

## Government cautions public on fake information about so-called "Government Investment Platform"

A government spokesman today (April 2) cautioned the public not to believe in a video circulating online, which appears to be artificially generated and falsely presents the Financial Secretary promoting a so-called "Government Investment Platform". The Government clarified that the information is totally fictitious and is intended to deceive. The spokesman advises the public not to fall for the scam. The matter has been referred to the Police for further investigation.

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## Country Parks Hiking and Planting Day 2025

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (April 2) that the AFCD and Friends of the Country Parks will hold the Country Parks Hiking and Planting Day on two Sundays in April and May. The public are welcome to take part in the activities.

The Country Parks Hiking and Planting Day will be held at the following locations according to the schedule below:

April 27	Pak Sha Wan Peninsula, Ma On Shan Country Park
May 4	Wong Nai Tun Irrigation Reservoir, Tai Lam Country Park

The public should enrol at the registration point on-site from 9am to 10.30am on the event day. Pre-registration is not required. The AFCD will provide seedlings and planting tools. Due to site constraints and limited availability of seedlings, all seedlings will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. If all seedlings are given out, participants are welcome to join the hiking activity.

An AFCD spokesman said, "The event aims to promote messages related to caring for nature and tree preservation via public engagement activities. AFCD staff and volunteers will share information on the seedlings and promote hiking etiquette to enhance participants' awareness of nature conservation."

The spokesman reminded the public to choose a suitable planting location and hiking route according to their physical strength and hiking experience. After tree planting, participants may continue hiking along the recommended

route or take the same route back. The AFCD encourages members of the public to go hiking with their friends or family and to help conserve the countryside by practising hiking etiquette, such as bringing along reusable water bottles and towels, and "Take Your Litter Home".

Seedlings for the tree planting activities were raised in the Tai Tong Nursery of the AFCD in Yuen Long. The department has been planting local species in country parks to enhance the biodiversity and ecological value of country parks in recent years. About 230 000 tree seedlings were planted in country parks last year by AFCD staff and various organisations.

Details of the activities and the latest information are available on the Nature in Touch website ([www.natureintouch.gov.hk](http://www.natureintouch.gov.hk)) or the Hong Kong Country Parks Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/hongkongcountryparks](https://www.facebook.com/hongkongcountryparks)). For enquiries about the Country Parks Hiking and Planting Day, please call 1823 or email [nature@afcd.gov.hk](mailto:nature@afcd.gov.hk).

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## **LCQ11: Overseas-trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists**

Following is a question by the Hon David Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

Some professional bodies for physiotherapy and occupational therapy in Hong Kong have indicated that it takes at least eight months for Hong Kong physiotherapists and occupational therapists who graduated overseas (overseas-trained therapists) to complete their registration applications in Hong Kong. It is learnt that there are quite a number of overseas-trained therapists awaiting assessment and approval for registration. Some of these therapists have been interviewed by the Hospital Authority (HA) while awaiting registration, but have been placed on a waiting list due to their unresolved registration status. Meanwhile, some overseas-trained therapists have worked as ward assistants, or taken up temporary positions as student physiotherapists or student occupational therapists. There are views that while the registration procedures must be rigorous, the excessively long waiting times for registration are unfair to applicants and prevent them from fully utilising their expertise to serve members of the public. As a result, some applicants have even left Hong Kong to serve in the countries where they graduated. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information regarding the time taken for overseas-trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists who meet the eligibility for registration to register in Hong Kong: the 10th percentile time, the 90th percentile time and the median time;

(2) whether the Physiotherapists Board and the Occupational Therapists Board have established performance indicators or performance pledges for registration processing times; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the number of overseas-trained therapists who applied for registration in Hong Kong and the rate of successful registration in each of the past three years, and whether it has compiled statistics on the number of those who left Hong Kong before completing their registration; and

(4) whether the Government will urge the Physiotherapists Board and the Occupational Therapists Board to expedite the vetting and approval of registration applications, so as to encourage overseas-trained therapists to return to Hong Kong to serve therein; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Secretariat of the Supplementary Medical Professions Council (the Council), my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon David Lam is as follows:

Healthcare professions in Hong Kong observe the principle of professional autonomy. Their statutory boards and councils were established by legislations. They are responsible for the registration of professionals, and maintaining and uplifting professional standard and conduct. Under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (the Ordinance), the Council and the Boards of each supplementary medical profession (SMP) are responsible for handling the registration, disciplinary and other regulatory matters of supplementary medical professionals.

