

HKSAR Government responds to media enquiries on reporting, photo and video-taking at prohibited places specified in subsidiary legislation made under Safeguarding National Security Ordinance

â€œIn response to media enquiries on reporting, photo and video-taking at prohibited places specified in the subsidiary legislation made under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, a spokesman for the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region today (May 16) said the following:

The Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, at the meeting of the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Two Items of Subsidiary Legislation Made under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance and the subsequent media session yesterday (May 15), clearly said that according to section 45 of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, a "specified officer" (including a police officer or a guard of the prohibited place), who has reasonable grounds to believe that exercising such power is necessary for safeguarding national security, may order any person not to do or cease to do such acts as that of approaching or inspecting (including doing so by electronic or remote means) a prohibited place, and such officer may also order persons in the neighbourhood of a prohibited place to leave. Any person who contravenes an order commits an offence.

There is no problem for members of the public to purely "check in" and take photos near a prohibited place while passing by, without any intention of endangering national security. However, if they deliberately take photos or videos of the entrances or the interior of a prohibited place so as to inspect such place, or engage in other conduct during photo or video-taking giving people reasonable grounds to believe that they may endanger national security, police officers or guards of the prohibited place have the power to ask the members of the public to leave in accordance with the above legal requirements and the judgment made at the scene at the time.

Hong Kong Customs detects one drug

trafficking case involving incoming passenger at airport

Hong Kong Customs today (May 15) detected a drug trafficking case involving baggage concealment at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 12 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$2.6 million.

The case involved a 18-year-old female passenger arriving in Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand today. During customs clearance, Customs officers found the suspected cannabis buds, concealed inside 25 plastic bags and weighing about 12kg, in her check-in suitcase. The woman was subsequently arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs will continue to step up enforcement against drug trafficking activities through intelligence analysis. The department also reminds members of the public to stay alert and not participate in drug trafficking activities for monetary return. They must not accept hiring or delegation from another party to carry controlled items into and out of Hong Kong. They are also reminded not to carry unknown items for other people.

Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

C for T meets taxi trade and reiterates determination to continuously combat illegal carriage

of passengers for reward activities and formulate legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms within 2025 (with photo)

The Commissioner for Transport, Ms Angela Lee, met with some 20 taxi trade representatives and Legislative Council Member concerned this afternoon (May 15), and exchanged views on their concerns about illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities, regulating online car hailing platforms and improving taxi service quality, reiterating the Government's determination to continuously combat illegal hire car services in accordance with the law and formulate legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms within 2025. Representatives of the Transport and Logistics Bureau also attended.

Trade representatives comprising various stakeholders, including trade associations, taxi dealers, taxi fleet operators and vehicle owners, attended the meeting. Ms Lee said, "Combating illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities, regulating online car hailing platforms and improving taxi service are the common goals of both the Government and the trade. We had candid exchanges at the meeting and we understand the taxi trade's concern regarding online car hailing platforms and illegal hire car activities. The Government is determined to continuously combat illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities with a view to protecting the safety and interests of the public."

The Transport Department (TD) sternly pointed out that any online car hailing platform operator providing carriage of passengers for reward services must comply with the laws and regulations. The Hong Kong Police Force have been continuously combating illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward across the territory during the past several months. Appropriate enforcement actions will be taken immediately for cases with sufficient evidence and enforcement actions are ongoing. Meanwhile, the Government is proactively studying legislative amendments, so that vehicles involved in the offence of illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward can be impounded even if the driver's identity cannot be confirmed, heightening the deterrent effect against illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities.

In addition, the TD has stepped up publicity on the penalties of illegal carriage of passengers for reward. For the first conviction, the maximum fine is \$10,000 with six months of imprisonment while the vehicle licence concerned will be suspended and the vehicle will be impounded for six months. Drivers are urged not to defy the law. Further, passengers using illegal hire car services may be at risk, as the vehicle's third party insurance may become invalid in case of a traffic accident.

