

FHB's response to impact of tear gas on health and food safety

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) made the following response today (November 21) regarding the recent public concerns about the impact of tear gas on health and food safety:

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said, "I fully understand the public's concern on the impact of tear gas on health and food safety. In this connection, the FHB has earlier sought advice from relevant experts. Subsequently, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) under the Department of Health (DH) and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have respectively provided health information on tear gas and advice on contaminants and food safety."

On the health effects of tear gas, in general, post-exposure symptoms to tear gas may include stinging and burning sensation to eyes and other mucous membranes, tearing, salivation, runny nose, tight chest, headache, nausea, burning sensation of skin, and erythema of skin. These symptoms will usually disappear within a short time after exposure to tear gas. According to the Hospital Authority (HA), amongst those who were exposed to tear gas and attended the accident and emergency (A&E) departments of HA, they generally experienced mild respiratory and skin irritation, and there was no serious health impact reported. Most of them could be immediately discharged after rinsing and receiving treatment at the A&E departments.

Some members of the public enquired how the residual materials could be removed. Advices from the DH include: disposable cleaning items are preferable. Suitable personal protective equipment such as masks, rubber gloves and rubber aprons should be worn. In general, surface with residual materials could be wiped by cloth soaked with soapy water but hot water should not be used in order to avoid evaporating the materials. Also, residual materials should not be stirred up and therefore tools such as high pressure water jet and brooms, as well as electric fans, should not be used. The disposable cleaning items should be properly packed (such as in a sealed plastic bag) after cleaning and then disposed.

Details in the cleaning of residual materials are available in the health information prepared by the CHP (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/102308.html).

On food safety, the CFS has earlier on offered advice to the public on contaminants and food safety. CFS's advice is available on its website. (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/files/Advice_on_tear_gas_for%20public_e.pdf)

In addition, the CFS has provided advice to the food trade on how to minimise food contamination by contaminants, including chemical substances of tear gas. The CFS advises the trade that food should be properly stored in

suitable places such as clean and covered food-grade containers to reduce the risk of food contamination.

"I know the public would like to learn more about the situation at the Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market. The CFS staff have visited the market to provide food safety information to traders and advised them to take appropriate preventive measures. Insofar as the general public is concerned, generally speaking, contaminants on the surface of some kinds of food, such as fruits or vegetables, can be reduced by washing with running water. For the sake of prudence, food suspected to be contaminated or showing abnormality should not be consumed."

"The FHB will continue to exchange views with relevant experts and to provide in a timely manner up-to-date information and advice to the public from the public health perspective," stressed Professor Chan.

Speech by STH at Hong Kong Shipowners Association Annual Cocktail Reception and International Chamber of Shipping (China) Liaison Office Launch Ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at the Hong Kong Shipowners Association Annual Cocktail Reception and International Chamber of Shipping (China) Liaison Office Launch Ceremony today (November 21):

Vice Minister Liu (Vice Minister of Transport, Mr Liu Xiaoming), Deputy Director Huang (Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Huang Liuquan), Bjorn (Chairman of Hong Kong Shipowners Association, Mr Bjorn Hojgaard), Esben (Chairman of International Chamber of Shipping, Mr Esben Poulsson), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I am delighted to be here with you for the annual reception of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA). Now into its 62nd year, the HKSOA has become one of the largest, most respected voices in global shipping. The Government of the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) fully appreciates the contribution of the HKSOA to our maritime industry, our economy and the future of Hong Kong. We could not have asked for a more trustworthy partner and are truly grateful for the unfailing support all along.

Tonight's reception also marks the official launch of the Liaison Office

of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). Established in 1921, ICS is the largest trade association for shipowners and operators. It represents more than 80 per cent of the world's merchant fleet and all sectors of the industry. The decision to have its first ever Liaison Office based right here in Hong Kong is clear recognition of China's emergence as one of the world's leading maritime nations, and also Hong Kong's superb connectivity with the global shipping community.

Hong Kong is a small city of 1 100 square kilometres with a population of 7.4 million. Given our limited domestic market, we ceaselessly reach out to the world. Strategically located in the heart of Asia and being the southern gateway to Mainland China, Hong Kong's shipping and trading venture has come a long way, and was the world's seventh largest trading economy of goods in 2018.

The first scheduled container ship berthed at Hong Kong on July 30, 1969. Fifty years since then, a throughput of 19.6 million TEUs were handled in 2018. Once a small fishing village back then, we are now the home base for shipowners who own or manage a near 2 200 ships. In 2018, some 280 million tonnes of cargoes were moved through our Kwai Tsing Container Terminals. Our maritime and shipping industry is truly a pillar underpinning the trade and logistics industry, which accounts for 21 per cent of Hong Kong's GDP and 19 per cent of total employment.

