

Government spokesman's response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the meeting between the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council today (January 24), a Government spokesman responded as follows:

The Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, and representatives from relevant government departments this afternoon met pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council for 1 hour 15 minutes and had a candid dialogue to clarify misunderstandings on the measure to adjust the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from 60 to 65.

The Government spokesman reiterated that the aim of adjusting the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 is not to cut expenses, but to encourage able-bodied adults aged up to 64 to engage in employment by extending CSSA employment support services to them. The Government will introduce a new Employment Support Supplement under the CSSA Scheme to provide able-bodied adult recipient aged 60 to 64 with a monthly sum of \$1,060 per recipient to encourage them to join the labour market and remain in employment. The Government will closely monitor the implementation of the measure, continuously listen to different views and explore areas for improvement during the process.

Moreover, the Social Welfare Department will assist these CSSA recipients to participate in the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs will assist these recipients in a caring manner, help them get access to up-to-date labour market information, arrange job matching, assess their needs and provide them with tailor-made and focused employment assistance services. The main objective of the above arrangement is to assist the able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 in joining the workforce, not forcing them to find jobs.

The Government spokesman also clarified that all persons with disabilities or persons in ill health and their family carers, or single parents and child carers with their youngest child aged below 12, do not have to participate in the employment support programme. Persons aged 60 to 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1, 2019, or had received elderly CSSA before and re-apply for CSSA also do not have to participate in the programme.

CFS follows up on prepackaged lemon juice concentrate suspected to contain undeclared preservative incident

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (January 24) that according to the latest information provided by the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission, the recall of the prepackaged lemon juice concentrate produced in Italy which was suspected to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the product's food label had been expanded. The CFS' follow-up investigation found that the importer concerned had imported another four batches of the affected lemon juice. The CFS advised consumers who are allergic to sulphur dioxide to refrain from consuming the affected products. The trade should also stop using or selling the products concerned immediately.

Product details are as follows:

(1) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice/Zitronensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrilemon
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 200 millilitres per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(2) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice/Zitronensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrilemon
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 1 litre per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(3) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice-Lime/Limettensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrigreen
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 200 millilitres per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(4) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice-Lime/Limettensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrigreen
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 1 litre per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

A CFS spokesman said, " The CFS announced earlier that a batch of the abovementioned brand of lemon juice was suspected to contain sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the food label. According to latest information on the expansion of recall of the product concerned provided by RASFF, CFS conducted follow-up investigation and found that the importer concerned, Coils

Electronic Co. Ltd, had also imported the above four batches of affected lemon juice which contained sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the food labels and some of them were sold. The CFS has instructed the importer concerned also to initiate a recall of the affected batches of the products. Members of the public may call the importer's hotline at 3960 9349 during office hours for enquiries about the recall."

Sulphur dioxide is a water soluble preservative of low toxicity. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is on-going.

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 24) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection.

The case involves a two-year-old boy with long-term medical condition, who has presented with fever since January 15 and developed cough, runny nose, decreased appetite and irritability since January 21. He was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for medical attention today and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit there for management. He was transferred to Queen Mary Hospital for further management this evening.

His nasopharyngeal swab tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with septic shock. He is now in a critical condition.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had not received seasonal influenza vaccination for the current season and had no travel history during the incubation period. His mother and elder brother had developed upper respiratory tract infection symptoms and are in a stable condition. His other home contact has remained asymptomatic so far.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"The latest surveillance data indicated that the local seasonal influenza activity may continue to rise in the period ahead. We urge the community to continue heightening its vigilance against seasonal influenza. As young children are particularly affected in this influenza season, we appeal to parents who have not yet arranged vaccination for their children in

this season to do so as soon as possible to strengthen their personal protection," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Apart from children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are also urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. Medical advice should be sought promptly if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people," the spokesman added.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).

CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at primary school in Sheung Shui

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 24) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at a primary school in Sheung Shui, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak involves eight boys and 12 girls aged 8 to 10, who have developed vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever since January 22. Among them, 19 sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. All patients have been in a stable condition.

Officers of the CHP conducted a site visit and provided health advice to the staff of the school concerning proper and thorough disinfection, proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene. The school has been put under medical surveillance.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP advised members of the public to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the Health Education Hotline (2833 0111) for more information.

SFST visits Yuen Long District

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, visited Yuen Long District this afternoon (January 24).

Mr Lau first had a meeting with the Chairman of Yuen Long District Council, Mr Shum Ho-kit, and other members, during which they exchanged views on issues of concern including implementation details of the Caring and Sharing Scheme, district banking services and loan-to-value ratios for property mortgages.

He then proceeded to Youth College (Tin Shui Wai) and the Hotel and Tourism Institute (Tin Shui Wai) of the Vocational Training Council, where he was briefed on their teaching philosophy and facilities. He commended the teaching staff for striving to provide an interactive learning environment for students and assisting them to acquire knowledge and skills for further studies and employment.

As the visit was done during lesson time, in addition to touring the training facilities Mr Lau also joined the students in making bread and observed some hairdressing training. He encouraged the students to make the best out of their classes and equip themselves for future career development.

Finally, Mr Lau went to the Mutual Help Child Care Centre operated by the Tin Shui Wai Women Association Limited to see the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project provided there. He chatted with child carers to learn more about the training they have received and details of the programme. Those serving as child carers are mainly from low-income or new-arrival families.

The programme provides needy parents with flexible child care support services.