Under section 12(1)(b) of the Ordinance, the Council may recognise the professional qualifications of non-locally trained supplementary medical professionals for meeting the requirement for local registration. When considering whether individual applicants are qualified for local registration, the Council will consider the applicants' education, training, professional experience and skillset, and consult the relevant Board of the SMPs. The processing time required for individual applications depends on a host of factors, including the discussions and views of the Council and the relevant Board on whether to recognise the qualification and experience of the applicant, and whether the training institute or regulatory authority of the region where the applicant comes from can timely provide information or verify information submitted by the applicant. Upon receiving the complete application and required documents, the Council could generally complete

processing the application for registration in around three months' time.

Registration as a healthcare professional is a serious process to ensure the academic and clinical competency of the overall healthcare profession and protect patient safety. Given the unique circumstances of each application, their processing time will vary, making it difficult to prescribe a timeframe to complete the processing of applications. The Secretariat will maintain communication with the applicant to inform them timely of the progress of the application and/or any supplementary information required. The general situation of applications of non-locally trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the past three years is set out at Annex. The overall average processing time of these cases is 3.5 months and the 90th percentile is 6.0 months, rather than "at least 8 months" as mentioned in the question.

Department of Health (DH) will continue to streamline administrative procedures and enhance the use of information technology to more effectively support the boards and councils in discharging their duties, including handling registration-related matters. For example, DH will introduce e-forms for registration of supplementary medical professionals as an enhancement measure in the second half of this year, with a view to expanding to other healthcare professions.

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## **LCQ3: Occupational safety of Government's outsourced workers**

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

It is learnt that since 2021, there have been at least four cases of workers falling from wooden folding ladders resulting in deaths or serious injuries, and some members of the public have relayed that some of the Government's outsourced service contractors have not complied with the requirements set out in the Overview of Work-at-Height Safety issued by the Labour Department to provide their staff with working platforms that meet the safety standards for work-above-ground. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has stipulated in the outsourced service contracts that the contractors must strictly comply with the Code of Practice on Safety Management, including the provision of safe working equipment to staff and the formulation of safety guidelines at work; if so, of the details; if not,

the reasons for that;

(2) of the occupational safety and health statistics of the Government's outsourced services (including the number of cases of occupational injuries, industrial accidents and occupational diseases) over the past three years, and the average number of days of sick leave taken by staff for work-related injuries, broken down in table form by types of work and accident; and

(3) of the number of inspections of the workplaces of outsourced staff carried out by the Government over the past three years, and whether it has formulated an assessment indicator in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; what measures in place to enhance the safety management standard of contractors to ensure the safety of their staff at work?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along attached great importance to the protection of occupational safety and health (OSH) of outsourced workers employed by government service contractors (GSCs). GSCs, as with other local employers, are regulated by OSH-related legislation, including the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSHO) and its relevant subsidiary regulations, etc. The OSHO stipulates that every employer must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and health at work of all the employees.

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the four major procuring departments (i.e. the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Government Property Agency and the Housing Department), our reply to the question raised by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung is as follows:

(1) All GSCs must ensure that the OSH of their employees are duly safeguarded. When procuring outsourced services, government departments may, depending on the nature and scope of the services, stipulate in the contract terms the relevant OSH-related requirements that the GSCs must comply with. Such requirements may include the codes of practice/guidelines to be observed, the requirement for the contractors to provide their staff with adequate equipment and tools as well as OSH training, etc. Departments may also request tenderers to submit management proposals in respect of OSH as necessary, which the successful tenderer must implement such proposals in the performance of the contract.

For GSCs employing non-skilled workers, the Government requires them to fulfil their OSH management responsibilities on various fronts:

(i) Tenderers who have been convicted of a relevant offence under the OSHO and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, etc will be debarred from bidding government service contracts for a maximum period of up to five years. In evaluating tenders for a service contract involving the employment of non-skilled workers, the department concerned will check whether any of

the tenderers are subject to debarment; and

(ii) Tenderers for service contracts that involve non-skilled workers performing duties outdoors, in an indoor environment without air-conditioning and/or in the vicinity of high temperature installations are required to submit a Heat Stroke Prevention Work Plan (Work Plan) certified by a Safety Officer who has a valid registration with the Labour Department (LD). Any tender submitted without a Work Plan will not be considered further in the tender assessment. Contractors who fail to comply with the measures committed in the Work Plan may also be issued with demerit points under the Demerit Point System.

In addition to the above contractual and tendering requirements, the LD has been committed to ensuring, through inspection and enforcement, publicity and promotion, as well as education and training, that employers (including GSCs) comply with the relevant statutory requirements, with a view to minimising safety and health risks at workplaces and safeguarding the OSH of employees.

(2) As regards the Member's enquiry about the cases of OSH-related injuries and deaths in the past three years, we have collected relevant information on outsourced non-skilled workers from the four major procuring departments. Such information is set out at Annex.