As a matter of fact, Hong Kong is blessed with immense opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development. The Greater Bay Area's Outline Development Plan calls for Hong Kong to continue and excel as a premier international maritime centre.

Same as the dedication of the HKSOA to creating value for its members, we the Government are committed to supporting the growth of the maritime sector. We have announced various initiatives in the 2019 Policy Address, such as tax concessions for ship leasing and marine insurance business, funding injection for maritime manpower development, and setting up regional maritime desks worldwide to better support our shipowners.

As an externally oriented economy, we are not immune from the impact of global economic slowdown. For the first nine months of 2019, the total throughput at Hong Kong Port dipped 6.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2018. Amid external headwinds and domestic social unrest, we have to brace ourselves for the eventuality of an overall negative growth for 2019.

To ease the financial burden of various sectors, the Financial Secretary has announced a number of supporting measures. On maritime front, we would exempt a number of fees for ocean-going vessels for 12 months. We would also provide one-off survey fee subsidy and non-accountable fuel subsidy to local commercial vessels. Besides, to better support small and medium enterprises, a new 90 per cent guarantee for approved loans would be rolled out. The Government is proactively supporting enterprises in Hong Kong.

Indeed, we have gone through difficult times in the past and every time

we have emerged stronger and more resilient than ever. Hand on heart, I am confident that Hong Kong will overcome and rise again. In closing, I wish the ICS, the HKSOA and every one of you a memorable evening and the best of business in the years to come. Thank you.



Japanese bottled tea beverage may pose risk to consumers

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 21) said that the bottle cap of a kind of bottled tea beverage imported from Japan is suspected to be not properly sealed which may pose a risk to consumers. The CFS is following up on the incident.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Not available in English
Place of origin: Japan
Manufacturer: Kirin Beverage Company, Limited
Importer: 759 Store
Volume: 430 millilitres per bottle
Lot Codes: 2020.4.30i₁₄0S and 2020.6.20i₁₄0S

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS, through its routine Food Incident Surveillance System, noted a notice issued by the Japanese authorities concerned that the manufacturer of the abovementioned product is recalling several batches of the affected product in Japan as the bottle cap of the affected product is suspected to be not properly sealed which may pose a risk to consumers. The CFS immediately followed up with major local importers and retailers."

Preliminary investigations found that a local importer, 759 Store, had imported a total of 8 400 bottles of the abovementioned affected batches of the product which were on sale in its retail outlets. The importer has removed from shelves and stopped sale of the affected batches of the product

and initiated a recall according to CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call its hotline at 3960 9349 during office hours for enquiries about the recall.

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

[Transcript of remarks by CS and SED at media session \(with video\)](#)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, met the media this afternoon (November 21). Following is the transcript of remarks from the media session:

Reporter: Mr Yeung, is there any plan for the Education Bureau (EDB) to clean the schools after the widespread use of tear gas? And also what is your view on the schools punishing the students who have taken part in some kind of blocking traffic at MTR stations? And also can I ask a question to you, Mr Cheung? Is the Government still adopting a waiting approach for the PolyU students to just come out because there are still about a hundred people inside after four days. So, is there any other thing the Government can do or will you just wait? And also what's your take on the US Congress passing the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act because it may be signed by the President? Thank you.

Secretary for Education: The Secretary for Food and Health and the Secretary for the Environment have clearly explained the impact of the tear gas on the environment at the LegCo yesterday. And we have advised the schools to follow the CHP (Centre for Health Protection)'s advice on how to clean the school environment. In case schools have difficulties or have resource difficulties, they could always contact the EDB for assistance, and we are happy to consider each case on a case-by-case basis.

Regarding the school taking some actions against students who had been taking part in blocking closing doors at the MTR, these are actually improper acts, and they could firstly cause danger to the students and could also cause inconvenience to other citizens in society. And (about) these improper acts, I think what the school has done is very proper in teaching the students not to do these improper acts in future. The EDB supports the schools in taking these actions.

Chief Secretary for Administration: On the question of the PolyU campus, the Police will continue to adopt a peaceful, prudent, flexible, persuasive and perseverant approach in order to appeal to those remaining in the campus to leave peacefully. So we're not talking about wait and see, we're talking about persuasive. A patient and professional approach, using a peaceful means

rather than using a normal means, you know, tackling the problem. So we're talking about adopting, a very flexible approach with a human touch in order to resolve the crisis, the problem. In fact, over nearly a thousand people have already left peacefully, and of these about 300 under 18. So, I want to thank the community leaders, educationalists and also those civic-minded people, religious leaders who are trying to mediate, to help persuade the students remaining in the campus to leave. I'm most grateful to them for their support and also for their co-operation.

