

Speech by CE at 8th ICAC Symposium (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the 8th ICAC Symposium today (May 22):

Honourable Deputy Secretary Fu Kui (Deputy Secretary of Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and Vice Chairman of National Commission of Supervision), Honourable Director Zheng Yanxiong (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Honourable Director Dong Jingwei (Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Commissioner Cui Jianchun (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR), Deputy Political Commissar Wang Zhaobing (Deputy Political Commissar of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison), Executive Director Ghada Waly (Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Commissioner Woo Ying-ming (Commissioner of ICAC), Consuls-general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all. It is a great pleasure to be here today to open this eighth ICAC Symposium, and to welcome each and every one of you – more than 500 high-profile professionals from 60 jurisdictions from six continents. You are anti-corruption law enforcers and experts, judges, prosecutors, legal practitioners, government regulators and officials, academics and more.

You are here, over these next three days, to hear and consider promising ways forward under the theme of "Charting a New Path to Combat Corruption". You are here, as well, for the 11th Annual Conference of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

Despite your wide-ranging backgrounds, your goal is shared: how best to prevent and combat corruption, a problem that impedes the development, stability and well-being of societies and peoples around the world.

This Symposium is co-hosted by Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption, the ICAC, and the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

As you all know, our ICAC is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. For half a century, the ICAC has championed the fight against corruption in Hong Kong. It has also worked closely with its counterparts around the world to tackle corruption. Indeed, the ICAC currently holds the presidency of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong maintains a robust regulatory regime in line with international standards, and is renowned globally for its clean and efficient government, level-

playing field for doing business, sound rule of law, a judiciary with independent judicial power, and zero tolerance for corruption. We are also at the forefront of the international fight against corruption.

International surveys consistently confirm Hong Kong's success in tackling corruption. The World Justice Project rated us ninth, overall, in "absence of corruption", out of more than 140 jurisdictions in 2023. Similarly, Hong Kong was ranked 14th out of 180 countries and territories in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index last year. These and other standings underscore Hong Kong's clean governance, as well as the ICAC's laudable anti-corruption efforts.

The people of Hong Kong substantiate these findings. The latest ICAC Annual Survey shows that Hong Kong citizens have a zero tolerance for corruption, with 98 per cent of survey respondents indicating that they had not personally encountered corruption in the past 12 months.

It is a priority of the Hong Kong SAR Government to sustain our pioneering role in combating corruption. We are pleased, and proud, to back the ICAC in widening its international network and co-operating with overseas counterparts.

We are committed, as well, to ensuring that our legal framework and anti-corruption institutions, as well as public and private sector governance, reflect the highest international obligations and standards, particularly those set out in the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

China, our country, has designated the ICAC as an authority under the Convention, helping other economies under the Convention develop and implement preventive measures. And the ICAC, in its work as president of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities since 2022, has overseen the Association's membership soar from 120 agencies in different countries and regions to more than 170 now. This phenomenal growth has allowed the Association to extend its work internationally.

In just a moment, the ICAC will conclude the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the UN (United Nations) Office on Drugs and Crime and the anti-corruption authorities of Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

The presence of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, as guardian of the Convention, and the national anti-corruption authorities of various countries here in Hong Kong to finalise bilateral agreements with the ICAC, exemplify the international co-operation and exchange that can make a difference, regionally and globally.

I congratulate the signatories on their impressive progress, and I look forward to more anti-graft partnerships between Hong Kong and other international jurisdictions.

Ladies and gentlemen, corruption knows no boundaries. It is a plague on

different economies, institutions and communities. It has a disrupting, and dispiriting, impact on every aspect of people's lives. Everyone here is fully aware of that overwhelming reality, because everyone here is working, hard, smart and relentlessly, to overcome it.

In marking International Anti-Corruption Day, last December, the United Nations reiterated that "only through co-operation and the involvement of each and every person and institution, can we overcome the negative impact of this crime."

And it's why this Symposium was initiated, 24 years ago: to bring economies, governments, institutions and businesses together, imbued with the indomitable spirit that we will – that we must – prevail.

â€‹Your participation in this Symposium speaks of our collective determination.

