

Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 9) reported the latest number of dengue fever (DF) cases, and urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From February 2 to yesterday (February 8), the CHP recorded two imported DF cases. The patients had been to Indonesia and Malaysia respectively during the incubation period.

As of yesterday, eight imported cases of DF had been recorded in 2024. In 2023, 62 imported cases of DF were recorded.

According to the World Health Organization, the global incidence of DF has markedly increased over the past two decades, posing a substantial public health challenge. Since the beginning of 2023, ongoing transmission, combined with an unexpected spike in DF cases, have resulted in close to a historic high of over five million cases and more than 5 000 dengue-related deaths reported in over 80 countries/territories. Several countries in Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh and Thailand, have reported a notable surge in dengue cases in 2023 compared to previous years, whereas the most affected countries in the Western Pacific region are the Philippines and Vietnam. Furthermore, the CHP has recently noticed that Brazil was reported to have a large increase in the number of DF cases. As such, members of the public, while travelling abroad, should stay vigilant and carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong, as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas, has been uploaded to the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf).

"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.

DEET

* 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](#).

[CFS finds ethylene oxide in samples of prepackaged seasoning](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 9) that samples of several kinds of prepackaged seasoning were found to contain a pesticide, ethylene oxide. Members of the public should not consume the affected products. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected products immediately if they possess any of them.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Chili Powder
Brand: SPICE ISLANDS
Manufactured in: United States
Net weight: 2.4oz (68 grams)
Best-before date: April 19, 2027
Distributor: SIMS Trading Co. Ltd.

Hotline: 2262 1587

Product name: Ground Nutmeg
Brand: BADIA
Packed in: United States
Net weight: 2oz (56.7 grams)
Best-before date: December 2024
Importer: Baking Warehouse.com
Hotline: 2172 6916

Product name: BASIL LEAVES
Brand: BADIA
Packed in: United States
Net weight: 4oz (113.4 grams)
Best-before date: December 2026
Distributor: Prime Fortune (Asia) Limited
Hotline: 2366 3330

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned samples from a supermarket in Causeway Bay and two online shops respectively for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that the samples contained a pesticide, ethylene oxide. The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and instructed them to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected products. According to the CFS's instructions, the distributor(s)/importer(s) concerned have initiated recalls on the affected products. Members of the public may call the respective hotlines above during office hours for enquiries about the recalls of the products concerned."

The spokesman continued, "The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified ethylene oxide as a Group 1 carcinogen. According to the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap. 132CM), a food for human consumption containing pesticide residue may only be sold if consumption of the food is not dangerous or prejudicial to health. An offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction."

The spokesman urged the public not to consume the affected products if they have bought any. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected products concerned immediately if they possess any of them.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.

[Results of monthly survey on business](#)

situation of small and medium-sized enterprises for January 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (February 9) the results of the Monthly Survey on Business Situation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for January 2024.

The current diffusion index (DI) on business receipts amongst SMEs decreased from 45.5 in December 2023 in the contractionary zone to 43.3 in January 2024, whereas the one-month's ahead (i.e. February 2024) outlook DI on business receipts was 45.3. Analysed by sector, the current DIs on business receipts for all the surveyed sectors dropped in January 2024 as compared with previous month, particularly for the restaurants (from 45.9 to 42.2) and retail trade (from 44.9 to 41.7).

The current DI on new orders for the import and export trades decreased from 45.3 in December 2023 to 43.2 in January 2024, whereas the outlook DI on new orders in one month's time (i.e. February 2024) was 43.5.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that overall business sentiment among SMEs and their expectations on the business situation in one month's time eased in January. The overall employment situation softened somewhat.

The spokesman added that the difficult external environment and tight financial conditions may continue to dampen business sentiment for the time being. However, continued economic growth should provide some support to business sentiment. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

The Monthly Survey on Business Situation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises aims to provide a quick reference, with minimum time lag, for assessing the short-term business situation faced by SMEs. SMEs covered in this survey refer to establishments with fewer than 50 persons engaged. Respondents were asked to exclude seasonal fluctuations in reporting their views. Based on the views collected from the survey, a set of diffusion indices (including current and outlook diffusion indices) is compiled. A reading above 50 indicates that the business condition is generally favourable, whereas that below 50 indicates otherwise. As for statistics on the business prospects of prominent establishments in Hong Kong, users may refer to the publication entitled "Report on Quarterly Business Tendency Survey" released by the C&SD.

