

11 building plans approved in October

The Buildings Department approved 11 building plans in October, with two on Hong Kong Island, three in Kowloon and six in the New Territories.

Of the approved plans, three were for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, three were for commercial developments, two were for factory and industrial developments, and three were for community services developments.

In the same month, consent was given for works to start on 11 building projects which, when completed, will provide 10 280 square metres of gross floor area for domestic use involving 160 units, and 82 316 sq m of gross floor area for non-domestic use. The department has received notification of commencement of superstructure works for five building projects.

The department also issued 14 occupation permits, with two on Hong Kong Island, five in Kowloon and seven in the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation, the gross floor area for domestic use was 207 034 sq m involving 3 715 units, and 37 190 sq m was for non-domestic use.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in October totalled about \$21.3 billion.

In addition, four demolition consents were issued.

The department received 2 603 reports about unauthorised building works (UBWs) in October and issued 809 removal orders on UBWs.

The full version of the Monthly Digest for October can be viewed on the Buildings Department's homepage (www.bd.gov.hk).

“Cross-boundary Health Record” and “Personal Folder” functions of eHealth to be extended to two dental institutions under Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme

starting from this Thursday

The Health Bureau (HHB) announced today (December 17) that the functions of the "Cross-boundary Health Record" and "Personal Folder" in the eHealth mobile application (eHealth App) will be extended to the two dental institutions in Shenzhen under the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme, namely, Shenzhen C.K.J Stomatological Hospital (CKJSH) and Dental Bauhinia Specialty Service Center (Shenzhen)/Dental Bauhinia General Care Center (Shenzhen) starting from this Thursday (December 19). In other words, the two functions will fully cover all medical institutions providing integrated services and dental services under the Pilot Scheme starting from the day after tomorrow, with a view to enhancing the continuity of medical care for Hong Kong citizens through facilitating their secure and convenient use of electronic health records (eHRs) across the boundary.

Starting from this Thursday, eligible elderly persons who plan to use Elderly Health Care Vouchers to seek medical consultations at the two aforementioned dental institutions can apply for their eHRs deposited in eHealth over the past three years through the "Cross-boundary Health Record" function in advance. Upon verification of an elderly person's authorisation, a "File QR Code" and "Password QR Code" will be sent to the elderly person via the eHealth App. Healthcare professionals can then access and browse the relevant eHRs by scanning the two QR codes presented by the elderly person at the time of consultation at relevant dental institutions to assist in diagnoses and treatment. The verification of applications and preparation for eHRs take no more than 24 hours. Elderly persons should submit their applications one day prior to their consultations at the relevant dental institutions to ensure that their eHRs will be ready for use at the time of the consultations.

Moreover, elderly persons can deposit medical-related records obtained during consultations received in medical institutions outside Hong Kong into their eHealth personal accounts through the "Personal Folder" function to facilitate storage and use of personal medical-related records obtained in and outside Hong Kong, including access by authorised healthcare providers in Hong Kong through eHealth during follow-up consultations.

The HHB has already set up support stations at the Shenzhen New Frontier United Family Hospital (NFUFH) and CKJSH to assist Hong Kong citizens in better understanding how to use the relevant functions. Citizens may visit the [eHealth thematic website](#) for more information.

The Government piloted the new "Cross-boundary Health Record" and "Personal Folder" functions of the eHealth App at the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital in July this year; and extended the functions to the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University; Zhongshan Chen Xinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine; Nansha Division of the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University; Dongguan Tungwah Hospital; and NFUFH under the Pilot Scheme from September. The feedback has been positive. Taking into account the implementation

experience, the Government will further streamline the workflow and enhance the user experience in a bid to support citizens' cross-boundary healthcare needs in a more effective manner.

Appointments to Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service

The Government announced today (December 17) that the Chief Executive has reappointed Dr Clement Chen Cheng-jen as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service (Judicial Committee). The Chief Executive has also appointed Ms Dilys Chau Suet-fung, and reappointed Ms Miranda Kwok Pui-fong and Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing as members of the Judicial Committee. The four appointees will serve for a period of two years with effect from January 1, 2025.