The second question is about the American Congress' (Hong Kong) Human Rights and Democracy Act. We've already issued a statement this afternoon. The Government's position is really clear: it's a blatant act of interference in Hong Kong's internal affairs. The Act itself is totally unwarranted, unnecessary, and also it's in nobody's interest to have the Act enacted because it also hurts American's interests in Hong Kong, not hurting only Hong Kong, because the United States has a huge stake in Hong Kong, enjoying over the last 10 years a huge surplus. It enjoys the largest surplus from Hong Kong, among their individual trade partners in the world. So they are, really, the greater beneficiary from Hong Kong's economy. So I hope that, really, common sense will prevail at the end of the day.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

[CHP investigates case of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 21) investigating a case of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus (HEV) and urged members of the public to be vigilant against hepatitis E infection and to strictly observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene.

The case involves an 82-year-old woman with underlying illnesses, who had presented with jaundice, poor appetite and tea-coloured urine since October 7. She was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital on October 21 and was discharged after treatment. The patient is now in a stable condition. Her blood sample tested positive for rat HEV upon laboratory testing.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that the patient resided in Kowloon City District. She could neither recall having direct contact with rodents or their excreta, nor had noticed rodents in her residence. She had no travel history during the incubation period and her home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far.

"Based on the available epidemiological information, the source and the

route of infection could not be determined. The CHP's investigation is ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"The CHP has already informed the Pest Control Advisory Section of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department about the case to carry out rodent control measures and a survey as appropriate," the spokesman added.

The exact mode of transmission of rat HEV to humans is unknown at the moment. Possible routes of transmission include ingestion of food or water contaminated by rodents or their excreta, exposure to environments or objects contaminated by rodents or their excreta and direct contact with rodents or their excreta. The usual HEV causing human infection is transmitted mainly through the faecal-oral route.

To prevent hepatitis E infection, members of the public should maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene. For example, they should wash hands thoroughly before eating, store food properly or in the refrigerator, not leave food at room temperature for a long time, and use 1:99 diluted household bleach for general household cleaning and disinfection as household detergent may not be able to kill HEV. High-risk individuals, such as elderly persons with a major underlying illness (especially those who have undergone organ transplantation), pregnant women, patients with chronic liver disease and patients with Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency (also known as G6PD Deficiency), who are infected with HEV may develop a serious illness, so they should exercise extra caution.

The Five Keys to Food Safety should be adopted when handling food, i.e. Choose (choose safe raw materials), Clean (keep hands and utensils clean), Separate (separate raw and cooked food), Cook (cook thoroughly) and Safe Temperature (keep food at a safe temperature), to prevent food-borne diseases.

- Drink only boiled water from the mains or bottled drinks from reliable sources.
- Avoid drinks with ice of unknown origin.
- Purchase fresh food from hygienic and reliable sources. Do not patronise illegal hawkers.
- Clean and wash food thoroughly. Cook food, especially seafood (e.g. shellfish), pork and pig offal, thoroughly before consumption. Avoid raw food or undercooked food.
- Slice raw meat and offal into thin strips to allow thorough cooking, especially during hotpot or congee cooking.
- For sliced pig liver, depending on the thickness and quantity, boil at 100 degrees Celsius or stir-fry in hot skillet/wok for at least three to five minutes.
- Heating to an internal temperature of 90 degrees Celsius for 90 seconds is required for cooking of molluscan shellfish. If possible, remove the shells before cooking as they impede heat penetration. Otherwise, boil at 100 degrees Celsius until their shells open; boil for a further three to five minutes afterwards. Discard any shellfish that do not open

during cooking.

- For meat and offal, make sure that juices are clear, not red, and blood is not visible when you cut the cooked meat and offal.
- When having hotpot, use separate chopsticks and utensils for handling raw and cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination.

In general, rodents (such as rats) can transmit multiple diseases to humans directly and indirectly. The public are advised to adopt the following measures:

- Eliminate sources of food and nesting places for rodents in the living environment. Store food in covered containers and handle pet food properly to avoid it becoming food for rodents;
- Store all refuse and food remnants in dustbins with well-fitted covers. Dustbins must be emptied at least once a day;
- Keep premises, especially refuse rooms and stairways, clean. Avoid accumulation of articles;
- Inspect all flower beds and pavements for rodent infestation regularly; and
- Avoid the high-risk activities below to reduce rodent contact:
 - Avoid rodent contact and places dirtied with rodent excreta;
 - Avoid handling rodents with bare hands;
 - Wash hands with liquid soap and water immediately after handling animals, and disinfect contaminated areas; and
 - If a wound appears, clean the broken skin immediately and cover it properly with waterproof adhesive dressings.