

Selection completed for third cohort of School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (July 4) announced the completion of the selection process of the third cohort of the School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme (SNDAS).

A total of 777 valid SNDAS nominations were received from 405 secondary schools for the third cohort. In the past few months, the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities participating in the Scheme arranged interviews for the nominated students and carefully considered their individual merits. Firm offers were eventually made to 332 nominees prior to the release of the 2024 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination results, of which 326 have accepted the offers and will commence study on their chosen UGC-funded undergraduate programmes in September 2024 in a wide spectrum of disciplines including architecture, surveying and town planning, arts and humanities, business, computing and engineering, education, environmental studies, design, fine arts, language, law, medicine and health, music, sciences, social sciences and more. A breakdown by discipline of study is provided in the Annex.

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, was pleased to note the encouraging results of the third cohort of the SNDAS, in particular the continuing increase in the number of offers made to successful nominees.

"Talents of diversified skills and knowledge are essential to the future development of Hong Kong. The Government has long been attaching great importance to nurturing young people and is committed to enhancing the diversity of our education system, allowing students to realise their full potential through the creation of different opportunities and space for them. I am immensely appreciative of the secondary schools' nomination of, and the universities' support for, the SNDAS as well as their recognition of students' diverse talents," Dr Choi said.

The fourth cohort of the SNDAS will be open for applications by Secondary Six students taking the 2025 HKDSE Examinations and commencing their undergraduate studies in September 2025. Details of the application arrangements will be announced in due course.

The SNDAS was introduced in 2021 as part of the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum, which included enhancing the flexibility in university admissions. The eight UGC-funded universities had designated a total of over 220 publicly funded undergraduate programmes to participate in the third cohort of the SNDAS and set admission criteria that are not based on HKDSE Examination results for individual programmes.

FEHD orders restaurant in Yuen Long to suspend business for 21 days

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene has ordered a general restaurant in Yuen Long to suspend business for 21 days, as the licensee repeatedly breached the Food Business Regulation (FBR) by extending the business area illegally.

The restaurant, located at Shop 1 on the ground floor of Ying Cheung House, 21-23 Kau Yuk Road, Yuen Long, was ordered to suspend business from today (July 4) to July 24.

"Four convictions for the above-mentioned breach were recorded against the restaurant licensee in December of last year, with a total fine of \$28,500 levied by the court. Ninety demerit points were also registered against the licensee under the department's demerit points system, resulting in a seven-day and a 14-day business suspensions to be executed consecutively," a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said.

The spokesman reminded the licensees of food premises to comply with the FBR and other relevant regulations, or their licences could be suspended or cancelled.

Licensed food premises are required to exhibit its licence and a sign at a conspicuous place of the premises, indicating that the premises have been licensed. A list of licensed food premises is available on the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/licence-foodPremises-search.html).

Summer Library Festival 2024 broadens reading horizons through appreciation of architecture (with photos)

â€‹ The Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will launch the Summer Library Festival 2024, with the theme "Walking into Architecture" in July and August. Through a range of diverse on-site and online activities such as workshops, storytelling

theatres, reading clubs, subject talks and book displays, members of the public of different ages are encouraged to broaden their reading horizons and deepen their understanding of the architecture of the country.

â€œ In addition to book displays related to architecture in public libraries in various districts, a series of parent-child workshops on the architecture of the Mainland and Hong Kong will take place at public libraries in the 18 districts, where parents and children will know more about the architecture of the Mainland and Hong Kong through creating mini fotomo models and mini neon signs together, or through making creative handicrafts of buildings with Chinese characteristics. Teenagers and adults can participate in workshops designated for them, namely the Coffee Shanshui Art Workshop and the Paper Art Workshop, in which participants will draw small-size landscape paintings with materials such as coffee and dry pastels, or make paper crafts showing the unique cityscapes on the Mainland and in Hong Kong.

â€œ Public libraries in various districts will organise storytelling theatres and parent-child musical sessions, where fascinating stories will be illustrated in different ways to cultivate children's interest in reading. Children will learn about buildings with special characteristics on the Mainland and in Hong Kong, and experience the joy of appreciating stories at the storytelling theatres, which will be conducted in Cantonese, Putonghua or English. They will also make story-related handicrafts. The musical "Writing Hero" will be performed by the Theatre Wonderland in Cantonese at the parent-child musical sessions to bring children joyfully into the world of writing and reading.

â€œ Furthermore, children can participate in online live workshops to learn about techniques on Western painting, watercolour painting and ink painting under the theme of ancient Chinese architecture. The HKPL will also organise online reading clubs and storytelling sessions featuring elements of Mainland and Hong Kong architecture. Videos about drawing techniques and handicrafts will be uploaded onto the HKPL YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/hkplgovhkhchannel) and the LCSD Edutainment Channel (www.lcsd.gov.hk/edutainment/en) in phases.