Ms Cecilia Lee Sau-wai, existing member of the Judicial Committee, will retire on December 31 this year. "We would like to thank Ms Lee for her invaluable contributions to the Judicial Committee over the years," the spokesman said.

The Judicial Committee is tasked to advise and make recommendations to the Chief Executive on matters concerning the salary and conditions of service of judges and judicial officers.

The membership list with effect from January 1, 2025, is as follows:

Chairman

Dr Clement Chen Cheng-jen

Members

Ms Dilys Chau Suet-fung
Ms Daisy Ho Chiu-fung
Mr Stephen Hung Wan-shun
Ms Miranda Kwok Pui-fong
Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing
Mr Jason Pow Wing-nin

Remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (December 17):

Reporter: Good morning. Two questions. Can you share any tourist data since restrictions on Shenzhen residents visiting Hong Kong were lifted about two weeks ago, and what's the expectation for tourist arrivals over Christmas and New Year? And also, a public consultation on the upcoming financial Budget is now under way, so what expectations do you have for the Financial Secretary in tackling the rising deficit? Thank you.

Chief Executive: The resumption of multiple-entry visits for visitors from Shenzhen is seeing very good returns of tourists from the Mainland, particularly from Shenzhen. We can see the rise in figures of tourists, particularly over the weekend, which regularly sees an increase of between 20 and 30 per cent. I think this trend will continue, particularly when we will have Christmas and New Year coming very soon, and we will have a fireworks display for the countdown. We have to get fully prepared for this opportunity. With the increase in the number of tourists coming to Hong Kong from different parts of the world, in particular those from Shenzhen, we have to ensure that, first of all, we will treat them nicely, so that they all have a good experience and will think of coming back. I have already seen different sectors having already rolled out measures and indicated that they will be grasping these golden opportunities to ensure that tourists will be well taken care of and that they will do more businesses.

For the Government, we will ensure that the whole arrangement for tourists to come to Hong Kong will be orderly and safe, and that it will be a pleasant experience, particularly when they go through the boundary control points. We have already started the inter-departmental mechanism – particularly, the Chief Secretary for Administration has already organised a high-level meeting on Thursday to take care of all the transportation and boundary-crossing point arrangements. The proposed arrangements include ensuring that the Shenzhen Bay Port will be open 24 hours, that the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port will operate 24 hours smoothly with sufficient manpower and transportation arrangements, and that the Lo Wu Control Point will be open up to 2am, so as to allow visitors from the Mainland who may have to cross the boundary after the fireworks display to be able to do it conveniently. In the event that they cannot meet the 2am closing time, we have already arranged special transportation between Sheung Shui and San Tin for their use of the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port. We will be on high alert for the different arrangements. The Lo Wu Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre will be in operation, so will the Security Bureau's Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre, as well as the Transport Department's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre – they will all be in operation, and particularly the Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre will be in operation 24 hours.

The Government has been in liaison with different organisations, particularly those in the transportation and tourism industry, to ensure that everybody is ready and geared up, so as to make sure that things will happen smoothly, in an orderly manner, and safely to ensure the best experience for our visitors. All business sectors should grasp this opportunity to ensure that we will be having a very good Christmas and New Year arrangement for both visitors as well as Hong Kong people.

Regarding the Budget, the consultation has started this Sunday (December 15), and a lot of advice and opinions have already been provided. The Financial Secretary has been doing the Budget consultation for a number of years, and he will, of course, be taking serious attention to all the opinions and suggestions that are raised and examine the pros and cons, and also the reasoning and thinking behind, so as to ensure that the eventual Budget will satisfy the overall needs of Hong Kong. Yes, we have a budget deficit, but already we have said that we will try to increase income and also reduce expenditure as well, and promote economic growth, so the businesses will make more money, as a result of which the Government will also have more income. I am sure that the Financial Secretary will be paying heed to the different opinions and analyse all the opinions very objectively and thoroughly to ensure that the best Budget is prepared for Hong Kong.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)

Record high numbers of companies and start-ups affirm Hong Kong's increasing attractiveness to businesses

