

## [Labour Department to hold webinar on abolition of MPF offsetting arrangement](#)

The Labour Department will hold a webinar on the abolition of the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) offsetting arrangement on March 27 (Thursday) at 3.30pm. Employers, employees and human resources practitioners are welcome to attend.

The abolition of MPF offsetting arrangement will be implemented on May 1 to improve the retirement protection of employees. The Government will at the same time launch the 25-year Subsidy Scheme for Abolition of MPF Offsetting Arrangement (SSA) to share out the severance payment/long service payment expenses of employers after the abolition. The key features of the abolition of MPF offsetting arrangement, the calculation of severance payment/long service payment after the abolition and the main points of the SSA will be introduced in the briefing.

The online briefing will be conducted in Cantonese via Zoom and admission is free of charge. The quota will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and the enrolment deadline is March 14 (Friday). The enrolment form can be downloaded from the thematic website of the abolition of MPF offsetting arrangement ([www.op.labour.gov.hk/en/pdf/Enrolment\\_Form\\_Mar\\_2025\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.op.labour.gov.hk/en/pdf/Enrolment_Form_Mar_2025_Eng.pdf)). For enquiries, please call 2852 3921.

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## [Appointments to Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education announced](#)

The Government announced today (February 20) the reappointment of five incumbent members, as well as the appointment of three new members, to the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education. The three new members are Dr Henry Ho Kin-chung, Ms Sabrina Ho Shuk-ying and Professor Dicky Tsang King-fung. Their appointments take effect today for a term of two years.

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, welcomed the appointments and reappointments. He said he believes that the newly appointed and reappointed members will provide valuable advice on the promotion of rule-of-law education.

Mr Lam also thanked the outgoing members, Mr Jonathan Chang, SC, and Mr Matthew Cheung for their contributions to the Steering Committee.

The membership of the Steering Committee is set out in the Appendix.

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## **Red flag hoisted at Silverstrand Beach**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (February 20) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Silverstrand Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

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## **Hong Kong Customs and Marine Police detected six large-scale maritime smuggling cases involving cigarettes and drugs during joint anti-smuggling operations (with photo)**

Hong Kong Customs and the Marine Police conducted joint operations from February 12 to 19 targeting large-scale maritime smuggling activities and six cases involving suspected illicit cigarettes and suspected dangerous drugs were detected. During the joint operations, a total of about 16.93 million sticks of suspected illicit cigarettes and 459 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds were seized.

Customs and police officers conducted anti-smuggling operations in Sai Kung and Lantau Island from February 13 to 16 and detected four suspected illicit cigarettes smuggling cases. A total of 4.1 million sticks of suspected illicit cigarettes, with an estimated market value of about \$19 million and a duty potential of about \$13.5 million, found in four goods vehicles and the waters nearby. The four goods vehicles involved in the cases were also detained.

At small hours on February 18, Customs found a suspicious unattended fishing vessel in Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter. Upon inspection, Customs

officers seized 12.83 million suspected illicit cigarettes, with an estimated market value of about \$57 million and a duty potential of about \$42 million, inside the compartments of the vessel.

Later on the same day, Customs intercepted a suspicious fishing vessel in the waters off Lamma Island, during which persons onboard the fishing vessel threw numerous nylon bags into the sea. Customs officers then took immediate action to board the vessel and retrieved the subject nylon bags from the water. Upon inspection, a total of about 459kg suspected cannabis buds, with an estimated market value of about \$118 million, were found inside the nylon bags. Three local men, aged between 44 and 60, suspected to be connected with the case were arrested in the operation.

Investigations on the above mentioned six cases are ongoing.

Being a government department primarily responsible for tackling smuggling activities, Customs has long been combating various smuggling activities at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies. Customs will continue co-operating and exchanging intelligence with the Police, Mainland and international law enforcement agencies, with targeted anti-smuggling operations carried out at suitable times to disrupt these activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

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

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

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



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## [CEPA Forum held today \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China co-organised the Forum on the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) Agreement on Trade in Services (Amendment Agreement II) today (February 19). The forum aimed to familiarise business sectors with the liberalisation measures and implementation arrangements of the Amendment Agreement II signed by both sides under the CEPA framework on October 9, 2024.

The HKSAR Government would like to express sincere gratitude to the Central Government for its support for the HKSAR, with the Ministry of Commerce and relevant authorities actively responding to the HKSAR Government's proposal of further opening up the Mainland market to Hong Kong in trade in services and signing the Amendment Agreement II, enabling more Hong Kong businesses and professionals to enter the Mainland market with more preferential treatments. The Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Ms Maggie Wong, and the Director-General of the Department of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs of the Ministry of Commerce, Mr Fan Shijie, attended the forum and delivered speeches.

Over 350 people, including representatives from local and foreign chambers of commerce, consulates, major trade associations and professional sectors, participated in the forum. The forum comprised three breakout sessions covering financial and legal services; audiovisual and telecommunications services; and other services (including construction and related engineering, medical, testing and certification, advertising, and tourism and travel related services). Representatives from over 20 central ministries and HKSAR Government bureaux and departments briefed participants at the forum on the content and implementation arrangements of the Amendment Agreement II, as well as the criteria and procedures for application for preferential treatments, and answered questions from the trade.

The Mainland and Hong Kong signed CEPA in 2003. CEPA has now been

upgraded to a comprehensive and modern free trade agreement, covering four major areas, namely Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment, and Economic and Technical Co-operation. The Amendment Agreement II introduces new liberalisation measures across a number of service sectors where Hong Kong enjoys competitive advantages, thus making it easier for Hong Kong service suppliers and professionals to set up enterprises and develop businesses in the Mainland, as well as enabling them to make contribution to the national development of new quality productive forces and solid progress in promoting high-quality development. The Amendment Agreement II came into effect on the day of signing and will be implemented on March 1.

