

Remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (September 24):

Reporter: My first question is, as the SNSO (Safeguarding National Security Ordinance) has stated that the CE has the power to issue a certificate to certify if a court case concerns national security, yesterday the court has heard that you have issued such a certificate for the HKU Students' Union Council case. So how many of such certificates have been issued in the past, and what cases were involved? My second question is, a French photojournalist working for the Associated Press was denied entry to Hong Kong earlier this month. What are the reasons behind and will it impact Hong Kong's image as an international city? Lastly, is there a time frame for Hong Kong to lift the ban on Japanese food imports after Beijing has agreed to lift the ban? Thank you.

Chief Executive: The Chief Executive certificate was issued in accordance with the law. It has been issued more than once, and it is issued whenever it is considered necessary, but all procedures for national security cases will be done in strict accordance with legal procedures and the relevant laws. I want to repeat again: we will deal with national security offences seriously, and we will enforce the law without hesitation, because national security offences are serious. I think we are doing this in the same way as what other jurisdictions are doing in connection with safeguarding national security.

Regarding the issue of discharge of radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea, I am aware that the relevant authorities of China and Japan have recently reached a consensus, and the consensus reads like this: the Japanese side will fulfil its obligation to avoid negative impacts on health and the environment and will continue to carry out impact assessments on the marine environment and ecosystems. Japan will establish a long-term international monitoring arrangement under the framework of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) to ensure China's participation, independent sampling, monitoring, and inter-laboratory comparisons. The two sides will commence science-based dialogue in the interest of life, health and the ecological environment. After the implementation of the independent sampling and monitoring activities, China will, based on the scientific evidence, consider to adjust the relevant measures. The Hong Kong SAR Government has all along accorded top priority to safeguard health and safety of the Hong Kong people. We emphasise scientific evidence. We have contacted the Commissioner's Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong SAR for more information and have also contacted the Consul-General of Japan for more details to ensure that the Hong Kong SAR Government will have access to sufficient scientific data and evidence to consider any adjustment possibility.

Regarding your question, all entries into Hong Kong must be considered in accordance with the prevailing immigration policies and relevant laws. The Immigration Department is doing the same as all other immigration authorities are doing in other jurisdictions; that is, they will look at the entries' characteristics and examine the entries in accordance with the policies and the laws. I think individuals will be considered according to their own cases, and we are doing it in no way different from other jurisdictions. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)

Visa-free arrangement for nationals of Georgia

The Immigration Department (ImmD) announced today (September 24) that, effective from September 30, 2024, nationals of Georgia who are holders of valid diplomatic, official and ordinary passports may visit Hong Kong visa-free for a stay of up to 30 days.

Currently, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passport holders may visit Georgia visa-free for a stay of up to 30 days.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Georgia is along on the Belt and Road. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, this visa-free arrangement will provide travel convenience for visitors from Georgia and strengthen the tourism, cultural and economic ties between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Georgia."

Secretary for Health receives vaccinations against seasonal influenza and COVID-19

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, received vaccinations against seasonal influenza and COVID-19 at Sai Wan Ho General Out-patient Clinic today (September 24). The Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee; the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam; the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), Dr Edwin Tsui; the Commissioner for Primary Healthcare of the Health Bureau, Dr Pang Fei-chau;

the Chairman of the Hospital Authority (HA), Mr Henry Fan; the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko; and frontline healthcare workers also echoed the move and were vaccinated.

Professor Lo said, "Seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. I strongly appeal to all members of the public to receive SIV early as it is now the best timing to get vaccinated for effective protection in the coming year against the influenza strains predicted by the World Health Organization in preparation for the possible winter or summer influenza seasons. Separately, individuals of high-risk priority groups should also receive an additional COVID-19 booster no less than six months after the last dose or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later) to enhance protection and reduce the risks of serious complications and death."

He continued, "To boost the SIV coverage rate among schoolchildren, special arrangements have been made under the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach Programme (SIVSOP) this year to offer a more flexible choice of vaccine options for kindergartens and childcare centres. They can choose both injectable inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccines (LAIV) (i.e. nasal vaccines) for the same or different outreach vaccination activities. Moreover, the DH will roll out a pilot scheme in which LAIV will be provided to primary and secondary schools that had indicated earlier this year their preference for arranging LAIV for their students."

At present, around 870 kindergartens and childcare centres (80 per cent) have already arranged vaccination activities for their schoolchildren. Among them, 246 schools will offer LAIV, eight schools will offer both IIV and LAIV, and the rest will offer IIV. Separately, around 610 primary schools (93 per cent) and around 390 secondary schools (77 per cent) have arranged vaccination activities for their students. Professor Lo added, "I call on those schools that have yet to join the outreach vaccination programme to enrol as soon as possible to seize the optimum timing for vaccination and do their part to provide the best protection for schoolchildren."

Hong Kong generally experiences two influenza seasons each year. The winter influenza season usually lies between January and March or April, whereas the summer influenza season typically runs from July to August. The overall influenza activity has remained at a low level since the end of the influenza season in late July this year. However, with reference to previous surveillance data, as the weather is expected to become cooler gradually, the CHP foresaw that the influenza activity level may rise at the end of the year. All citizens should receive SIV which can reduce the risks of serious illnesses and death.

The Government will launch the 2024/25 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programmes, including the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, the Government Vaccination Programme, the SIVSOP and the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme the day after tomorrow (September 26) to provide free or subsidised SIV for persons aged 50 or above (including the elderly living in residential care homes); adults aged 18 to 49 with underlying comorbidities; persons aged

6 months or above with immunocompromising conditions; pregnant women and healthcare workers etc.

Furthermore, individuals of the abovementioned groups should receive an additional COVID-19 booster in a timely manner regardless of the number of doses of COVID-19 vaccines received before for dual protection. A COVID-19 vaccine can be co-administered with, or separated from, an SIV under informed consent. The inactivated COVID-19 vaccines currently used in Hong Kong (i.e. Sinovac CoronaVac) will expire on October 3, and the vaccine supplier has confirmed that they will no longer produce inactivated COVID-19 vaccines. Members of the public who would like to receive an inactivated COVID-19 vaccine should make a booking as early as possible. Starting from October 4, only mRNA vaccines will be available under the Government's COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

For more details, members of the public may call the CHP at 2125 2125 or visit the [Vaccination Schemes page](#).

Firing practice for October 2024

Firing practice will take place at two military sites, namely the San Wai/Tai Ling Firing Range and the Tsing Shan Firing Range, next month (October).

Red flags or red lamps will be hoisted at the firing areas before and during firing practice. For their safety, people are advised not to enter the firing area.

Following are the dates and times for the firing practice sessions in October 2024:

San Wai/Tai Ling Firing Range

Date	Time
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October 2 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 3 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 4 (Friday)	8am-9pm
October 5 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 7 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 8 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
October 9 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 10 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 12 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 14 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 15 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
October 16 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 17 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 18 (Friday)	8am-9pm
October 19 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 21 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 22 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
October 23 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 24 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 25 (Friday)	8am-9pm
October 26 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 28 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 29 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
October 30 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 31 (Thursday)	8am-9pm

Tsing Shan Firing Range

Date	Time
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October 2 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 3 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 4 (Friday)	8am-9pm
October 5 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 7 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 8 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
October 9 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 10 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
October 12 (Saturday)	8am-9pm
October 14 (Monday)	8am-9pm
October 15 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
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October 30 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
October 31 (Thursday)	8am-9pm

Red flags hoisted at some beaches

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 (September 24) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Shek O Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; Hung Shing Yeh Beach and Pui O Beach in Islands District; and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.