The results of the survey should be interpreted with care. The survey solicits feedback from a panel sample of about 600 SMEs each month and the survey findings are thus subject to sample size constraint. Views collected from the survey refer only to those of respondents on their own

establishments rather than those on the respective sectors they are engaged in. Besides, in this type of opinion survey on expected business situation, the views collected in the survey are affected by the events in the community occurring around the time of enumeration, and it is difficult to establish precisely the extent to which respondents' perception of the business situation accords with the underlying trends. For this survey, main bulk of the data were collected around the last week of the reference month.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey on the Business Situation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises". Users can browse and download the publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1080015&scode=300).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact Industrial Production Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7246; email: sme-survey@censtatd.gov.hk).

Government welcomes refund option of Tatler XFEST Hong Kong, Hong Kong Team vs Inter Miami CF by organiser Tatler Asia

The Government, as well as all football fans, are extremely disappointed that Messi could not play at Tatler XFEST Hong Kong, Hong Kong Team vs Inter Miami CF on February 4.

We have been urging the organiser, Tatler Asia, to explain again in detail its arrangement with Inter Miami CF concerning Messi's participation in the match, and to respond positively to the demands of different sectors of the community.

In the past few days, we have been continuously discussing with the organiser, Tatler Asia, to identify viable options for handling the matter. The Consumer Council has also been subsequently engaged in the discussion.

The organiser, Tatler Asia, took the initiative to withdraw the application for "M" Mark Status on February 5, and also gave up on the \$16 million sponsorship. Additionally, it announced today (February 9) that it will arrange half-refunds (i.e. 50 per cent) to local fans and those from outside Hong Kong who purchased tickets for the match through Tatler Asia's official sales channels.

â€‹The Government welcomes the decision. The Government is of the view that the compensation option is a responsible act by the organiser, Tatler

Asia, which demonstrates its positive manner and sense of commitment. According to the accounts of the match, which were made publicly available by the organiser, Tatler Asia, it has made all efforts with sincerity to arrange for half-refunds (i.e. 50 per cent) with a view to responding to the demands of different sectors of the community.

The Government understands that different sectors of the community may still have many queries about the incident, particularly over Messi not playing at the match in Hong Kong due to injury, yet being able to actively play in Japan three days later, and also doing intense sports on the field for a certain period of time. The Government hopes that Inter Miami CF will eventually provide reasonable explanations to the people of Hong Kong and the fans who travelled to Hong Kong for the match.

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

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

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	:	February 9, 2024
Paper on offer	:	EF Bills
Issue number	:	M2404
Issue date	:	February 14, 2024
Maturity date	:	March 13, 2024
Amount applied	:	HK\$8,030 MN
Amount allotted	:	HK\$2,000 MN
Average yield accepted	:	4.04 PCT
Highest yield accepted	:	4.06 PCT
Pro rata ratio*	:	About 74 PCT
Average tender yield	:	4.18 PCT

Tender date	:	February 9, 2024
Paper on offer	:	EF Bills
Issue number	:	Q2407
Issue date	:	February 14, 2024
Maturity date	:	May 16, 2024
Amount applied	:	HK\$121,910 MN
Amount allotted	:	HK\$59,887 MN
Average yield accepted	:	4.06 PCT
Highest yield accepted	:	4.12 PCT
Pro rata ratio*	:	About 28 PCT

Average tender yield : 4.17 PCT

Tender date : February 9, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2436
Issue date : February 14, 2024
Maturity date : August 14, 2024
Amount applied : HK\$41,015 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$16,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 3.99 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 4.02 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 57 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.11 PCT

Tender date : February 9, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y2486
Issue date : February 14, 2024
Maturity date : February 12, 2025
Amount applied : HK\$15,070 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$3,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 3.82 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 3.85 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 36 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.01 PCT

*"Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning February 19, 2024:

Tender date : February 19, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : M2405
Issue date : February 20, 2024
Maturity date : March 20, 2024
Tenor : 29 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$600 MN

Tender date : February 20, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills

Issue number : Q2408
Issue date : February 21, 2024
Maturity date : May 22, 2024
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$61,123 MN

Tender date : February 20, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2437
Issue date : February 21, 2024
Maturity date : August 21, 2024
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$13,000 MN