

SCED updates representatives of consulates and chambers of commerce on investment promotion work

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, today (October 31) hosted a reception for some 150 representatives of consulates and local and foreign chambers of commerce to update them on the Government's work on investment promotion.

Mr Yau also announced the signing of the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPA) between Hong Kong and Türkiye earlier today. The Agreement is the first IPPA signed by the current-term Government and the 23rd IPPA that Hong Kong has signed, bringing the IPPA coverage to a total of 32 trading partners.

Speaking at the reception, Mr Yau said that Hong Kong is renowned as a robust free-market economy and welcomes foreign direct investment from all over the world, while the level playing field and free market mechanism will continue as guaranteed under the Basic Law.

He stressed that it is a priority of the current-term Government to attract enterprises and investments, and updated the guests on the latest developments of investment promotion. Among them, Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) has assisted 300 companies from various sectors around the globe to set up or expand businesses in Hong Kong in the first nine months of this year, an increase of 27 per cent compared to the same period last year, surpassing the KPI announced in the 2022 Policy Address on a pro-rata basis. He expressed appreciation to all the stakeholders for their support, and said that InvestHK would stand ready to continue offering one-stop customised support services to enterprises via its investment promotion network across the world.

Mr Yau added that Hong Kong is also committed to enhancing protection and guarantees for foreign direct investment, and has been making relentless efforts in expanding the network of IPPAs.

"The signing of the IPPA between Hong Kong and Türkiye today sends a very positive signal to the investment community that Hong Kong and Türkiye are committed to enhancing protection and guarantees for foreign direct investment," he said.

The Agreement, which will enter into force after the fulfilment of relevant internal requirements by both sides, will enhance the confidence of investors and expand investment flows between Hong Kong and Türkiye.

Following the signing of the Hong Kong-Türkiye IPPA today, the geographical scope of the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic

Sales is also extended to cover Türkiye, as the 38th eligible economy, with immediate effect to further support Hong Kong enterprises in developing their businesses there.

Stressing the Government's long-standing commitments and dedicated efforts in strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties by forging IPPAs with other economies, Mr Yau highlighted the commencement of IPPA negotiations with Bangladesh and the ongoing IPPA negotiations with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Mr Yau also took the opportunity to brief the guests on initiatives related to commerce and trade in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address". Among them, InvestHK and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council will set up more consultant offices along the Belt and Road to strengthen efforts on investment and trade promotion.

[CHP investigates confirmed Mpox case](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said today (October 31) that it is investigating a confirmed Mpox (also known as Monkeypox) case, and urged the public to heighten vigilance and avoid close physical contact with persons suspected of contracting Mpox. Meanwhile, high-risk target groups are advised to receive Mpox vaccination.

The case involves a 30-year-old male patient with an underlying illness. He had developed localised skin ulcer since October 21. He visited the Yau Ma Tei Male Social Hygiene Clinic of the DH on October 25 and 27. He is in stable condition and arrangements were made for him to be admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital.

An initial investigation revealed that he had visited the Mainland during the incubation period. According to the patient, he only had high-risk exposure in Hong Kong during the incubation period. No epidemiological linkages between this case and other confirmed cases recorded in Hong Kong earlier have been found so far. The CHP is continuing its epidemiological investigations of the case and will report the case to the World Health Organization.

A total of 51 confirmed Mpox cases have been recorded in Hong Kong so far. The CHP appeals again to high-risk target groups to receive Mpox vaccination with a view to lowering the risk of infection or the possibility of having more severe symptoms after infection. Persons who experience Mpox symptoms (including rashes, fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle pain, and severe headaches) or suspect themselves of being infected are advised to seek medical attention and receive treatment at once, and they should not engage in activities with others during which other people may

have contact with their skin rash or body fluids. Members of the public should maintain good personal and hand hygiene to prevent virus transmission or infection through contact. They should also avoid close physical contact with persons or animals suspected of infection.

The CHP had earlier set up an Mpox telephone hotline (2125 2373). The hotline operates from Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) from 9am to 5pm, which enables those who suspect or are concerned they have had high-risk contact with confirmed patients, in particular men who have sex with men or those who have sexual practices with strangers, to make enquiries and receive relevant health advice.

The Government has activated the Alert level of the preparedness and response plan for the disease in September last year and will continue to assess the risk in view of the latest scientific evidence and situation, and implement corresponding control measures.

