatively limited. According to information made public by the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC), the number of maritime arbitration related cases submitted in Hong Kong is as follows (Note 7):

Year	Number of arbitration cases submitted in Hong Kong	Share of maritime-related arbitration cases
2019	308	14.4%
2020	318	18.6%
2021	277	17.0%
2022	344	12.5%
2023	281	16.0%

Note 7: Data from the HKIAC

The above statistics do not cover all maritime arbitration cases conducted in Hong Kong, which include maritime arbitration cases administered by other arbitral institutions, ad hoc maritime arbitration cases, maritime arbitration cases not seated in Hong Kong but heard in Hong Kong only, etc. Therefore, the above statistics can only partially reflect the position of maritime arbitration activities in Hong Kong. The HKIAC does not provide in its public information any statistics on the total dispute amount of maritime arbitration in Hong Kong.

The HKSAR Government does not maintain an official record of the ranking of global arbitral institutions. However, according to the 2021 International Arbitration Survey published by Queen Mary University of London, the HKIAC is the third most preferred arbitral institution worldwide.

(4) The number of local and non-local insurance companies engaged in the marine insurance business in Hong Kong and the total gross marine insurance premiums written are set out below (Note 8):

Year	Number of local insurers (as at year end)	Number of non-local insurers (as at year end)	Gross Premiums (HK\$ million)
2019	54	35	2,411.6
2020	54	33	2,764.5
2021	52	32	2,900.8
2022	52	31	3,074.0
2023	51	30	3,444.8 (Note 9)

Note 8: Data from the Insurance Authority

Note 9: Provisional figure

(5) Of the total amount of loans and advances provided by authorised institutions relating to transport and transport equipment for use in Hong Kong, the amount related to shipping is set out below (Note 10):

End-December	Loans and advances (HK\$ million)
2019	119,713
2020	129,405
2021	122,175
2022	98,769
2023	90,146

Note 10: Data from the Hong Kong Monetary Authority

(6) The gross tonnage of ships registered in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's global ranking in terms of gross tonnage are as follows:

Hong Kong Shipping Registry		
Year	Gross tonnage ('000 tons) (Note 11)	World ranking (in terms of gross tonnage) (Note 12)
2019	127 448	4
2020	129 723	4
2021	131 147	4
2022	126 615	4
2023	128 120	4

Note 11: Data from the Marine Department

Note 12: Data from the UN Trade and Development

(7) The average weekly international container vessel sailings and the number of destinations for Hong Kong are as follows:

Hong Kong international container vessels		
Year	Average weekly sailings	Number of destinations
2019	300	420
2020	280	610
2021	270	590
2022	240	460
2023	320	490

(8) and (9) The Hong Kong Port (HKP) is renowned for its high efficiency and is one of the busiest international container ports in the world, which provides frequent and comprehensive liner services with over 300 international container vessel sailings per week, connecting nearly 500 destinations worldwide. This, coupled with the first-class airport and land boundary crossings and transport facilities, makes Hong Kong a regional hub with an extensive service network. The HKSAR Government has been maintaining communication with container terminal operators and the shipping industry to keep abreast of the latest market developments, including the operation and planning cycles of the routes of major shipping alliances around the world. In the short term, increasing local cargo volume is the key to attracting more international transshipment business to Hong Kong. We will utilise the advantages of Hong Kong's world-class multimodal transport network and take advantage of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to strengthen logistics connections with western Guangdong, expand cargo sources, and open up new opportunities for the maritime and port industry. We will also actively work with the industry to enhance the international connectivity of the HKP in handling cargos to and from more places. We will pragmatically explore with

ports and cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) where we enjoy complementary advantage, so as to attain the goal of consolidating Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre as well as bolstering the overall throughput of the GBA port cluster. Currently, Container Terminals 1 to 9 within the Kwai Tsing Container Terminals are being run commercially by five private operators respectively under various land leases. The HKSAR Government will handle the relevant land lease matters in due course.