According to the results of the 2024 Annual Survey of Companies in Hong Kong with Parent Companies Located outside Hong Kong and the 2024 Startup Survey released by the Government today (December 17), the number of companies in Hong Kong with overseas or Mainland parent companies rose to 9 960 in 2024, while the number of start-ups in Hong Kong increased to 4 694, both reaching record highs. The results demonstrate that Hong Kong is becoming increasingly attractive to businesses and remains an ideal place for Mainland and overseas enterprises to set up or expand their operations.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, said, "With our unique advantages under 'one country, two systems', Hong Kong is the best two-way platform for overseas enterprises to tap into the Mainland market and for Mainland enterprises to go global, and therefore is

their prime destination for investment. While factors such as global economic uncertainties, a shift in market behaviour after the epidemic and geopolitics have hindered enterprises' global expansion plans, Hong Kong's business-friendly environment has maintained its unique advantages and attractiveness, offering enterprises vast opportunities.

"Apart from the above two local surveys that fully demonstrate the confidence shown by overseas and Mainland enterprises in Hong Kong's future development, Hong Kong was also recently ranked among the best in the reports by various international institutes. We were again ranked by the Fraser Institute as the world's freest economy, and remained the fourth globally in terms of inward foreign direct investment recipient in the World Investment Report 2024. Coupled with the various policy initiatives covered by the Chief Executive in his 2024 Policy Address, as well as recent policy breakthroughs, including the liberalisation measures under the amended Agreement on Trade in Services under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, the automatic extension of land leases for 50 years to beyond 2047, and visa and travel facilitation measures, Hong Kong's appeal as a global hub for business and investment is further enhanced.

"On another note, the number of start-ups in Hong Kong continues to grow at an impressive rate, reflecting that the Government's proactive implementation of various support measures in recent years have been effective in nurturing an ideal start-up ecosystem for local start-ups to thrive," Mr Yau added.

The number of Hong Kong companies with overseas or Mainland parent companies has significantly increased along with the city's continuous recovery in the post-epidemic era. According to the 2024 Annual Survey of Companies in Hong Kong with Parent Companies Located outside Hong Kong, jointly conducted by Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) and the Census and Statistics Department, there were 9 960 companies in Hong Kong with parent companies located outside Hong Kong in 2024, representing an increase of 10 per cent which amounted to over 920 companies when compared with that of last year. The number of people employed reached 493 000, recording an increase of 5 per cent year on year.

Analysed by the location of the parent company, in 2024, the Mainland was ranked first (2 620), followed by Japan (1 430), the United States (1 390), the United Kingdom (720) and Singapore (520).

Mr Yau pointed out that, "Companies from the Mainland continued to top the list, proving once again that Hong Kong is Mainland enterprises' preferred platform to go global. As for the continued growth in the number of companies from overseas, it indicates that businesses remain pragmatic about business expansion and are sensibly choosing Hong Kong as their base to expand in Asia despite geopolitical headwinds. As the only city in the world where the global advantages and the China advantages come together in a single economy, Hong Kong will continue to proactively play the bridging roles as a 'super connector' and a 'super value-adder', attracting overseas enterprises to invest in the Mainland while assisting Mainland enterprises to

tap into overseas markets, thereby creating stronger impetus for growth in Hong Kong's trade and economic development."

Analysed by major line of business in Hong Kong in 2024, among those 9 960 companies, the import/export trade, wholesale and retail sector topped the list (4 730), followed by the financing and banking sector (2 020) and the professional, business and education services sector (1 530).

In addition, according to the results of InvestHK's 2024 Startup Survey, start-ups in Hong Kong continued to flourish with a record high number of 4 694, up by 10 per cent from last year, fully illustrating the attractiveness of Hong Kong to start-up founders. These start-ups engaged 17 651 persons, representing an increase of 7 per cent compared to last year's figure.

These start-ups spanned across different sectors, such as financial technology; information, computer and technology; electronic commerce; education and learning; and data analytics, etc. Notably, the number of start-ups in the health and medical sector as well as the sustainable technology/green technology sector recorded significant year-on-year increases of 54 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

The results of the two surveys have been uploaded to the websites of the Census and Statistics Department (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1110004&scode=360) and InvestHK (www.startmeup.hk/about-us/hong-kongs-startup-ecosystem/) respectively.