

Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 20) reported the latest number of dengue fever (DF) cases, and strongly urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From November 29 to December 19, the CHP recorded two imported DF cases. The patients had respectively been to Vietnam (one case) and multiple countries (one case, who had been to Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) during the incubation period.

As of yesterday (December 19), 195 cases had been recorded this year (including 194 imported cases and one local), as compared with 159 cases recorded in the same period last year. The imported cases were mainly from Thailand (32), Malaysia (27) and the Philippines (24).

The CHP has been closely monitoring the latest DF situation in neighbouring and overseas areas. DF is endemic in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world. According to the World Health Organization, some Asian countries are experiencing unusually high numbers of DF cases this year. The numbers of cases in some countries were significantly higher than the numbers for the same period in 2018, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Separately, according to the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, as of November 30, a total of 5 986 cases had been recorded in Guangdong this year, which was significantly higher than that in the same period last year (3 250 cases). In Taiwan, as of yesterday, 623 cases (including 100 local cases) had been recorded in 2019.

Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas this year has been uploaded to the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf). Members of the public should stay vigilant and carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

“Apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from areas affected by DF should apply insect repellent for 14 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor,” a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;

- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the DF page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

[Grading of beach water quality released](#)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 20) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Deep Water Bay Beach
Golden Beach
Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a storm or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the department's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Statistics of Payment Cards Issued in Hong Kong for Third Quarter 2019

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (December 20) statistics of payment cards issued in Hong Kong for the third quarter of 2019.

The payment card statistics (see Annex) include quarterly data on credit and debit cards issued in Hong Kong under the credit and/or debit card schemes of the eight payment card scheme operators (Note 1). The HKMA began to publish the payment card statistics on a quarterly basis in June 2010 to enhance transparency of the payment card industry in Hong Kong, in line with international practice.

According to the quarterly statistics, the total number of credit cards in circulation (Note 2) was 19.69 million by the end of Q3/2019. The figure represents a 0.5% increase from the previous quarter and a 1.9% increase from the previous year. The number and value of credit card

transactions (including retail sales and cash advances) (Note 3) are susceptible to seasonal factors and the general economic environment, making the trends more prone to fluctuation. The total number of credit card transactions was 214.19 million for Q3/2019, representing a 4.5% increase from the previous quarter and a 15.4% increase from the same period in 2018. The total value of credit card transactions was HK\$188.7 billion for Q3/2019, representing a 0.6% decrease from the previous quarter and a 5.4% increase from the same period in 2018. Of the total transaction value, HK\$142.8 billion (75.6%) was related to retail spending in Hong Kong, HK\$33.5 billion (17.8%) in retail spending overseas and HK\$12.5 billion (6.6%) in cash advances.

The total number of debit cards in circulation is not available due to overlapping of debit card brands in a single card. Like the number and value of credit card transactions, the number and value of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales and bills payments (Note 4) are also affected by seasonal factors. On a quarterly basis, the total number of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales and bills payments decreased 2.4% to 34.23 million while the total value decreased by 1.3% to HK\$81.8 billion in Q3/2019. When compared to the same period in 2018, the total number increased by 2.2% and the total value rose by 3.1% in Q3/2019.

Notes:

1. The payment card statistics are compiled from data on credit and debit cards issued in Hong Kong by both authorized institutions (AIs) and non-authorized institutions (non-AIs) under the credit and/or debit card schemes of the eight payment card scheme operators ("the card operators"). The card operators, in alphabetical order, are American Express International, Inc., Discover Financial Services (Hong Kong) Limited, EPS Company (Hong Kong) Limited (EPSCO), JCB International (Asia) Ltd, Joint Electronic Teller Services Ltd. (JETCO), MasterCard Asia/Pacific Pte. Ltd., UnionPay International Co. Ltd and Visa Worldwide Pte. Limited.

2. A credit card issued in Hong Kong only carries one credit card brand. The total number of credit cards in circulation refers to the total number of credit cards (i.e. cards with a credit function) issued in Hong Kong under the credit card schemes of card operators (but excluding EPSCO and JETCO, which do not operate a credit card scheme). Some of these credit cards carry debit card functions, i.e. the credit card can be used for making purchases/payments or cash withdrawal at ATMs through directly debiting cardholders' bank accounts.

3. The total number/value of credit card transactions refer to the total number/value of transactions made via credit card accounts of credit cards issued in Hong Kong under the credit card schemes of card operators (excluding EPSCO and JETCO). Starting from March 2015, a Hong Kong/overseas spending breakdown of credit card retail sales transactions is provided.

4. The total number/value of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales/bill payments refers to the total number/value of those transactions

made via debiting cardholders' bank accounts. Some of the eight card operators do not operate a debit card scheme. Care should be exercised in combining the credit card retail sales figures and the debit card retail sales/bills payment figures because of the possibility of double counting.

Statistics of Stored Value Facilities (SVF) Schemes issued by SVF licensees

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (December 20) statistics on Stored Value Facilities (SVF) schemes issued by SVF licensees for the third quarter of 2019.

The SVF scheme statistics (see Annex) include quarterly data on SVF schemes issued by the eighteen SVF licensees (Note 1).

