

## [2025 edition of "Statistical Digest of the Services Sector" published](#)

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (May 30) the 2025 edition of "Statistical Digest of the Services Sector". The publication provides up-to-date annual statistics for the years 2020 to 2024 on 14 major service industries/domains of Hong Kong for the more important statistical series.

Users can browse and download the publication at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1080007&scode=520](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1080007&scode=520)). Users who have enquiries may contact the Logistics and Producer Prices Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7257; email: [services@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:services@censtatd.gov.hk)).

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## [Private Columbaria \(Amendment\) Ordinance 2025 comes into force](#)

The Private Columbaria (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 was gazetted and came into force today (May 30). The Amendment Ordinance helps to enhance the current regulatory regime on private columbaria and strengthen the protection of consumers' interests.

With a pragmatic and sympathetic approach, the Government introduced the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) in 2017 to establish a licensing regime for the regulation of private columbaria, including new operators and "pre-cut-off columbaria" (i.e. those that were in operation and had ashes interred in them before the announcement of the proposal to establish a licensing regime at 8am on June 18, 2014), and progressively rectified violations of requirements from the operation of private columbaria in the past.

One of the primary purposes of the Amendment Ordinance is to provide "pre-cut-off columbaria" an additional option to make new applications for exemption. "Pre-cut-off columbaria" that successfully obtain an exemption through the new application can retain niches they sold before the enactment of the Ordinance. It enables them to continue operating at their current scale, avoids social disruption from large-scale ash disposal, and at the same time, minimises their impact on the neighbourhood.

A spokesperson for the Environment and Ecology Bureau said, "The Private Columbaria Licensing Board will specify the time limit for making new applications for exemption by 'pre-cut-off columbaria'. The Private

Columbaria Affairs Office of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will, through case managers, individually notify relevant 'pre-cut-off columbaria' and provide them with targeted assistance to enable them to make appropriate decisions as to the way forward for their operations."

To strengthen the protection of consumers' interests and foster the public's confidence in the operation of private columbaria in compliance with requirements, the Amendment Ordinance enhances enforcement-related provisions for greater deterrent effect. It includes the introduction of new offences prohibiting the sale of niches not covered in the approved plans or sale of interment rights exceeding the approved ash interment capacity (i.e. "overselling niches"), or keeping ashes other than in niches covered in the approved plans (i.e. "over-placing ashes"). Relevant penalties have also been increased.

Additionally, the Amendment Ordinance enhances the operation of the Private Columbaria Appeal Board, requiring the Appeal Board to only receive and consider new materials not previously provided to the Licensing Board upon special grounds being shown. It ensures the adoption of a consistent standard by appeal panels and makes the arrangement clearer to members of the Appeal Board and appellants. The Appeal Board has updated its Rules on Practice and Procedure. The Amendment Ordinance also clearly stipulates the arrangement for eligible masons' workshops that meet certain conditions to keep ashes temporarily for operational reasons, and the industry has been notified.

Members of the public and the trade may visit the dedicated website "Regulation of Private Columbaria" of the FEHD ([www.fehd.gov.hk/rpc/](http://www.fehd.gov.hk/rpc/)) for information on the Amendment Ordinance.

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## **Reappointment of Chairman to Independent Police Complaints Council**

The Government today (May 30) announced the reappointment of Ms Priscilla Wong Pui-sze as the Chairman of the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) for a term of two years with effect from June 1, 2025.

The appointment is made by the Chief Executive according to section 5 of the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance (Cap. 604) (IPCC Ordinance).

The Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, said, "I am most grateful for the invaluable contributions of the IPCC in safeguarding a fair, effective and transparent two-tier police complaints system in Hong Kong. I believe that under the leadership of Ms Wong, the IPCC will continue to fully

discharge its statutory functions under the IPCC Ordinance to ensure that complaints from the public are handled fairly and impartially. It will also leverage the experiences from the complaints to make improvement recommendations to the Police with a view to enhancing service quality and professional standards."

Mr Tang said that the Government will continue to render full support to the IPCC to give full play to its independent statutory monitoring functions to uphold a fair and impartial police complaints system accountable to the public in Hong Kong.