â€œ Public libraries in Kwun Tong District, Sham Shui Po District and Wong Tai Sin District will organise activities with different topics in summer to encourage members of the public to learn more about and make effective use of the library resources in the districts. These activities include sessions of balloon twisting and magic performance; storytelling sessions guiding children to learn more about the history of Hong Kong's return to the motherland; handicraft workshops on Hong Kong's intangible cultural heritage; and parent-child workshops on the cultural meaning of the Olympic Games.

â€œ All activities are free of charge. Seat reservations or admission tickets are required for some of the programmes. Details of the Summer Library Festival 2024 can be found on www.hkpl.gov.hk/slf2024-en. Members of the public can also visit the "Reading is Joyful" Facebook page (www.facebook.com/readingisjoyful) and Instagram page

(www.instagram.com/readingisjoyful) for more information on different events of the HKPL.

Some of the Summer Library Festival 2024 programmes are under the Chinese Culture Promotion Series. The LCSD has long been promoting Chinese history and culture through organising an array of programmes and activities to enable the public to learn more about the broad and profound Chinese culture. For more information, please visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ccpo/index.html.



[Land Registry releases statistics for](#)

first half of 2024

The Land Registry today (July 4) released its statistics for the first half of 2024.

Land registration

* The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration for the first half of 2024 was 35 089 (+51.2 per cent compared with the second half of 2023 and +0.8 per cent compared with the first half of 2023).

* The total consideration for these agreements for the first half of 2024 was \$280.93 billion (+52.1 per cent compared with the second half of 2023 but -4.2 per cent compared with the first half of 2023).

* The number of assignments of building units for the first half of 2024 was 35 425 (-6.2 per cent compared with the second half of 2023 and -27.2 per cent compared with the first half of 2023).

* The total consideration for these assignments for the first half of 2024 was \$213.74 billion (-20.3 per cent compared with the second half of 2023 and -33.5 per cent compared with the first half of 2023).

Land search

* The number of searches of land registers made by the public for the first half of 2024 was 2 170 566 (-2.9 per cent compared with the second half of 2023 and -7.6 per cent compared with the first half of 2023).

Speech by CE at South China Morning Post China Conference 2024 (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the South China Morning Post China Conference 2024 today (July 4):

Ms Catherine So (Chief Executive Officer of the South China Morning Post), Ms Tammy Tam (Editor-in-Chief of the South China Morning Post), Mr Phil Witherington (President and Chief Executive Officer of Manulife Asia), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I would like to, first of all, thank Phil for bringing up

this new card-type travel document, to have great convenience to visit the Mainland. I would like to highlight that it is actually a big policy breakthrough. It may be a step in your convenience, but it is a big step in making that breakthrough. It is, in fact, the second step because the first step I have done to create convenience for non-Chinese friends in Hong Kong is that for any staff of companies setting up in Hong Kong, there has been a fast-track procedure for them to apply for a visa to visit the Mainland. One application is valid for two to three years and is multi-entry. So that is step one and now we have step two, and there will be more steps coming. I hope that I will deliver more to you in due course.

I'm delighted to be here, once again, for this annual conference of the South China Morning Post. This is a much welcomed occasion to update you all, on Hong Kong's distinct advantages as a global city and our deepening economic integration with the Mainland, as well as the wide-ranging promise for the city and for the companies and start-ups, the entrepreneurs, innovators and young people looking to Hong Kong for long-term opportunities, and the flourishing future we can create. Working together.

Just three days ago, we celebrated the 27th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

In doing so, we also celebrated the achievements of the unique "one country, two systems" principle, and the accomplishments of our economy and our community.

Last month, the World Competitiveness Yearbook, published by the International Institute for Management Development, named Hong Kong the world's fifth-most competitive economy, rising by two positions in a year.

Last year, the same Institute ranked our talent competitiveness second in Asia. Also last year, the annual report on Economic Freedom of the World ranked Hong Kong second, globally.

It's not surprising then, that more than 320 Mainland and overseas companies set up or expanded their businesses in Hong Kong through the first six months of this year, thanks to Invest Hong Kong, our designated investment promotion agency. That, ladies and gentlemen, represents a year-on-year rise of 43 per cent. These companies come from 33 economies from across the globe. Together, their investment to Hong Kong, so far, is close to US\$5 billion, and they have created more than 3 500 job opportunities here.

And they are far from alone. Hong Kong is home to over 9 000 Mainland and overseas companies, including about 50 strategic enterprises here through OASES – the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, set up by this Government a year and a half ago. These strategic enterprises are pioneers in different innovation and technology fields, and they are investing more than US\$5 billion in Hong Kong and creating over 13 000 jobs. Most of those jobs, let me add, will be in scientific research and management positions.

Thanks to the unique "one country, two systems", Hong Kong has the unique advantages of enjoying the bountiful support from our country, China, while maintaining unparalleled connectivity with the world. Our robust legal system, together with other long-standing institutional strengths such as the free flow of information, capital, goods and people, a low and simple tax regime, with both Chinese and English as official languages, ensure our strategic role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder" between the Mainland and the rest of the world.

Hong Kong champions multilateralism and accords high priority to establishing partnerships with different economies. Our connections with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) have grown since the ASEAN-Hong Kong, China Free Trade Agreement came into force in June 2019. Last summer, I led a high-profile business delegation to a number of ASEAN countries to pave the way for broader co-operation.

Aside from ASEAN, we will continue to strengthen regional collaboration, say with the Middle East, and enhance our links with Europe and other Western markets, thereby serving well as an important node of the national and international dual circulation, creating new opportunities and fresh impetus.

Looking ahead, we will seize both national and international opportunities, and board the "fast train" of our country's development. Thanks to our country's unwavering support, I'm confident that the opportunities will only continue to expand.

On Monday, the Mainland announced that non-Chinese Hong Kong permanent residents would be eligible for a special Mainland travel permit, which Phil has mentioned, allowing them to enjoy self-service clearance at Mainland control points.

Issuance of the new travel permits begins next Wednesday. This groundbreaking measure underlines Hong Kong's singular status under "one country, two systems". And I have no doubt that they will attract companies and talent from around the world to Hong Kong, a perfect springboard for their pursuit of the abundant opportunities of China.

On Monday, as well, I welcomed the prospect of continuing liberalisation of trade in services under CEPA – the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement.

We have largely reached a consensus on new measures to further open up the Mainland's trade in services with Hong Kong. They will go a long way in deepening business co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland. For 21 years now, CEPA has enabled Hong Kong companies, including companies set up in Hong Kong by overseas enterprises and professionals, to enjoy preferential treatment in developing their businesses in the Mainland.

That highlights Hong Kong's great advantage – our dual gateway role between the Mainland market and the global market. And with the continuing

development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, our gateway role will only grow.

With a population of some 87 million, and an economic output exceeding RMB14 billion last year, the Greater Bay Area is among the most economically vibrant regions of our country. With less than 1 per cent of the country's land area, the Greater Bay Area generates one-ninth of China's GDP.

The Hong Kong SAR Government attaches great importance to the Greater Bay Area and its role in our future. More than a key national strategy, it is the obvious entry point for Hong Kong to integrate into the country's national development.

Take financial services as an example. In February, the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme was enhanced.

It now offers an increased personal investment limit and enlarged product coverage. It also enables securities companies to participate in the Scheme. At the end of April 2024, more than 110 000 individual Greater Bay Area investors had participated in the Scheme, with cross-boundary fund remittances surpassing RMB50.7 billion.

In the last year or so, we have also seen the introduction of Northbound Trading of Swap Connect, and the Hong Kong Dollar-Renminbi Dual Counter Model, both of which are innovative measures to connect the world-class financial markets of Hong Kong and the Mainland.

The Hong Kong Dollar-Renminbi Dual Counter Model, which I had just mentioned, allows investors to buy stock through either Hong Kong dollars or Renminbi, and sell them in the same way. In other words, you can actually convert your currencies through trading the stocks under this Dual Counter Model. That means it gives you the investment return, as well as saving the currency exchange expenses.

The Shenzhen Municipal Government has issued offshore, Renminbi-denominated bonds in Hong Kong three years in a row. In doing so, they have reinforced Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre and the world's largest offshore Renminbi business hub.

Innovation and technology (I&T) is another policy priority of the Hong Kong SAR Government. It too, fits smartly with the Greater Bay Area's development plans.

Last year's Global Innovation Index named the Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou science and technology cluster second among the world's top 100 clusters, for the fourth consecutive year.

We are also working with the Shenzhen Government on the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Co-operation Zone in the Lok Ma Chau Loop. This massive I&T development transcends the boundary between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, and takes in both the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology

Park in Hong Kong, and the Shenzhen Park.

In April, some 60 leading innovation and technology companies from nine economies signed MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) to set up their business in the Hong Kong Park.

These companies will bring to the Park strategic specialisations, ranging from life and health technology to new energy, microelectronics and much more.

Hong Kong offers the Greater Bay Area internationally recognised professional services.

Hong Kong legal practitioners can now obtain qualifications to practise, in specific civil and commercial matters, in the Greater Bay Area. With dual qualifications, and well versed with both the common law and Chinese law, our legal practitioners have an edge in providing one-stop services for cross-boundary transactions.

In addition, Hong Kong and other foreign-invested enterprises registered in Shenzhen's Qianhai area now have the option to adopt Hong Kong law as the applicable law. And those in the Mainland's Free Trade Zones can choose Hong Kong as the seat of arbitration in their civil and commercial contracts.

Similarly, companies and professionals in five disciplines – engineering, architecture, surveying, planning and landscape architecture – can provide direct services in the Greater Bay Area's nine Mainland cities through a simple registration system.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is just part of the good opportunities awaiting Hong Kong, and those of you who endeavour to thrive with this energetic city.

Looking at the year ahead, Hong Kong will focus our efforts in three main areas, developing the economy and improving people's livelihood, reinforcing Hong Kong's competitive edge and exploring new areas of growth, and seizing both national and international opportunities. We will unite and lead society in seeking innovation all the way.

My thanks, once again, to the South China Morning Post, for organising this annual global gathering. I wish you all a rewarding conference. And the summer of your life, right here in Hong Kong. Do enjoy every minute of it.

Thank you very much.