According to the quarterly statistics, the total number of SVF accounts in use (Note 2) was 62.52 million by the end of Q3/2019, representing a 2.1 per cent increase from the previous quarter. The total number of SVF transactions (Note 3) was around 1.6 billion for Q3/2019, or 0.5 per cent lower than the previous quarter. The total value of SVF transactions was HK\$51.2 billion for Q3/2019, representing a 2.4 per cent increase from the previous quarter. Of the total transaction value, HK\$24.3 billion was related to point-of-sale spending payment, HK\$18.7 billion in online spending payment and HK\$8.2 billion in P2P funds transfer. The total float and SVF deposit (Note 4) was HK\$11.2 billion for Q3/2019, 2.5 per cent higher than the previous quarter.

As compared with the end of Q3/2018, the total number of SVF accounts in use at the end of Q3/2019 was up by 15.6 per cent, and the total float and SVF deposit was up by 17.1 per cent. The total number and value of SVF transactions during Q3/2019 were up by 4.6 per cent and 14.4 per cent respectively year-on-year.

Notes:

1. The SVF scheme statistics are compiled from data on SVF schemes issued by the eighteen SVF licensees. The SVF licensees, in alphabetical order, are 33 Financial Services Limited, Alipay Financial Services (HK) Limited, Autotoll Limited, Bank of Communications (Hong Kong) Limited, Dah Sing Bank, Limited, ePaylinks Technology Co., Limited, Geoswift Cards Services Limited, HKT Payment Limited, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (The), K & R International Limited, Octopus Cards Limited, Optal Asia Limited, PayPal Hong Kong Limited, TNG (Asia) Limited, Transforex (Hong Kong) Investment

Consulting Co., Limited, UniCard Solution Limited, WeChat Pay Hong Kong Limited, and Yintran Group Holdings Limited.

2. "Total number of SVF accounts in use" refers to the total number of SVF accounts that can be used as at the end of the reporting period.

3. SVF transactions include point-of-sale spending payment, online spending payment and P2P funds transfer.

4. The following terms follow their definitions in the Payment Systems and Stored Value Facilities Ordinance:

- "Float" means the stored value remaining on the facility but does not include any SVF deposit;
- "SVF deposit" means a deposit placed with the licensee, or another person on behalf of the licensee, for enabling the facility to be used.

[Communications Authority press release](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 91st meeting held in December 2019:

Non-compliance with licence requirements on broadcast of announcements in the public interest (APIs) and publicity material for the CA (CA publicity material) by Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB)

The CA decided that TVB had breached Condition 19.1 of its domestic free television programme service licence (licence) by failing to broadcast some of the scheduled APIs provided by the Government and CA publicity material during the period from July 13 to November 26, 2019, as stipulated under the licence (Note). TVB is required to make up the shortfall in the broadcast of APIs and CA publicity material in the coming three months.

TVB reported to the CA that the broadcast of some of the scheduled APIs and CA publicity material on TVB News channel was pre-empted since July 13, 2019, without compensation to make way for breaking news and live broadcasts relating to or arising out of the recent social events. While the CA noted the circumstances, the CA considered that the difficulties in broadcasting the scheduled APIs and CA publicity material with flexibility permitted under the existing arrangement should not have been insurmountable.

Taking into account TVB's representations as well as all the relevant circumstances of the breach, the CA decided that TVB should be strongly

advised to observe the relevant licence condition more closely and be required to provide additional timeslots as compensatory arrangement to make up the shortfall in the broadcast of APIs and CA publicity material in the coming three months.

Non-compliance with the licence requirement on the broadcast of hourly news and weather reports by Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting Company Limited (CRHK)

The CA decided that CRHK had breached Condition 23.1(b) of its sound broadcasting licence by failing to broadcast an hourly weather report at 7am and hourly news and weather reports from 8am to 2pm on AM864 Channel on September 2, 2019.

The CA noted that the missed broadcasts of hourly news and weather reports had been due to a technical fault of the microphone in the on-air studio, and that a staff of CRHK had forgotten to read out the weather report at 7am. The CA considered that CRHK had not exercised sufficient vigilance to monitor on-air broadcasts and to avoid human error.

Taking into account CRHK's representations as well as the specific circumstances of the breach, the CA decided that CRHK should be strongly advised to observe the relevant licence condition more closely. The CA noted that CRHK had promptly taken remedial measures with a view to preventing such a recurrence in the future.

Note: TVB is required under Condition 19.1 of TVB's licence to broadcast such APIs and CA publicity material as directed or provided by the CA. In accordance with the licence, TVB has been directed to broadcast on each of its programme channels (a) a maximum of one minute of APIs every single clock hour in accordance with the schedules prepared by the Information Services Department (ISD); and (b) a maximum of five minutes of CA publicity material every week in accordance with the schedules prepared by the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA).

To give some flexibility to the licensees, the CA allows them to deviate from ISD's and OFCA's schedules under exceptional circumstances (i.e. deviations due to live broadcasts or caused by forces beyond the licensees' control) on condition that the pre-empted APIs and CA publicity material would be broadcast two hours prior to or after the live broadcasts, or within two hours after the scheduled time, as the case may be.