The Mpox vaccination programme for high-risk groups commenced on October 5 last year. Under the programme, the following high-risk target groups can receive Mpox vaccination on a voluntary basis:

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1. Individuals with high-risk sexual practices, e.g. having multiple sexual partners, sex workers, or having a history of sexually transmitted infection within the past 12 months;
2. Healthcare workers responsible for caring of patients with confirmed Mpox;
3. Laboratory personnel working with zoonotic pox viruses; and
4. Animal care personnel with high risk of exposure in case of Mpox occurrence in animals in Hong Kong.

High-risk target groups can receive Mpox vaccination at the designated Mpox vaccination centre (situated at 2/F, CHP building, 147C Argyle Street, Mong Kok), by appointment through email (mpv_booking@dh.gov.hk) or telephone booking line (2547 1900) during office hours. They can also receive Mpox walk-in vaccinations at all of the DH's Social Hygiene Service Clinics (SoCHS) (namely Chai Wan SoCHS, Wan Chai Male SoCHS, Wan Chai Female SoCHS, Yau Ma Tei Male SoCHS, Yau Ma Tei Female SoCHS, Yung Fung Shee SoCHS, Fanling SoCHS and Tuen Mun SoCHS). Further information of the clinics including their locations is available at www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcf.html and www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcm.html.

Meanwhile, the DH's Integrated Treatment Centre in Kowloon Bay, and the Hospital Authority's Special Medical Clinics at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital will continue to provide Mpox vaccination services for their clients.

For more details, please visit the CHP's page on [Mpox](#).

Speech by SCED at reception for Promotion of Investments cum Expression of Appreciation to Stakeholders in Hong Kong (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, at the reception for Promotion of Investments cum Expression of Appreciation to Stakeholders in Hong Kong today (October 31):

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to everyone attending this cocktail reception. Thank you for joining us today.

Hong Kong prides itself as one of the most important and attractive investment hubs in the world. We are consistently on the top of the world's investment league: number four and number seven for foreign direct investment inflows and outflows respectively in 2022. Apart from our own strengths, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to you and all stakeholders for the profound and enduring efforts you have made over the years, in making Hong Kong a success on the investment front.

It is a priority of the current-term Government to attract enterprises and investments from all over the world. Renowned for being a robust free-market economy, we are committed to enhancing protection and guarantees for foreign direct investment. Foreign and Mainland enterprises can rest assured this level playing field and that the free market mechanism will continue as guaranteed under the Basic Law.

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK), our investment promotion agency under my bureau, has been striving to assist Mainland and foreign companies in setting up or expanding their businesses in our city. I am pleased to tell you that, during the first nine months of this year, InvestHK has assisted 300 companies from various sectors around the globe, an increase of 27 per cent compared to the same period last year, surpassing the KPI (key performance indicator) announced in the 2022 Policy Address on a pro-rata basis. Through its global network, InvestHK stands ready to offer one-stop customised support services to enterprises.

And we will continue to expand our global network and reach out to more stakeholders. Currently, the Hong Kong family, including our overseas

Economic and Trade Offices, InvestHK and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, has offices in 65 cities around the world covering 128 countries. The Chief Executive announced in his 2023 Policy Address delivered last week that we will set up more offices along the Belt and Road, particularly in emerging markets in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa, so as to strengthen our investment and trade promotion efforts.

Going hand in hand with investment promotion is investment protection, which is certainly one of the main considerations of investors in making investment decisions. Our domestic legal regime is already one of the best for investment protection. Yet, Hong Kong has been making relentless efforts to add another level of protection – by forging Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPAs) to further assure overseas investors that their investments in Hong Kong are protected, and at the same time enable Hong Kong investors to enjoy similar protection in respect of their investments overseas.

The Chief Executive has foreshadowed in his 2023 Policy Address that Hong Kong and Türkiye would sign an IPPA very soon. In this connection, I am very pleased to announce that the IPPA has just been signed earlier today. The Consul General of Türkiye is with us today, and I thank him and his office for assistance throughout the negotiations of the agreement. We look forward to its coming into force soon on completion of the respective internal procedures on the two sides.

