

CHP investigates food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 18) investigating a food poisoning cluster affecting 15 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene when travelling outside Hong Kong to prevent foodborne diseases.

The cluster involved five males and 10 females aged between 57 and 94, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and fever after eating at two restaurants in Zhanjiang during a group tour to Guangdong between December 13 and 15.

Fourteen of the affected persons sought medical advice either on the Mainland or in Hong Kong. Two sought medical advice when they returned to Hong Kong while one required hospitalisation and was discharged after treatment.

Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food including oysters, abalone, shrimp, sea cucumber and fish. The incident might have been caused by norovirus or *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

The CHP has forwarded the case details to the Mainland health authorities and is appealing to those who participated in the three-day tour to Zhanjiang, Taishan and Jiangmen organised by E King Travel (International) Limited between December 13 and 15 to call the CHP hotline (2125 2670) for follow up and medical surveillance. The hotline will operate from tomorrow (December 19) until December 24 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. They should seek medical advice immediately if they develop symptoms of infection, such as fever or feeling unwell.

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

- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters at a buffet;
- Choose pasteurised eggs, egg products or dried egg powder for dishes that often use lightly cooked or uncooked eggs;
- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Store and reheat pre-cooked or leftover foods properly before consumption;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hotpot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;

- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked foods;
 - Avoid patronising illegal food hawkers;
 - Drink boiled water;
 - Refrain from trying to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
 - Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.
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Working Group on Promoting Gold Market Development established

Following the Chief Executive's announcement in the 2024 Policy Address to establish a working group under the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau to comprehensively review all aspects relating to the development of a gold market, take forward the establishment of an international gold trading centre, and formulate plans on enhancing the trading and regulatory mechanisms of the market, conducting domestic and overseas promotion, etc, the Government announced today (December 18) that the Working Group on Promoting Gold Market Development has been established.

The Working Group is chaired by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury. Members comprise relevant government officials, representatives of regulatory bodies, financial institutions, exchanges and industry stakeholders. The Working Group will also invite other industry experts to participate in discussions on specific issues.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui said, "The establishment of an international gold trading centre is a new entry point to consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre. In this year's Policy Address, the Chief Executive stated that we would attract physical gold storage, drive gold trading, settlement and delivery activities, and even propel Hong Kong into being a gold trading centre. The Government will promote the development of world-class gold storage facilities, and building on the increased gold holdings, scale up associated support and financial services such as insurance, testing and certification, logistics, etc, as well as expanding related derivative transactions such as collateral, loans and hedging, etc, hence creating a comprehensive ecosystem in a progressive manner. This will promote a comprehensive multicurrency trading, clearing, delivery, and regulatory system, thereby establishing a holistic gold trading centre. We will also explore mutual access with the Mainland financial market when appropriate."

He added, "The Working Group, which brings together industry leaders and professionals, as well as representatives of financial regulators and market participants, will hold its first meeting this month. I look forward to

working closely and actively discussing with members on formulating a comprehensive implementation plan for the development of Hong Kong's gold market."

The membership of the Working Group is as follows:

Chairperson

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

Non-official members

Ms Peggy Chang

Dr Haywood Cheung

Mr Andrew Fung Hau-chung

Mr Robert Lee Wai-wang

Mr Lv Haitao

Mr Ma Manfu

Mr Tse Moon-chuen

Mr Kent Wong Siu-kee

Mrs Sally Wong Chi-ming

Mr Xu Lei

Ms Zhang Qiaochun

Ms Zhu Jing

Official members

Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services)

Representative of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Representative of the Securities and Futures Commission

Representative of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited

Import of poultry meat and products from District of Stade of State of Niedersachsen in Germany suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 18) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in the District of Stade of the State of Niedersachsen in Germany, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area 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 800 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Germany in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the German authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

FSTB welcomes Cathay Pacific's carbon credits settlement through HKEX's carbon marketplace Core Climate

The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) today (December 18) welcomes Cathay Pacific Airways Limited's settlement of 50 000 tonnes of voluntary carbon credits, as part of their voluntary carbon offset programme, on the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX)'s carbon marketplace Core Climate.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, said, "The transaction showcases how Hong Kong's green finance platform helps businesses achieve sustainability goals through our robust financial market infrastructures, and sets a benchmark example for more transactions to follow. This aligns with the vision of the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address in enhancing Hong Kong's green finance ecosystem and highlighting our role as a leading sustainable finance hub in Asia."

He added, "The Government will continue to support and promote co-operation and synergies between the HKEX and its Mainland and international counterparts in building a dynamic and trustworthy carbon marketplace. By enabling access to high-quality carbon credits verified by international standards, and facilitating interaction between local, Mainland and overseas carbon market participants, we aim to further strengthen Hong Kong's leadership in empowering green transition through finance."

The transaction highlights the role of Core Climate in supporting corporates on their climate transition journey, offering trustworthy settlement services to enhance efficiency and mitigate risks. It also reflects Cathay Pacific's commitment to sustainability as a leading airline in Hong Kong, and its efforts in proactively reducing carbon footprint. As the world's only carbon marketplace offering settlement in both Hong Kong dollars and Renminbi for international voluntary carbon credits at present, Core Climate provides businesses with access to quality carbon credits from internationally certified projects and reinforces Hong Kong's position as a

leading regional hub for green and sustainable finance.

Besides promoting the development of the carbon marketplace, the FSTB last week published a roadmap on the full adoption of the International Financial Reporting Standards – Sustainability Disclosure Standards (ISSB Standards), leading Hong Kong to be among the first jurisdictions to align its local requirements with the ISSB Standards, reinforcing its leadership in sustainability reporting and disclosure, and furthering the efforts in building a comprehensive green finance ecosystem.

Hong Kong's commitment to carbon neutrality remains steadfast. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and reduce the city's carbon emissions by 50 per cent before 2035. These ambitious targets, coupled with initiatives like Core Climate and the adoption of international sustainability disclosure standards, position Hong Kong as a leading international green finance centre driving sustainable development in Asia and beyond.

[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 December 17 to noon today (December 18), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 231 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. 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).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 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).

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).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 106 091 samples of food imported from Japan (including 68 749 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 24 016 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.