I'm grateful to the ICAC for once again organising this important international gathering.

I wish you all three days of inspired Symposium sessions and intelligence insights, of rewarding networking and future collaborations.

And when you need a break, Hong Kong is waiting for you. Hong Kong is way more than an international business centre with a clean government. This is, after all, a world city – and the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. It is a city where you work hard and also play hard.

Enjoy your time in Hong Kong! Thank you.

Red flags hoisted at Silver Mine Bay Beach and Pui O Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 22) that according to the Beach Water Quality Forecast System of the Environmental Protection Department, the Beach Water Quality Forecast Index of Silver Mine Bay Beach and Pui O Beach in Islands District is 4, which means the water quality is "Very Poor". The red flag has been hoisted and beachgoers are advised not to enter the water to safeguard their health.

LD holds online exhibition on Employment Ordinance and Minimum Wage Ordinance

The Labour Department (LD) is holding an online exhibition from 9am today (May 22) to 6pm May 24 on the LD's website disseminating information about the Employment Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance to enhance the public's understanding of employment rights and benefits.

Consolidating the content of physical exhibitions held by the LD, the online exhibition features the main provisions of the Employment Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance, employment rights and benefits for foreign domestic helpers, as well as good human resource management measures. The relevant hyperlink is www.labour.gov.hk/common/Online_exhibition_EO_MW0/index_en.html.

Government responds to concerns over internship arrangements for local dental graduates

In response to the concerns expressed by individual Legislative Council (LegCo) Members and attendees of the deputation session of the Bills Committee on the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 (the Bill), the Government further elaborated today (May 21) on the background and proposal on requiring local dental undergraduates to undergo a one-year internship after their graduation.

The proposed internship arrangement aims to enhance the clinical experience of local dental graduates through on-job training, so as to address the concerns raised by the Dental Council of Hong Kong (DCHK) on multiple occasions over the severe lack of clinical experience among the graduates of the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) programme of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) in its accreditation exercises. This serves to uphold the standard of dental services in Hong Kong and safeguard the wellbeing of patients.

Accreditation of local BDS programme

The DCHK is a statutory body established under the Dentists Registration Ordinance (Cap. 156) (the Ordinance), which is responsible for handling dentists registration, conducting licensing examinations, and maintaining the ethics, professional standards and discipline of the dental profession. In particular, the DCHK may, pursuant to section 8 of the Ordinance, specify in the Schedule any recognised dental undergraduate programme offered by local universities. Graduates of such recognised programmes are exempted from taking the licensing examination and allowed to become registered dentists direct. At present, the HKU BDS programme is listed as a recognised programme. The DCHK regularly conducts accreditation exercises on the HKU BDS programme to ensure that such graduates can meet the required professional standards.

Since 2012, the DCHK has been conducting an accreditation exercise of the HKU BDS programme every five years. The accreditation exercise is assisted by a Visiting Team comprising experienced local dentists and overseas experts, who would conduct on-site visits to the HKU Faculty of Dentistry (the Faculty) and exchange views with the Faculty's management, teaching staff and students to review the programme on various aspects. After each accreditation exercise, the DCHK examines the Visiting Team's findings and issues an accreditation report to the Faculty.

The DCHK issued two accreditation reports in 2014 and 2019 respectively. In the first accreditation report, it was revealed that the Faculty could not provide complete records for monitoring the training of BDS students' clinical skills and failed to supplement any quantitative account which was acceptable to the DCHK. As for the second accreditation exercise, the DCHK observed that the Faculty would need to enhance the training of clinical skills and clinical experience of local BDS students. Consequently, the DCHK maintained its recognition to the HKU BDS programme only on the condition that the Faculty would ensure proper implementation of its relevant recommendations and submit annual reports on the follow-up measures.

In November 2022, the Government was informed by the DCHK that the third accreditation exercise was being conducted. However, based on the information submitted by the Faculty, the DCHK found that the Faculty's implementation of the DCHK's recommendations in the previous two accreditation exercises was far from satisfactory. The implementation of clinical training in the curriculum was significantly inadequate in particular, and the clinical experience in performing dental procedures varied greatly among local dental graduates. The Faculty was also unable to provide any evidence showing that all graduates had completed the required number of clinical practice cases for all essential dental procedures. Moreover, records presented by the Faculty even showed that clinical experience of some students were severely inadequate, with individual students having zero actual experience in performing certain dental procedures.

