

Cluster of Rhinovirus cases in Kowloon Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Kowloon Hospital made the following announcement today (May 30):

Three patients (aged 41 to 67) and a staff member in a male infirmary ward of the Rehabilitation Department presented with respiratory symptoms since May 25. Appropriate viral tests were arranged for the patients and their test results were positive for Rhinovirus. The patients concerned are being treated under isolation with stable condition. The staff member is currently on leave.

Limited admission to the ward has been imposed. Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

CHP investigates two food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 30) investigating two food poisoning clusters affecting four persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent food-borne diseases.

The first cluster involved one man and one woman, aged 40 and 45, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting about seven to 10 hours after consuming ready-to-eat cooked food bought from a supermarket for dinner at home on May 23.

The second cluster also involved one man and one woman, aged 46 and 51, who developed similar symptoms about 10 to 11 hours after having the same ready-to-eat cooked food bought from the same supermarket at home the same evening.

All those affected sought medical advice. One from each cluster was discharged upon hospitalisation, and their stool specimens tested positive for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. All patients are now in a stable condition.

"We have alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

To prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and eating utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.

Task Force on Professional Development of Teachers convenes meeting

The Task Force on Professional Development of Teachers held a meeting this afternoon (May 30).

The Task Force was set up in November 2017 to study the feasible options of establishing a professional ladder for teachers; the ranking arrangement of school management of primary, secondary and special schools; and the timetable for an all-graduate teaching force.

At its meeting today, the Task Force consolidated various preliminary directional recommendations on enhancing the professional development of teachers, discussed the drafting of the consultation document, and deliberated on the detailed arrangements for the upcoming public consultation, including the timetable for consultation, targets and means of collecting views.

The Chairperson of the Task Force, Dr Carrie Willis, said, "The Task Force attaches great importance to the views of stakeholders. Extensive consultation on the directional recommendations drawn up by the Task Force

will be conducted to collect in-depth and specific views from different stakeholders, which will serve as invaluable references of the Task Force in the course of formulating specific recommendations. The Task Force expects that the specific recommendations to be submitted to the Government would be practicable and effective in promoting professional development of teachers, so as to further enhance the professionalism of teachers in Hong Kong."

The Task Force plans to conduct a consultation on the directional recommendations for two months starting from June 2018, and aims to submit its report and recommendations to the Education Bureau in early 2019.

Fraudulent website related to Hang Seng Bank, Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Hang Seng Bank, Limited on fraudulent website, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on [the HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the website concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the website should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

LCQ22: Prohibiting the trade of products containing ingredients from bear bile

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

At present, the import and export of Chinese herbal medicines, proprietary Chinese medicines and related products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders are regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586). Given that the practice of extracting bile from live bears is extremely cruel and inhumane, a number of international organisations which are concerned about animal welfare have in recent years actively called upon various countries to step up the regulation of the trade of products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quantity of products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders which were legally imported into Hong Kong in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by place of origin); whether it knows, among such products, the respective quantities of those sold in Hong Kong and transshipped to the Mainland and to other places;

(2) given that the international activities of illegal hunting and killing of wild bears have all along remained rampant owing to the huge profits that may be generated by the sale of products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders, coupled with the report that the Huanggang customs and excise authorities on the Mainland have earlier on seized at the Huanggang Port 13 bear gall bladders with a total weight of 297.71 grams from a private car travelling to the Mainland, whether the authorities will step up the law enforcement efforts in Hong Kong and raise the relevant penalty level to combat the illegal import and export of products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders;