The IPCC, established under the IPCC Ordinance, is an independent statutory body responsible for monitoring and reviewing the investigation of complaints against members of the Hong Kong Police Force. The IPCC Ordinance provides a statutory basis for the IPCC's role and power as well as the two-tier police complaints system. It also imposes a statutory duty on the Police to comply with the IPCC's requirements. The IPCC comprises a Chairman, three Vice-chairmen and 14 non-official members.

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## **Hong Kong's COVID-19 activity shows signs of decline from its peak but is expected to remain high in near term**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 29) said that there are signs that the level of COVID-19 activity in Hong Kong has started to decline from its peak. However, it is expected to remain at a relatively high level in the near future. High-risk individuals, especially the elderly and those with underlying illnesses, should not take this lightly and should receive a free booster dose in a timely manner to minimise the risk of serious complications or death after infection.

According to the latest surveillance data (as of the week ending May 24), both the viral load of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from sewage surveillance and the test positivity rate of respiratory samples have begun to decline in the past week. Among them, the percentage of respiratory samples testing positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus decreased from 13.80 per cent in the previous week (May 11 to 17) to 11.12 per cent. For sewage surveillance, the per capita viral load of SARS-CoV-2 virus decreased from around 770 000 copy/litre to 500 000 copy/litre during the same period. Besides, the consultation rate of COVID-19 cases at general out-patient clinics and sentinel private medical practitioner clinics also dropped.

"COVID-19 has become an endemic disease with cyclical patterns. Epidemiological data from local and other regions around the world show that

there are generally periodic upsurges in the COVID-19 activity level approximately every six to nine months. Hong Kong has experienced an upsurge in COVID-19 cases since April this year, more than half a year after the last increase in July and August of last year. The current active period is expected. Although the activity of COVID-19 has started to decline, with reference to previous data, we expect that it will remain at a relatively high level in the short term, and will take a month or two to gradually decline to a lower level," said the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui.

"Genetic analysis showed that XDV and its descendent lineages (mainly NB.1.8.1) have become the dominating variant strains in Hong Kong. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently assigned NB.1.8.1 as one of the "Variants under Monitoring". The WHO suggested that the global public health risk posed by NB.1.8.1 was low. There is currently no evidence that NB.1.8.1 will cause more severe diseases than previously dominating variant strains (such as JN.1 and XBB as well as their descendent lineages). As XDV (including NB.1.8.1) is a JN.1-related variant, the COVID-19 vaccines currently used in Hong Kong can effectively prevent infection and severe disease," Dr Tsui said.

The CHP has recorded six severe paediatric cases (no fatal cases) related to COVID-19 so far this year. Among which, two have underlying illnesses and four have not received the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. These cases showed that even children who have been in good past health may experience severe complications from COVID-19 infection.

"Severe COVID-19 cases primarily affect the elderly and children, and those with underlying illnesses. Existing local and overseas scientific data has fully proved that the COVID-19 vaccine is effective in minimising the risk of severe disease or death after infection. Therefore, I remind members of the public who have not received the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine (including infants and children) to get vaccinated at appropriate times. Moreover, pregnant women getting the COVID-19 vaccine not only can reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death, the antibodies in their bodies can also be passed to the foetus and the breastfed babies through the umbilical cord or breast milk respectively, providing protection to infants aged below six months who cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Those at high risk (particularly the elderly and persons with underlying illnesses), should receive a booster dose as soon as possible," Dr Tsui added.

Apart from vaccination, the public should maintain stringent personal, environmental and hand hygiene at all times to minimise the risk of contracting COVID-19 and other respiratory infectious diseases. When respiratory symptoms appear, one should wear a surgical mask, consider avoiding going to work or school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

For the latest surveillance data, members of the public can refer to the CHP's weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#). For more information on vaccination, please refer to the [COVID-19 Vaccination Programme webpage](#).

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## [Invest Hong Kong promotes Hong Kong's business advantages in Beijing and Tianjin \(with photos\)](#)

Acting Associate Director-General of Investment Promotion at Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) Ms Loretta Lee is visiting Beijing and Tianjin from May 27 to 30 to promote Hong Kong's business advantages and new opportunities to local food and beverage (F&B) and retail enterprises as well as industry associations. The visit is aimed to facilitate mutually beneficial co-operation between Mainland and Hong Kong businesses, supporting joint efforts to tap into international markets.