At the meeting, the taxi trade also made suggestions on regulating online car hailing platforms and their vehicles and drivers. Ms Lee said that the Government is actively conducting a study on the overall demand and supply of personalised point-to-point transport services. She stressed that the service sustainability will be taken into account, meeting passengers' needs for point-to-point services while safeguarding passenger safety and upholding service quality. The Government will holistically consider the report to be submitted by the Working Group for Enhancing Personalised Point-to-Point Transport Services under the Transport Advisory Committee, the views collected including the taxi trade's views and relevant data in formulating legislative proposals on regulation of online car hailing platforms and licensing requirements for their vehicles and drivers within 2025, aiming to promote the platforms' operations in a regulated manner.

Ms Lee was pleased to note that the taxi trade representatives shared the need to act in concert to improve taxi service quality, including pressing ahead for the taxi fleets' completion of gearing-up work for the commissioning of their services by end-July 2025, thereby improving passengers' riding experiences and enhancing the trade's competitiveness. The TD will continue to maintain close communication with the taxi trade to achieve the common goal of bringing mutual benefits to the transport sector and commuters at large.



[Medical Laboratory Technologists Board responds to requests for clinical practice/attachment hours](#)

â€‹The following is issued on behalf of the Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) Board:

The MLT Board is aware of a statement made by individual groups and training institutions regarding the hours required for clinical practice/attachment for medical laboratory technologists and responds today (May 15) as follows:

The MLT Board, established under the Supplementary Medical Professions

Ordinance (Cap. 359), is a statutory body that reviews the training arrangements of MLT from time to time to enhance their professional development. The MLT Board has started to discuss and review the requirement for clinical practice/attachment in the curriculum since 2023. It has agreed to strengthen the training of students in different medical laboratory-related areas under the principle that the overall number of training hours should remain unchanged. The objective is to ensure that the curriculum keeps abreast of the times and aligns with the latest developments in the medical field.

Since 2023, the Registration Committee of MLT Board has been discussing and reviewing the hours required for clinical practice/attachment, which were formulated in 2013. Subsequently, at the MLT Board meeting of February 5, 2024, the MLT Board endorsed revising the required hours for clinical practice/attachment from 400 hours, covering only four basic areas, namely "Clinical Microbiology & Infection", "Anatomical Pathology", "Chemical Pathology" and "Haematology", to 200 hours. This change will enable the institutions to allocate the released 200 hours to elective study modules according to the characteristics of their respective curricula without affecting the total number of hours. Under this arrangement, institutions can optimise the released training time to strengthen students' learning in the basic areas or arrange for the students to explore other medical laboratory-related subjects beyond the basic areas, such as clinical immunology, molecular techniques and genetic testing etc. This encourages the diversified development of different institutions while maintaining their professional standards. Contrary to the allegation made in the statement, it is not a hasty reduction of clinical practice/attachment hours from 400 to 200 before graduation.

Before making the decision, the MLT Board has been in close liaison with the industry through its Registration Committee (which comprises institutions, members of the associations and practitioners from different work backgrounds) and has held in-depth discussions on various accreditation requirements. Meetings were held to discuss the above issues and a Working Group on Review of Accreditation Criteria and Checklist was set up to invite experts to provide views in optimising the accreditation criteria and to continuously review both the local and international situations. The allegation that "academic institutions and industry stakeholders were not adequately consulted" is off the mark. The MLT Board stands ready to further explain to the MLT industry and training institutions the rationale of revising the required hours for clinical practice/attachment, and will work closely with stakeholders on the implementation details to facilitate the smooth execution of the resolution.

The MLT Board is a statutory body established under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (Cap. 359) to promote adequate standards of professional practice and of professional conduct in the MLT professions. The MLT Board members (see Annex) comprises a wide representation of stakeholders, who are from the medical laboratory testing and medical professions, professional education, the Government, the Hospital Authority, and private sector.