(3) whether the authorities will enact legislation expeditiously to impose a total ban on (i) the import and export of products containing ingredients from bear gall bladders and (ii) any form of trading in bear gall bladders; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as some Chinese medicine experts have pointed out that some clinical researches have proved that certain Chinese herbal medicines have the same efficacy as bear gall bladders, whether the authorities will step up their efforts in public education to avoid using bear gall bladders in medicine by members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Department of Health and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), a consolidated reply to the four parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is committed to the protection of endangered species and implements the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 586) to fulfill the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) requirements in regulating the trade in CITES-

listed species. Currently, all bear species of the family Ursidae are listed in Appendix I or Appendix II of CITES and are regulated by the Ordinance. According to the Ordinance, commercial trade in Appendix I species of wild origin is prohibited. Import of Appendix II species, including traditional Chinese medicinal materials, proprietary Chinese medicines (pCms) and products, must first obtain a valid CITES export permit issued by the CITES management authority of the exporting place, and be inspected by authorised officer upon arrival in Hong Kong. In the past five years, the majority of bear bile or pCm/products containing bear bile imported into Hong Kong were originated from Russian brown bears, which is listed in CITES Appendix II. The bear bile and products re-exported from Hong Kong was shipped to Japan. As local possession of non-living Appendix II species for commercial purposes is exempted from the requirement of obtaining a License to Possess, we do not have information on the quantity of bear bile and its products that sold locally. The records of import and re-export of bear bile and its products over the past five years are tabulated below:

Import records:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Species	Brown Bear (App. II)	Brown Bear (App. II)	Brown Bear (App. II)	Brown bear, American black bear (App.II)	Brown Bear (App. II)
Product (Quantity)	Medicine (0.75 Kg)	Medicine (22.27 Kg) Bear bile(15.23 Kg)	Medicine (9.46 Kg) Bear bile (7.75 Kg)	Medicine (15.62 Kg+ 72,750 bottles) Bear bile (11.50 Kg)	Medicine (6.31Kg +117,450pcs) Bear bile (9.59 Kg)
Exporting place	Japan	Japan and Russia	Japan and Russia	Japan and Russia	Japan and Russia
Place of Origin	Russia	Russia	Russia	Russia and Canada	Russia

Re-export records:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Species	Brown Bear (App. II)	—	—	Brown Bear (App. II)	Brown Bear (App. II)
Product (Quantity)	Bear bile powder (11.06 Kg)	—	—	Bear bile powder (4.75 Kg)	Bear bile powder (4.80 Kg)
Destination	Japan	—	—	Japan	Japan
Place of origin	Russia	—	—	Russia	Russia

(2) to (3) The AFCD has been working closely with the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department to combat the illegal import and export of endangered species and curb the smuggling of products containing or claiming to contain bear bile components. In order to provide a sufficiently strong deterrent against illicit wildlife trade, and to send a clear signal to the international and local communities that the Government is committed to the protection of endangered species and to combating endangered species smuggling, the penalties for offences under the Ordinance have been amended in early 2018 and the maximum penalty has been significantly increased to a fine of \$10 million and an imprisonment for 10 years. The objective of CITES is to strengthen trade controls through adoption of effective measures among governments of the contracting parties, so as to effectively protect the endangered species of wild fauna and flora and ensure that the sustainable use of wild fauna and flora will not be affected by international trade. CITES does not impose regulation on the methods of collecting specimens of endangered species. We will continue to pay attention to the international developments for whether we should enact legislation to ban the import of bear bile products and any form of bear bile sales and trading.

(4) It is generally considered in the Chinese medicine field that bear gall bladders have significant efficacy in the treatment of critical, acute, serious and rare or complex illnesses, playing an important role in Chinese medicine clinical treatment. The clinical effects of bear gall bladders in the treatment mentioned above cannot be substituted by other herbal medicines, and no artificially synthesised substitutes are available at the moment. The Chinese Medicines Board (CMB) under the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (note) has discussed the use of bear gall bladders in pCms. Having considered the uniqueness of the medicinal properties, functions and usage of bear gall bladders and the balance between animal rights and utilisation of natural resources, the CMB currently accepts the use of bear gall bladders as active ingredients of pCms for medical treatment, provided that the products meet the requirements of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549) (CMO), the Ordinance and CITES.

The CMB will continue to closely keep in view international developments about the medicinal value and use of bear gall bladders, and continue to require the medicine traders concerned to comply with the CMO and other laws in Hong Kong.

Note: The Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong is a statutory body established under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. The Council is responsible for implementing regulatory measures for Chinese medicine. The main purpose for regulation of Chinese medicine is to protect public health and consumers' rights and to ensure the professional standard of Chinese medicine practice and the trade of Chinese medicines through "self-regulation".