During her visit, Ms Lee met with numerous companies to understand their overseas strategies, while promoting Hong Kong business opportunities. She highlighted Hong Kong's unique role as a "super connector" between the Mainland and global markets under the "one country, two systems" framework. She will also follow up with Beijing-based companies that recently joined the Business Delegation led by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to the Middle East.

In Beijing and Tianjin, InvestHK held thematic discussions with organisations such as the China Alcoholic Drinks Association to showcase the immense opportunities for liquor businesses following Hong Kong's reduction in liquor duty. InvestHK also co-organised a series of promotional activities with industry associations, including policy exchange sessions and seminars on global expansion for F&B enterprises.

InvestHK yesterday (May 28) hosted a thematic roundtable event in Beijing with F&B industry representatives to exchange views on overseas expansion and Hong Kong's investment policies. Ms Lee explained that Hong Kong serves as a vital bridge between the Mainland and international markets, offering unparalleled business advantages for Mainland enterprises to expand overseas.

"As a world-renowned culinary capital, Hong Kong is an ideal testing ground for F&B brands aiming to internationalise," said Ms Lee. "The city's diverse consumer base enables brands to validate product acceptance across cultures. With a robust influx of international visitors, brands can also benefit from strong word-of-mouth marketing. Hong Kong's mature F&B ecosystem provides an ideal platform for innovation, while local talent with international prospective and global experience offers a solid foundation for international expansion," she said.

The Head of Tourism and Hospitality at InvestHK, Ms Sindy Wong, gave a detailed overview of Hong Kong's F&B market advantages and how the city can

support Mainland enterprises in scaling their overseas presence. The Associate Director of the Office of the HKSAR Government in Beijing (Beijing Office) , Ms Eunice Chan, delivered welcome remarks at the event.

InvestHK today (May 29) visited Tianjin to engage with major local wine companies to promote Hong Kong's latest policies on the alcohol industry. A seminar entitled Leveraging Hong Kong's Advantages to Support Tianjin F&B Enterprises Going Global was held, co-organised by Hong Kong Bauhinia College and the Tianjin General Chamber of Commerce, and supported by the Tianjin Liaison Unit of the HKSAR Government, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of Tianjin Municipal People's Government, and the Tianjin Federation of Industry and Commerce.

In her welcome remarks, Ms Lee said, "Tianjin and Hong Kong have long enjoyed close economic and trade ties. Hong Kong is Tianjin's largest source of foreign investment and a vital platform for local enterprises to go global. With its unique advantages of having the staunch support of the country while maintaining unparalleled connectivity with the world, Hong Kong's thriving culinary economy presents opportunities for Mainland brands to grow their brand influence. Tianjin enterprises can leverage Hong Kong's open and internationalised environment to accelerate their global expansion. "She highlighted Hong Kong's role as a vital international gateway, capable of helping Tianjin culinary brands set sail for overseas markets and expand their global presence.

Ms Wong shared an in-depth analysis of Hong Kong's market environment, along with practical case studies, and the HKSAR Government's latest policies to attract businesses, encouraging them to utilise the Hong Kong platform for outbound investment.

The Chairman of the Tianjin General Chamber of Commerce, Ms Han Xiuyun, delivered welcome remarks, pledging to deepen economic, trade, and investment co-operation, particularly in the catering sector, between Tianjin and Hong Kong, enabling enterprises from both places to capitalise on their respective strengths for mutual development.

During the professional services sharing session, Deputy Director of the Management Committee of Beijing Yingke (Hangzhou) Law Firm and Director of Yingke Global Catering Enterprise (outbound investment) Service Center, Mr Chen Shaojun, and the Chief Immigration Officer of the Beijing Office, Mr Xarier Wong, delivered keynote speeches on Hong Kong's professional services and talent schemes to attendees. Vice President of Xiabu Xiabu Group, Ms Zhang Yanmei, shared experiences on the company's business set-up and growth in Hong Kong, encouraging catering businesses to strongly consider Hong Kong's platform for brand internationalisation.

The seminar also featured a Q&A session for enterprises interested in setting up in Hong Kong. Hong Kong representatives addressed their queries in detail. The event attracted more than 80 representatives from Tianjin businesses, institutions, and media.

For photos of the seminar, please visit [www.flickr.com/photos/investhk/albums/72177720326484438](http://www.flickr.com/photos/investhk/albums/72177720326484438).