The DCHK advised the Government again in February 2023 that the aforementioned situation revealed the structural problems of the clinical training offered in the HKU BDS programme. As the issue on insufficient clinical experience among graduates had yet to be ameliorated, the DCHK would seriously consider whether it would still be appropriate to continue

accepting the HKU BDS programme as a recognised programme in the Schedule to the Ordinance. Should the programme be removed from that Schedule, all local dental graduates would have to pass the licensing examination conducted by the DCHK, and those who fail to do so would not be able to become registered dentists.

Proposed dental internship arrangement

The Government had been exploring to amend the Ordinance in 2022, with a view to creating new pathways for the admission of non-locally trained dentists and addressing the industry's call for enhancing the professional standards of dentists. In the light of the views raised by the DCHK and the profession on the need to enhance the clinical experience of dental graduates, the Health Bureau released a consultation document to stakeholders in February 2023 and proposed to introduce a provisional registration system akin to the arrangement for medical practitioners. This would enable local dental graduates to undergo a one-year internship under provisional registration for gaining more clinical experience before full registration. As for non-locally trained dentists who sat and passed the licensing examination of the DCHK, they will be required to undergo a period of assessment to familiarise themselves with the local practice as previously suggested by the industry.

During the consultation period, the Government met with various stakeholders, such as the DCHK, dental professional bodies, partners of the Government's dental service programmes, teaching staff and students of the HKU Faculty of Dentistry, associations and training institutions for ancillary dental workers, the Hospital Authority and patients' groups respectively, to canvass their views on the legislative amendments. The vast majority of stakeholders agreed in principle the idea of introducing an internship/period of assessment. The DCHK concurred in their reply to the Government in April 2023 that there were imminent needs to kick-start the internship arrangement, while HKU also expressed support in the same month for the implementation of the proposal. Both parties subsequently set up a task force with the Department of Health (DH) to discuss the specific implementation details, with the involvement of an existing BDS student representative.

Subsequently, the DCHK issued an accreditation report to the Faculty in June 2023 which maintained the status of the HKU BDS programme only on a conditional basis.

In briefing the LegCo Panel on Health Services on the consultation results in July 2023, the Government indicated that in recent years the dental profession has suggested from time to time the need to explore ways to enhance the clinical experience of local dental graduates or non-locally trained dentists in real-life setting. This serves to ensure that they are not only equipped with professional knowledge but also sound practical skills and professional attitude as required for making clinical judgment under different situations and handling the work of a practising dentist in an effective manner. The implementation of the proposed dental internship and

period of assessment can effectively address the appeal of the dental profession, including the DCHK, for enhancing the clinical experience of dentists who newly joined the profession.

Under the arrangement of internship/period of assessment, dental interns will work in rotation at various service units under the guidance of experienced dentists. The scope of work includes the School Dental Care Service, emergency dental services, hospital dental service (such as oral maxillofacial surgery and specialist dental service clinics), community special dental service (such as outreach services for the elderly at residential care homes and dental services targeting persons with intellectual disability), as well as general dental services (such as government dental clinic services).

Having gathered the views of BDS students, the DH will, subject to the availability of posts, strive to provide local dental graduates with the opportunities to undergo internship in the dental specialties of their choice. This will further enrich their exposure before pursuing specialty training in future. The internship arrangement will also allow local dental graduates to independently handle unscreened local patients with different clinical conditions, and collaborate with local dentists and other professionals in performing tasks. All these cannot be emulated by normal teaching settings nor practices on dental procedures under instructors' clinical supervision, thereby allowing local dental graduates to get better prepared for their future practice and professional development.

Dental interns will be appointed as dentists under contractual terms at a salary level comparable to medical interns. The specific salary level will be 50 per cent of the Master Pay Scale Point 30 for civil servants (HK\$34,470 per month in financial year 2023-24), which ensures that regular adjustments can be made in light of the economic conditions in Hong Kong.