This is the 23rd IPPA signed by Hong Kong, and the first IPPA signed by this term of Government, bringing our IPPA coverage to a total of 32 trading partners. It sends a very positive signal to the investment community that Hong Kong and Türkiye are committed to enhancing protection and guarantees for foreign direct investment. Following the signing of the Hong Kong-Türkiye IPPA today, the geographical scope of the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales is also extended to Türkiye with immediate effect, to support Hong Kong enterprises in making use of better protection afforded by the IPPA to develop their businesses in the Turkish market.

With our long-standing commitments and dedicated efforts in strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties, Hong Kong will continue to explore and forge IPPAs with other economies, in particular with countries along the Belt and Road and in the Middle East region.

As announced by the Chief Executive in his 2023 Policy Address, Hong Kong has also commenced the IPPA negotiations with Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the important participants of the Belt and Road Initiative, with a huge market of around 170 million in population. Its economy has been growing rapidly in recent years and is a manufacturing hub in South Asia, and is already an investment destination of many Hong Kong manufacturers. I am confident that an IPPA will help enhance two-way investment flows between the two sides, and will bring mutual benefits to the two economies.

In addition, we also attach great importance to the Middle East region, a key link at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Earlier this year,

the Chief Executive led a high-level delegation to visit the Middle East region to promote Hong Kong's advantages and investment opportunities. During his trip, the Chief Executive announced the launch of formal IPPA negotiations with Saudi Arabia. Formal negotiations have already started after the visit, and I look forward to its early conclusion.

What's more, we are having intensive IPPA negotiations with Bahrain, another trading and investment hub in the Middle East. I have asked my negotiating team in the Trade and Industry Department to keep up their efforts with a view to concluding the negotiations soon, so that our investors can enjoy the benefits of the IPPA as soon as possible.

Apart from investment, some other initiatives of my bureau in the 2023 Policy Address would also be of interest to you. We will continue to strengthen bilateral and regional co-operation. We are working at full steam with the free trade agreement negotiations with Peru, and striving for early accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. To promote Hong Kong as the functional platform for the Belt and Road Initiative, we will organise more outbound missions to promote Hong Kong professional services, as well as visits to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area for overseas enterprises operating in Hong Kong. We will continue to support our SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in terms of developing e-commerce business on the Mainland, export credit insurance, and financing. We will enhance our intellectual property regime and offer a tax incentive for qualifying profits derived from patents. All these measures are to create strong impetus for our economic growth and provide more opportunities for local and international businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me once again express my heartfelt gratitude to you and your staunch support to Hong Kong and our investment promotion work. And we look forward to continue working with you and your organisations in the furtherance of co-operation and bilateral investment flow. In particular, we are open to forming partnerships and forging IPPAs, and we call upon your support in this matter. Thank you, and I hope you have a very enjoyable evening.

Thank you very much.

Two fish ball samples detected with methylmercury at levels that may have breached Food Adulteration (Metallic

Contamination) Regulations

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (October 31) announced that two loose-packed fish ball samples were detected with methylmercury, a metallic contaminant, at levels which may have contravened the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations. The CFS is following up on the incidents.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned samples from two restaurants in Mong Kok and North Point for testing when following up on earlier relevant incidents. The test results showed that each sample contained methylmercury at a level of 0.2 part per million. Risk assessment of the CFS revealed that for groups vulnerable to methylmercury toxicity (such as pregnant women), consuming a high amount of fish balls with prolonged consumption of the concerned food may pose an adverse effect on health."

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the restaurants concerned of the irregularities, and had instructed them to stop sales of the affected products. Prosecutions will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

"Methylmercury is the major form of mercury in fish. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS's Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, alfonso, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning a pregnancy and young children should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish to minimise excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," the spokesman added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap. 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination in an amount that is dangerous or prejudicial to health is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.

Immigration Department repatriates Vietnamese illegal immigrants to Vietnam (with photos)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) carried out a repatriation operation today (October 31). A total of 21 Vietnamese illegal immigrants were repatriated to Vietnam. The persons removed comprised seven males and 14 females, all of which were unsubstantiated non-refoulement claimants. Among them were discharged prisoners who had committed criminal offences and had been sentenced to imprisonment.

The ImmD will remain committed to expediting the removal process to repatriate illegal immigrants and overstayers from Hong Kong as soon as practicable according to the actual situation through appropriate measures as necessary.