DH urges high-risk individuals to receive COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible as COVID-19 activity hits one-year high in Hong Kong

With the major surveillance indicators of COVID-19 reaching a one-year high, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 15) urged all sectors of the community to heighten their vigilance and enhance personal hygiene and protection measures, including receiving the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. People at high risk, especially the elderly and individuals with underlying illnesses, should receive a booster dose free of charge in a timely manner to minimise the risk of serious complications or death after infection.

"After the resumption of normalcy, Hong Kong experienced cycles of active periods of COVID-19 in every six to nine months. Taking into account local and global epidemiological data in recent years, the CHP is of the view that COVID-19 has evolved into an endemic disease with a periodic pattern. According to the CHP's analysis, the active periods are associated with the changes in the predominant circulating strains and declining herd immunity in Hong Kong. In early 2024, the predominant strains circulated locally changed from XBB to JN.1; while in the third quarter of 2024, they changed from JN.1 to KP.2 and KP.3; and they have further changed to XDV since late March this year. There is no evidence suggesting that XDV will cause more severe disease. Nevertheless, the changing nature of the virus should not be taken lightly. The CHP will continue to closely monitor the situation of the variant strains in accordance with the World Health Organization's recommendation, and be cautious of the possible emergence of more virulent or vaccine-mismatched strains of the virus in the future," the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui, said.

According to the latest surveillance data as of the week ending May 10, the viral load of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from sewage surveillance, the test positivity rate and the cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests in the laboratory have continued to rise over the past four weeks. In particular, the percentage of respiratory samples testing positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus gradually increased to 13.66 per cent from 6.21 per cent four weeks ago (the week of April 6 to 12), which is a record high in the past year. For sewage surveillance, the per capita viral load of SARS-CoV-2 virus was around 710 000 copy/litre, which was also significantly higher than that of about 390 000 copy/litre four weeks ago. During the same period, the consultation rate of COVID-19 cases at Accident and Emergency departments, general out-patient clinics and sentinel private medical practitioner clinics also recorded a significant increase.

"According to the surveillance data after the resumption of normalcy, there were two relatively active periods of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, which lasted for about 15 weeks from April to July 2023 and for about seven weeks from February to March last year. COVID-19 became more active in mid-April of this year (i.e. about four weeks ago). Based on previous statistics, we expect the activity level of COVID-19 to remain at a higher level for at least the next few weeks," said Dr Tsui.

Regarding severe and fatal cases, in the past four weeks, the CHP recorded a total of 81 COVID-19 severe cases (including 30 fatal cases) involving adults. Epidemiological investigation showed that 83 per cent of the patients being elderly persons aged 65 or above, and more than 90 per cent of these elderly cases had underlying illnesses. Only one case had received a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the past six months.

For children, the CHP has recorded five severe cases (no fatal case) so far this year. Of which, two have underlying illnesses and three cases have not received the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. "This shows that even children who have been in good health can experience severe complications from COVID-19 infection. Therefore, I hope that parents will not hesitate to bring their children to complete the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. The currently prevalent XDV strain is a related variant of JN.1. Therefore, the JN.1 vaccine used in Hong Kong is effective in preventing the disease, reducing the risk of severe illness and death, and enhancing herd immunity," said Dr Tsui.

"Currently, the proportion of high-risk groups, especially the elderly, receiving booster doses of the vaccine is relatively low. This suggests that the public does not attach much importance to vaccination. Based on the surveillance data and vaccination figures, the CHP projected that about 75 per cent of the elderly aged 65 or above living in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and 90 per cent of those living in the community had not received booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine timely according to the CHP's recommendation. I would like to reiterate my appeal to the high-risk groups, especially the elderly and persons with underlying illnesses, to receive an additional booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine 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 infecting COVID-19 and other respiratory infectious diseases. High-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised) should wear surgical masks when visiting public places. The general public should also wear a surgical mask when travelling on public transport or staying in crowded places. 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.

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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](#). COVID-19 Vaccination venues for persons [aged 6 months to 11 years old](#) and [aged 12 and above](#) had been uploaded to the website.