

# Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 27) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From May 19 to 25, the CHP recorded two community-acquired LD cases:

1. A male patient, aged 70 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Kwun Tong District; and
2. A male patient, aged 61 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Tuen Mun District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of May 25, 35 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain

humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

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â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2  $\mu\text{m}$  filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

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# Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on May 24 to noon today (May 27), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 316 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" ([www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme\\_rafs/programme\\_rafs\\_fc\\_01\\_30\\_Nuclear\\_Event\\_and\\_Food\\_Safety.html](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html)).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 150 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website ([www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological\\_testing/Radiological\\_Test.html](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html)).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website ([www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 54 231 samples of food imported from Japan (including 35 086 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 13 738 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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# External Merchandise Trade Statistics for April 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (May 27) the external merchandise trade statistics for April 2024. In April 2024, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 11.9% and 3.7% respectively.

In April 2024, the value of total exports of goods increased by 11.9% over a year earlier to \$378.7 billion, after a year-on-year increase by 4.7% in March 2024. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 3.7% over a year earlier to \$388.9 billion in April 2024, after a year-on-year increase by 5.3% in March 2024. A visible trade deficit of \$10.2 billion, equivalent to 2.6% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in April 2024.

For the first four months of 2024 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods increased by 11.9% over the same period in 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 6.9%. A visible trade deficit of \$93.9 billion, equivalent to 6.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first four months of 2024.

Comparing the three-month period ending April 2024 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 3.6%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 2.3%.

## Analysis by country/territory

Comparing April 2024 with April 2023, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 15.7%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Malaysia (+38.4%), Thailand (+33.2%), Vietnam (+22.1%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+21.3%) and the Philippines (+16.3%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (-28.5%) and Japan (-13.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the USA (+17.1%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to the Netherlands (-24.3%) and Germany (-21.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+48.8%), Korea (+47.9%), Singapore (+45.1%), Malaysia (+11.9%) and the Mainland (+5.7%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from Taiwan (-19.6%) and the USA (-12.2%).

For the first four months of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (+37.2%), the Mainland (+20.5%), Vietnam (+18.8%), the United Arab Emirates (+15.6%) and the USA (+8.7%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to the Netherlands (-26.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (+55.6%), Vietnam (+40.6%), Singapore (+22.1%), Thailand (+10.6%) and the Mainland (+8.7%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from India (-11.1%) and Taiwan (-10.6%).

#### Analysis by major commodity

Comparing April 2024 with April 2023, increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$22.4 billion or +14.3%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$8.2 billion or +24.0%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$17.9 billion or +11.1%).

For the first four months of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$83.4 billion or +13.9%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$24.2 billion or +15.6%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$62.2 billion or +10.2%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$15.2 billion or +9.5%).

#### Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports grew notably in April 2024 over a year earlier. Exports to the Mainland and the United States rose visibly, while those to the European Union fell. Those to other major Asian markets showed mixed performance.

Looking ahead, Hong Kong's export performance should improve further if external demand holds up, though geopolitical tensions and a longer period of tight financial conditions will bring uncertainties. The Government will

monitor the situation closely.

#### Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for April 2024. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2021 to April 2024, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for April 2024 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for April 2024.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for April 2024 will be released in mid-June 2024.

The April 2024 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in April 2024 and will be available in early June 2024. Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230)).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel.: 2582 4691).

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## **Old and Valuable Tree in Central to be removed by LCSD**

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will remove an Old and Valuable Tree (OVT) at Justice Place in Central on June 1, in view of its very poor structural and health condition.

The tree concerned is a big-leaved fig (*Ficus virens*) listed on the Register of OVTs (registration number LCSD CW/142).

The original height of the tree is 13 metres. However, the tree crown was heavily damaged during super typhoon Mangkhut in 2018. Over the past six years, the LCSD had carried out regular inspections and maintenance of the

tree, including the application of compost to improve the growth environment, control the spreading of fungal pathogens by application of fungicides, and conduct pruning operations to reduce and remove decayed branches to alleviate the tree risk, etc. However, the health condition of the tree has continued to deteriorate, with the roots and trunk affected by fungal infection, with most major branches damaged or collapsed. Only the tree trunk remains standing with a height of a mere 4.5m, which is considered irrecoverable.

Having consulted the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel through the Tree Management Office and the Central and Western District Council on the removal proposal, and being supported, the LCSD plans to remove the tree on June 1 and replant a common saraca at the location.

A spokesman for the LCSD reiterated that the department will continue to adopt a prudent approach in inspecting and managing trees under its care. Removal of problematic trees will be undertaken only when no other viable risk mitigation measure is available.

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## **Import of poultry meat and products from areas in India, US and Korea suspended**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 27) that in view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Ranchi District of Jharkhand State in India, Morrison County of the State of Minnesota in the United States (US) and Changnyeong-gun of Gyeongsangnam-do Province in Korea, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with India for the import of poultry eggs but not for poultry meat. According to the Census and Statistics Department, in the first three months of this year, no eggs were imported from India; and Hong Kong imported about 16 480 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 7.73 million poultry eggs from the US, and about 230 kilograms of frozen poultry meat and about 5.94 million poultry eggs from Korea.

"The CFS has contacted the Indian, American and Korean authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman

said.