(3) The LD has all along adopted a multi-pronged strategy in promoting employers (including GSCs) to enhance the safety management standard and protect the OSH of their employees. Relevant measures include:

(i) adopting a risk-based approach in conducting OSH inspections at different workplaces. If OSH issues are identified during inspections, the LD will exercise its professional judgement in assessing the seriousness and consequences of the issues and, based on the evidence available, take enforcement actions. Such actions may include issuing written warnings, improvement notices and suspension notices, or even initiating prosecutions. The said inspections also cover the workplaces of GSCs. In respect of GSCs employing non-skilled workers, the LD conducted 185, 199 and 224 OSH inspections respectively from 2022 to 2024, and took 41, 52 and 27 enforcement actions.

(ii) issuing OSH guidelines to help contractors and other employers enhance their safety management standard. Such guidelines include "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work", "Cleansing Workers – Safe Use of Chemicals", "Lightening the Load" and "Guide on Safety at Work in times of Inclement Weather"; and

(iii) co-organising activities (e.g. OSH talks, seminars and training programmes) with organisations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), trade associations and workers' unions to enhance the OSH awareness of both employers and employees. The LD and the OSHC have also set up hotlines to answer OSH-related enquiries.

In addition to the inspections conducted by the LD, procuring departments are also, in general, required to formulate suitable arrangements for inspection of contractors' workplaces (including the number of inspections) having regard to factors such as nature of the outsourced services and their manpower, and to develop assessment indicators as necessary.

The Government will remain committed to safeguarding the OSH of outsourced workers employed by service contractors through the implementation of various measures.

Thank you, President.

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## A relatively dry and mild March

The weather of March 2025 was drier and milder than usual in Hong Kong. The monthly mean relative humidity of 74 per cent was 8 per cent below the normal of 82 per cent and one of the fourth lowest on record for March. The monthly total sunshine duration amounted to 143.8 hours, about 44 per cent above the normal of 100.0 hours. With more sunshine, the monthly mean maximum temperature of 23.5 degrees was 1.6 degrees above the normal and one of the 10th highest on record for March. The monthly mean temperature of 20.1 degrees and monthly mean minimum temperature of 17.7 degrees were 0.6 degrees and 0.1 degrees above their corresponding normals. Rainfall in the month was 38.1 millimetres, about 51 per cent of the normal of 75.3 millimetres. The accumulated rainfall in the first three months of the year was 68.4 millimetres, about 54 per cent below the normal of 147.4 millimetres for the same period.

Affected by a humid maritime airstream, the weather was mainly cloudy and humid with rising temperatures on the first four days of the month. It was foggy from March 2 to 4. The visibility in many places once fell below 1 000 metres on March 2. A cold front moved across the coast of Guangdong on the night of March 4. Under the influence of the associated northeast monsoon and a broad band of clouds covering the coast of Guangdong, temperatures fell progressively with a few rain patches on the following three days. More than 10 millimetres of rainfall were recorded over many parts of the territory on March 6. The temperatures at the Observatory fell to a minimum of 12.1 degrees the next morning, the lowest of the month.

The northeast monsoon over the coast of Guangdong was gradually replaced by a relatively dry easterly airstream on March 8. While it was mainly cloudy with one or two light rain patches that morning, there were sunny periods that afternoon and in the following two days. With a band of clouds covering the coast of Guangdong, the weather became mainly cloudy from March 11 to 12, with one or two rain patches on March 12. Winds were weak over the coast of

Guangdong on March 13. Locally, it was hot with sunny periods. With a humid easterly airstream affecting the coast of Guangdong the next day, the weather turned mainly cloudy with one or two light rain patches. Visibility was rather low in some areas and once fell to around 1 000 metres in the harbour.

With a trough of low pressure over inland Guangdong developing into a cold front and moving across the coastal areas on March 15, heavy showers and severe squally thunderstorms ahead of the cold front brought around 20 millimetres of rainfall and violent gusts to many places in Hong Kong that afternoon. Hail was even reported at Tai Po. Under the influence of the associated northeast monsoon, the weather became drier and cooler in the following six days. There were sunny periods on March 16. Affected by a band of clouds covering southern China, it became cloudier with one or two rain patches on the next two days. With the departure of the band of clouds and the influence of an anticyclone aloft, the weather turned fine and dry from March 19 to 25. Under the influence of a southerly airstream, the weather became relatively humid with rising temperatures from March 26 to 28. There were fog patches and the weather was hot on March 28. The temperatures at the Observatory rose to a maximum of 29.4 degrees that afternoon, the highest of the month. A cold front moved across the coast of southern China that evening and brought a few rain patches and significantly cooler weather to Hong Kong that night and the following two days. Under the persistent influence of the associated northeast monsoon, the last two days of the month remained cold in the morning.

There was no tropical cyclone over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in March 2025.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for March are tabulated in Table 2.