

Public urged to keep up anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (May 20) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in April was 4.2 per cent. The index in April remained at the lowest Level 1, indicating that the distribution of *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in the areas surveyed was not extensive.

In April, among the 64 survey areas, there was only one area (Hung Hom) with the area gravidtrap index exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. Positive gravidtraps in the district concerned were mostly located in the vicinity of private residential areas, public housing estates, schools, recreational and sports facilities and public places. The FEHD has collaborated with relevant government departments by taking immediate action to strengthen mosquito prevention and control work in the area concerned.

Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* in April was 1.2, which represented that an average of 1.2 *Aedes albopictus* adults were found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was not abundant in the survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different survey areas as well as information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "As summer is approaching, the FEHD reminds members of the public to carry out early effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes as mosquitoes breed quickly in the hot and rainy weather. The Government has long been concerned about mosquito infestation. The FEHD has continued to intensify the mosquito prevention and control work with relevant government departments in areas under their purview, including eliminating mosquito breeding places, applying larvicides, conducting fogging operations to eradicate adult mosquitoes, and placing mosquito trapping devices at suitable locations. The FEHD has also conducted site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support to assist them in formulating and implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. At the same time, the FEHD has strengthened publicity and education. Under the concerted efforts and collaboration of various parties, the index in April remained at a low level. The FEHD will continue to monitor the mosquito infestation in all districts, and will conduct prompt and effective mosquito prevention and control work. At the same time, members of the public are advised to continue the routine mosquito prevention and control work, especially the repair and maintenance of structures. Cracks and dents which may accumulate water and become potential breeding grounds should be filled and levelled to reduce the chance of mosquito breeding."

In view of a local dengue fever (DF) case earlier, the FEHD has immediately conducted surveys of mosquito infestation and has carried out

additional targeted mosquito prevention and control work (including conducting fogging operations, applying larvicides and placing mosquito trapping devices) in areas within a 250-metre radius of the residence and workplace of the patient, as well as places he had visited during the incubation and infectious period. The FEHD has also stepped up inspections and taken enforcement actions where necessary.

The FEHD will conduct a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The second phase of the territory-wide campaign was launched on April 15 and will run until June 16. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD will target areas that have drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, to remove accumulated water and carry out mosquito prevention and control work. To further enhance the effectiveness of mosquito control, the FEHD and relevant government departments have carried out the second phase of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations since May 2 to focus on eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, and called on property managements to arrange necessary repairs to their premises so as to minimise mosquito breeding places. Furthermore, intense adult control has been conducted by means of regular ultra-low volume fogging operations after the onset of the rainy season.

The FEHD appeals to members of the public to work together to carry out mosquito prevention and control measures early, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing water in vases and scrubbing their inner surfaces, removing water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. The FEHD also advises members of the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit DF. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high and Hong Kong has recorded 22 imported DF cases and one local DF case so far this year. Members of the public should stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

[Unemployment and underemployment](#)

statistics for February – April 2024

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for February – April 2024) released today (May 20) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.0% in February – April 2024, same as that in January – March 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1% in the two periods.

Comparing February – April 2024 with January – March 2024, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but the magnitudes were generally not large.

Total employment increased by around 5 700 from 3 688 400 in January – March 2024 to 3 694 100 in February – April 2024. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 7 700 from 3 800 100 to 3 807 800.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 2 000 from 111 700 in January – March 2024 to 113 700 in February – April 2024. The number of underemployed persons in February – April 2024 was 40 500, about the same as that in January – March 2024 (40 000).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at a low level of 3.0% in February – April 2024, same as January – March 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1%. The labour force increased further by 7 700 to 3 807 800, and the total employment bounced back by 5 700 to 3 694 100. The number of unemployed persons increased slightly by 2 000 to 113 700."

The unemployment rates of various sectors remained low in general in February – April 2024, mostly showing only small changes compared with the preceding three-month period.

Looking ahead, Mr Sun said, "Continued economic growth is expected to keep the labour market tight in the near term."

In February – April 2024, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 75 425 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year decrease of 29.2% and a decrease of 2.7% over the average figure in January – March 2024.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Embracing New Opportunities Job Fair at the Southorn Stadium in Wan Chai on May 30 and 31, 2024. About 60 employers will participate, offering a large number of vacancies. Job-seekers may also make use of the LD's Interactive Employment Service website, for obtaining more information on available vacancies.

Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for February – April 2024 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 69 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of February to April 2024.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html). More detailed analysis of the labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the report contains statistics for the quarter October – December 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter January – March 2024 will be available by end May 2024. Users can also browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the General Household Survey Section (3) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).

Composite Interest Rate: End of April 2024

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (May 20) the composite interest rate at the end of April 2024 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of

funds of banks, decreased by 8 basis points to 2.65 per cent at the end of April 2024, from 2.73 per cent at the end of March 2024 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The decrease in composite interest rate mainly reflected the decrease in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of April 2024 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, May 20, 2024 is 106 (up 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

â€‹The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, May 18, 2024 was 105.9 (same as last Friday's index).

Import of poultry meat and products

from areas in US suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 20) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in San Francisco County of the State of California and Jerome County of the State of Idaho in the United States (US), 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 according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 16 480 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 7.73 million poultry eggs from the US in the first three months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the American authority over the issue 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.