

Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases issues recommendations on seasonal influenza vaccination for 2025-26 season

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 21) issued recommendations on seasonal influenza vaccines to be used and the priority groups for receiving vaccination for the upcoming 2025-26 influenza season in Hong Kong, after reviewing the scientific evidence, local data, latest recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and overseas practices.

The SCVPD recommended that various quadrivalent and trivalent seasonal influenza vaccines registered in Hong Kong, including inactivated influenza vaccine, live attenuated influenza vaccine (i.e. nasal vaccine) and recombinant influenza vaccine, could be used for the 2025-26 influenza season. Moreover, the composition of the seasonal influenza vaccines for the upcoming 2025-26 season should follow the WHO's recommendations for the 2025-26 Northern Hemisphere influenza season.

Regarding the priority groups for receiving seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV), the SCVPD recommended that the priority groups for 2025-26 influenza season continue to follow those recommended for the current season (2024-25), including healthcare workers, persons aged 50 years or above, pregnant women, residents of residential care homes, persons with chronic medical problems, children and adolescents aged 6 months to under 18 years, poultry workers, as well as pig farmers and pig-slaughtering industry personnel.

"At the meeting, CHP representatives shared with the experts the latest analysis on the reduction of the risk of severe influenza by SIV during the current influenza season. Local data showed that the rate of severe influenza complications among children who did not receive SIV of the current season is about four times that of vaccinated children. Among the elderly, the rate of severe influenza (including death) among residents of the residential care homes aged 65 years or above who did not receive SIV of the current season is 2.3 times that of the vaccinated residents. Experts agreed that the data highlighted the important protective role of SIV against severe infection and death," said the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui.

"Both local and overseas data have confirmed that SIV offers protection against influenza and its complications. Except those with known contraindications, members of the public, in particular young children and older adults, should receive SIV annually for personal protection," he added.

With joint efforts of all sectors of society (including the Government,

medical sector, schools, parents and institutions), as of March 16, a total of about 2.06 million doses of vaccines were administered under various vaccination programmes in the year 2024/25, representing an increase of about 12.1 per cent over the same period last year. It also exceeded the total number of doses (about 1 873 000 doses) administered under various SIV programmes last year, reaching a record high. For the 2025/26 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Scheme, the Government will continue to step up efforts to assist high-risk groups, particularly young children, students and the elderly, in receiving influenza vaccinations. The Government is exploring the feasibility of procuring some influenza vaccines for participating private doctors in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme and is obtaining information from suppliers about the market supply situation. Announcement will be made at an appropriate time.

â€‹Details of the SCVPD recommendations are available on the [CHP website](#).

18 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Greenlane", "Lightshadow" and "Twilight", and a joint operation with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion", for four consecutive days from March 17 to yesterday (March 20). A total of 15 suspected illegal workers and three suspected employers were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 77 target locations including exhibition halls, industrial buildings, residential buildings, restaurants and retail stores. Thirteen suspected illegal workers and two suspected employers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised nine men and four women, aged 24 to 56. Among them, two women were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, one woman was suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Two men, aged 35 and 60, were suspected of employing the illegal workers and were also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 17 target locations in Central district. Two suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised two women, aged 46 and 54. Among them, one woman was suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. One man, aged 65, who was suspected of employing the illegal workers, was also arrested.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. As stipulated in section 20(1)(a) of the Immigration Ordinance, the Chief Executive may make a deportation order against an immigrant, prohibiting the immigrant from being in Hong Kong at any time thereafter if the immigrant has been found guilty in Hong Kong of an offence punishable by imprisonment for not less than two years. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence.

According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman reminded all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal

workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the ImmD officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



[Approved Cheung Chau Outline Zoning Plan amended](#)

The Town Planning Board today (March 21) announced amendments to the approved Cheung Chau Outline Zoning Plan (OZP).

The amendments mainly involve rezoning a site at Fa Peng from "Residential (Group C) 6" to "Residential (Group C) 9" for residential development.

The Notes and Explanatory Statement of the OZP are amended to take into account the above amendments. Opportunity is also taken to update the general information of various land use zones and the planning scheme area, where appropriate.

The draft Cheung Chau OZP No. S/I-CC/10, incorporating the amendments, is available for public inspection during office hours at (i) the Secretariat of the Town Planning Board, (ii) the Planning Enquiry Counters, (iii) the Sai Kung and Islands District Planning Office, (iv) the Islands District Office, (v) the Islands Home Affairs Enquiry Centre (Cheung Chau), and (vi) the Cheung Chau Rural Committee.

Any person may make written representations in respect of the amendments to the Secretary of the Town Planning Board on or before May 21, 2025. Any person who intends to make a representation is advised to read the Town Planning Board Guidelines No. 29C on "Submission and Processing of Representations and Further Representations" (TPB PG-No. 29C).

Submission of a representation should comply with the requirements set out in TPB PG-No. 29C. In particular, the representer should take note of the following:

- * If the representer fails to provide his or her full name and the first four alphanumeric characters of his or her Hong Kong identity card or passport number as required under TPB PG-No. 29C, the representation submitted shall be treated as not having been made; and
- * The Secretariat of the Town Planning Board reserves the right to require the representer to provide identity proof for verification.

The Guidelines and the submission form are available at the above locations (i) and (ii) as well as the Town Planning Board's website (www.tpb.gov.hk).

Copies of the draft Cheung Chau OZP are available for sale at the Map Publications Centre in North Point. The electronic version of the OZP can be viewed on the Town Planning Board's website (www.tpb.gov.hk).

[Approved Ngau Tau Kok and Kowloon Bay Outline Zoning Plan amended](#)

The Town Planning Board today (March 21) announced amendments to the approved Ngau Tau Kok and Kowloon Bay Outline Zoning Plan (OZP).

The amendments mainly involve (i) rezoning two sites at Choi Hing Road and Choi Ha Road from "Government, Institution or Community" ("G/IC") to "Residential (Group A)4"; and (ii) rezoning two strips of land at Choi Hing Road from "G/IC" to areas shown as 'Road' and a strip of land at Choi Ha Road from "G/IC" to "G/IC(3)" to reflect the as-built conditions.

The Notes and Explanatory Statement of the OZP are amended to take into account the above amendments. Opportunity is also taken to update the general information of various land use zones and the planning scheme area, where appropriate.

The draft Ngau Tau Kok and Kowloon Bay OZP No. S/K13/33, incorporating the amendments, is available for public inspection during office hours at (i) the Secretariat of the Town Planning Board, (ii) the Planning Enquiry Counters, (iii) the Kowloon District Planning Office, and (iv) the Kwun Tong

District Office.

Any person may make written representations in respect of the amendments to the Secretary of the Town Planning Board on or before May 21. Any person who intends to make a representation is advised to read the Town Planning Board Guidelines No. 29C on "Submission and Processing of Representations and Further Representations" (TPB PG-No. 29C).

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Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (March 21) released the latest grading of water quality for 10 gazetted beaches that are open for swimming.

Nine beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), and one as Fair (Grade 2).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Big Wave Bay Beach	Lido Beach
Casam Beach	Repulse Bay Beach
Clear Water Bay Second Beach	Silver Mine Bay Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach	Stanley Main Beach
Golden Beach	

Grade 2 beach is:

Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a tropical cyclone or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666. Members of the public can also obtain the latest daily water quality forecast information for all beaches that are open for swimming through the EPD's dedicated webpage on the beach water quality forecast (www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast).