

All gazetted beaches continue to meet bacteriological Water Quality Objective (with photos)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) released the 2024 Beach Water Quality Report today (April 1). The report reveals that all 42 gazetted beaches in Hong Kong continued to fully achieve the bacteriological Water Quality Objective (WQO) for bathing waters in that year, with 23 beaches ranked as "Good" and the remaining 19 ranked as "Fair". No beaches were ranked as "Poor" or "Very Poor".

An EPD spokesman said, "All gazetted beaches have fully complied with the WQO for 15 consecutive years since 2010.

"The satisfactory beach water quality over the years is attributed to various pollution control and environmental improvement measures implemented by the Government, including the enforcement of the Water Pollution Control Ordinance and Livestock Waste Control Scheme, extension of the sewerage network to the beach hinterland, and the implementation of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme.

"The EPD will continue to embrace the use of innovative technologies to enhance the effectiveness of environmental water quality management, with a view to protecting and improving beach water quality to safeguard the health of swimmers," the spokesman added.

The 2024 Beach Water Quality Report can be found at the EPD's website (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach).



Hong Kong Youth Symphonic Band Annual Concert "Echoes of the Harmony: An American Tapestry" to be held May 1

The Hong Kong Youth Symphonic Band (HKYSB) of the Music Office under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will hold its annual concert, this one entitled "Echoes of the Harmony: An American Tapestry", at 3pm on May 1 (Thursday) at the Concert Hall of Hong Kong City Hall.

The concert will be conducted by Music Office instructors Lee Sing-wan and Kevin Ling. The HKYSB will perform the jazz-infused "The Fast Lane" from the "Cinnamon Concerto", with Music Office instructor Lau Tsz-kit as saxophone soloist.

Other programme highlights include "The Nine", inspired by a historical event and conveying positive values such as compassion and unity; "Machu Picchu: City in the Sky", portraying the mystery and grandeur of the "golden city" of the Inca Empire; and "Foster Rhapsody", blending the characteristics of the classic folk melodies by renowned American composer Stephen Foster.

The HKYSB was formed in 1978 with the aim of nurturing young musicians and arousing greater interest in symphonic band music in Hong Kong. The Band currently has around 60 members and recruits annually by open audition. It has performed in Hong Kong and overseas, winning much acclaim.

Tickets priced at \$70, \$90 and \$115 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2796 1003 or 3842 7784 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/musicoffice.

Red flag hoisted at Stanley Main 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 (April 1) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

Welcome remarks by SDEV at opening ceremony of International Water Pioneers Summit (English only)

Following are the welcome remarks by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, at the opening ceremony of the International Water Pioneers Summit today (April 1):

Honourable Minister Li Guoying (the Minister of Water Resources), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you to Hong Kong and to this International Water Pioneers Summit. It is my honour to join prestigious water leaders on this significant occasion and to benefit from discussions among experts.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the co-organisers, including Hong Kong branch of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and the Hong Kong branch of the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering. I thank them for their collaboration and generous effort to make the Summit possible. My heartfelt thanks also goes to the Minister of Water Resources of China and his team for their presence in this Summit. Your presence means a lot to us. I also wish to thank all our distinguished speakers and moderators from the Mainland and overseas for accepting our invitations and travelling to Hong Kong to participate in this Summit. We are honoured to welcome an exceptional lineup of speakers and moderators from nine countries across four continents here today. They are distinguished experts and leaders of international water and health organisations and senior government officials. With these renowned leaders sharing their insights, I am sure the upcoming exchanges would be inspiring and rewarding.

From the Hong Kong Palace Museum to the theme of the Summit

Today's venue, the Hong Kong Palace Museum showcasing the rich tapestry of Chinese art and culture, is a setting particularly fit for the Summit. Water is the essence of life and the cornerstone of human civilisation. It also has symbolic meanings in the Chinese culture. Most of you would have come across the Exhibition of Chinese Water Culture in the foyer before entering this Auditorium. The exhibition explains the origin, symbolism, philosophy and wisdom of water through the lens of Chinese culture. It also reminds us how water has shaped human civilisation, culture and connections.

The supply of Dongjiang water from the Mainland is a showcase of the Chinese water culture. It is not just an engineering achievement to address

Hong Kong's water demand. More importantly, it is a touching demonstration of the core value in Chinese culture, "èiāifā-1ā°'" in Chinese, which means "family connections are inseparable". The supply of Dongjiang water underscores the deep bonding between our country and Hong Kong as a special administrative region, as well as the unwavering love of our Motherland for Hong Kong. The extended spirit of unity and the sense of mission extending beyond the family to make the world a better place, serves as a guiding principle for us to work together to foster a community of life against the global water challenges.

With the growing impacts of global climate change and increasing pressure on how best we should use the finite resources around the world, the sustainable management of water is no longer optional but imperative. The theme of the Summit, "Smart Water · High-Quality Development", is undoubtedly very close to our hearts as it captures the urgency and importance of our having to overcome challenges we face nowadays. We need collective responses. We need innovative and actionable solutions. We also need forward-thinking strategies. Today's Summit comes in time.

The theme of the Summit – "Smart Water · High-Quality Development"

So how can we achieve "Smart Water · High-Quality Development"? Our morning session will focus on the high-quality development of water supply and technologies in response to global crises, the essential co-ordination of water, economy, and ecology for sustainable growth, and the transformative role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in enhancing water management.

And we all know that the reliability and safety of water supplies are crucial to public health. So in the afternoon session, our speakers will lead us in delving into crucial strategies and technological advances for developing low-carbon, as well as green urban and rural water systems. We will also touch on recent developments in drinking water safety, and the challenges and opportunities in protecting health through water, adaptability, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

The special panel discussion – Belt and Road

The Belt and Road Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 has connected countries, regions and continents through advancing infrastructure development and strengthening collaboration in various aspects. To bolster high-quality co-operation in water management among countries along the Belt and Road, a special panel discussion is arranged in this Summit to showcase successful examples of collaboration and highlight how shared expertise and resources can pave the way for sustainable water management across borders.

Special keynote speeches on the Dongjiang Water Supply

Another highlight of today's programme is the special keynote session on the Dongjiang water supply to Hong Kong, which is scheduled to take place

later in the afternoon. I am sure that the renowned speakers would provide valuable insights on this mega water supply project, the achievement in safeguarding the water quality of the Dongjiang water and a great strive taken over the years in advancing the operation and maintenance through smart technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the significance of this Summit lies not only in the exchange of knowledge but also in the spirit of collaboration it fosters. Water is not just a resource, it is a lifeline of the ecosystems, economies and communities to where we belong.

As we embark on today's discussions, let us remember that the challenges we face can only be solved through collective efforts. I encourage everyone here to actively engage in the discussions. Once again, a warm welcome to all of you and I wish the Summit every success. Thank you.

DH's first briefing seminar on "1+" mechanism for new drugs well received

The Department of Health (DH) yesterday (March 31) held the first briefing seminar on the "1+" mechanism for new drugs with an introduction of the requirements for registration of pharmaceutical products under this mechanism, as well as the upcoming workshops on good regulatory practices and pre-new drug application (NDA) meetings. The DH aims to work with the pharmaceutical industry to achieve the goals of early consultation to enhance quality and efficiency throughout the process so that registration approval can be expedited, thereby bringing more good drugs for use in Hong Kong.

"The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" announced that a consultation service for NDAs under the "1+" mechanism will be introduced to enhance the efficiency of processing relevant applications. The consultation service comprises briefing seminars, workshops and pre-NDA meetings. Yesterday's seminar was well received and was attended by 76 representatives from pharmaceutical and consultation companies inside or outside Hong Kong, as well as scientific research institutions. This marks the beginning of the consultation service. The DH will organise two more seminars on April 21 and May 16 this year. For further details and to register for future seminars, please visit the Drug Office's thematic [webpage](#) on the "1+" mechanism.

The DH will also organise workshops starting from June this year to provide guidance and sharing of good practices and real-life experiences on submitting applications through the "1+" mechanism. The DH will also offer to hold pre-NDA meetings with potential "1+" registration applicants starting from the second half of this year, providing specific guidance to assist in their planning of the NDA approval process and improve the quality of

application documents to enhance the efficiency of the whole process. Details of the arrangements of the workshops and meetings will be announced in due course.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has implemented the "1+" mechanism since November 1, 2023, to facilitate the registration of new drugs for treating life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government has extended the "1+" mechanism to all new drugs from November 1, 2024, including all new chemical or biological entities and new indications, and vaccines and advanced therapy products. Under the "1+" mechanism, new drugs which are supported by local clinical data and recognised by local relevant experts can be applied for registration in Hong Kong by submitting approval from the drug regulatory authority of one of the reference places (instead of two in the past).

The "1+" mechanism serves to attract more new drugs from different parts of the world seeking approval for registration in Hong Kong, giving patients more choices and further strengthening the local capacity for drug evaluation while enhancing the development of relevant software, hardware and expertise with a view to progressing towards "primary evaluation". Since the implementation of the "1+" mechanism, a total of 11 new drugs have been approved under this mechanism. The DH has been promoting the "1+" mechanism through different channels, and so far, has received 460 enquiries from 120 pharmaceutical companies, including those from overseas and the Mainland.

Meanwhile, the Government will continue its efforts to reform the approval mechanism for drugs and medical devices. These include putting forward a timetable for establishing the Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation and charting a roadmap towards "primary evaluation" in the first half of this year, aiming to spur the growth of new industries in pharmaceutical and medical device research, and development and testing.