Response to concerns on internship arrangement

The above internship arrangement is designed for dental graduates, as in the long established practice for medical graduates. With reference to the experience of medical interns, cases requiring extension of internship/period of assessment are extremely rare (only about 1 per cent), and there is no record of any case for termination of internship/period of assessment in the past five years.

The Government emphasised that local dental graduates are to be treated under the Bill as registered dentists when they are undergoing the internship. The internship arrangement is by no means an extension of the BDS programme, and it is infeasible to replace the internship with school work. The DCHK has provided a written reply to LegCo that it is inappropriate to allow BDS students, who are still in the learning and practising process without having yet fully mastered various clinical skills for dental treatment, to prematurely undergo internship as registered dentists and independently perform various dental procedures on patients. It is of no benefit to both students and patients. The Government also considered that it

is impractical to require students to undergo internship on a full-time basis while studying an undergraduate programme at the same time. As for the content and duration of the BDS programme, as well as whether and how it should be adjusted in light of the internship arrangement, is a matter of the university. The DCHK will continue to conduct its accreditation work.

The Government undertook to provide internship opportunities for all dental graduates of the HKU BDS programme, and will spare no efforts in assisting every graduate to complete the internship with a view to providing quality dental services to the community. Based on the ongoing legislative progress of the Bill, the internship requirement will, at the earliest, apply to local dental graduates in class of 2025 and thereafter, while the arrangement for period of assessment will apply to non-locally trained dentists who have sat and passed the licensing examination administered by the DCHK with the exact date hinging on the examination schedule.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, emphasised, "The Government attached great importance to the training and regulation of the professional standard of dentists in Hong Kong, as well as the prospect of local BDS students. Regardless of the manpower supply of dentists, we are committed to investing additional resources to arrange internship placement for local dental graduates, thereby promoting their professional development to offer better services to the public."

"I have noticed that some LegCo Members plan to propose amendments to the internship arrangement. The Health Bureau never shies away from upholding the quality of healthcare services in Hong Kong. We propose to introduce the internship arrangement as soon as possible, which is crucial to maintaining the professional standards and reputation of dentistry in Hong Kong. More importantly, it is central to safeguarding the wellbeing of our citizens."

"The early implementation of internship arrangement is a matter of public interest, and also a matter of imminence. As a responsible Government, we should proactively enhance the standard of our dentists to keep up with the times, rather than taking remedial measures only after incidents concerning patients' safety arise. I strongly appeal to LegCo Members and the industry to recognise the importance of the proposed internship arrangement and render support for its early implementation."

Youth Financial Education Programme officially launched (with photos)

The kick-off ceremony of the Youth Financial Education Programme, launched by the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) and the Investor and Financial Education Council (IFEC), was held today (May 21).

To assist with the development of young people, the Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that the Government will launch a pilot scheme to provide young people with financial planning and counselling services as well as information on financial management, saving and investment that suits individual needs. On a pilot basis, the Youth Financial Education Programme will be implemented at the five youth hostels under the Youth Hostel Scheme to help young people with developing an effective financial management plan.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, said that the HYAB and the IFEC will introduce a series of online resources and activities through the Youth Financial Education Programme in the coming months, including story-telling sessions on financial planning and interactive learning activities. The programme aims to help young people customise their own financial plans and goals, so that they will develop good habits for managing personal finances and investment. She said she hopes that young people would utilise the financial education resources to actively enhance their knowledge, attitude and ability in personal finance management during their stay in the youth hostels, and engage in personal financial planning as well as life planning. She expressed her gratitude towards the IFEC and the operators of the youth hostels for collaborating with the HYAB in organising the programme.

After the kick-off ceremony, Miss Mak participated in the first story-telling session on financial planning with the guests and youth tenants.

Other officiating guests of the kick-off ceremony included the Under Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Mr Clarence Leung; the Commissioner for Youth, Mr Eric Chan; the General Manager of the IFEC, Ms Dora Li; and former Chairman of the Hong Kong Investment Funds Association Mr Bruno Lee. Representatives from various organisations participating in the Youth Hostel Scheme also attended the event.



