

Hong Kong Customs strengthens co-operation on Smart Customs with General Administration of Customs of People's Republic of China (with photos)

â€‹The Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Ms Louise Ho, and Vice Minister of General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) Ms Lv Weihong signed the Co-operative Arrangement on Smart Customs Development between the GACC and Hong Kong Customs during a high-level meeting held at the Customs Headquarters Building today (November 27).

Ms Ho welcomed Ms Lv's visit to Hong Kong Customs with her delegation and chaired the meeting with the delegation of the GACC. Ms Ho said that the signing of the Co-operative Arrangement lays a solid foundation for mutual co-operation with smart construction as the core. The integration of Smart Customs helps to expand the scope of cross-boundary collaboration between both Customs administrations and to facilitate the enhancement of governance systems and the governance of Hong Kong Customs, as well as serving as a major key for Hong Kong Customs in fostering the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Stressing that Hong Kong Customs will continue to deepen co-operation with the GACC, Ms Ho said Hong Kong Customs will also deepen and widen its role as a participant and contributor in promoting the development of the GBA in order to contribute to the prosperity and stability of the country.

The two Customs administrations also explored multiple co-operation issues in the meeting, including Smart Customs development, consumer goods safety, and mutual training.

On the same day, the delegation visited the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link to learn about Hong Kong Customs' passenger clearance operations. They will also tour the Customs Marine Base at Stonecutters Island and take a ride on sector patrol launch to visit sea-borne smuggling black spots tomorrow (November 28) to learn about the maritime enforcement work of Hong Kong Customs.



[EEB and GACC sign Cooperation Agreement on Supervision of Safety and Facilitation of Customs Clearance of Food Products Manufactured in Hong Kong Exported to Mainland](#)

The Environment and Ecology Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) signed the Cooperation Agreement on the Supervision of Safety and Facilitation of Customs Clearance of Food Products Manufactured in Hong Kong Exported to the Mainland today (November 27). The Cooperation Agreement seeks to fully implement the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area by providing a facilitating arrangement for customs clearance for food products that meet relevant requirements so as to shorten the time required for customs clearance, further enhancing the safety of local food products exported to the Mainland and facilitating trade.

The Cooperation Agreement will initially cover three major categories of food, namely (1) beverages and cold drinks (excluding alcoholic and dairy beverages); (2) biscuits, pastries and bread; and (3) candies and chocolates (including chocolate, cocoa butter substitute chocolate and their products). The arrangement will be available at the ports under the Shenzhen Customs and the Gongbei Customs. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the export volume to the Mainland of relevant categories of domestic food products in 2022 was over 46.4 million kilograms with the value of approximately \$2.88 billion, which accounted for approximately 75 per cent of the total value of all Hong Kong-manufactured food exports to the Mainland in the same year and about 12 per cent of the total value of all domestic goods exported to the Mainland.

The Cooperation Agreement will aid the monitoring of food safety from the source for Hong Kong-manufactured food products exported to the Mainland, thus achieving the goal of customs clearance facilitation. Not only will this promote food trade between the Mainland and Hong Kong, the Greater Bay Area in particular, but also deepen exchanges and co-operation in food safety monitoring between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

After the Hong Kong-manufactured food products of the concerned categories covered by the Cooperation Agreement are confirmed in compliance with the specific requirements, a food product which shows no abnormality during an on-site inspection but needs to be sampled can be released upon completion of sampling without waiting for the results, which will facilitate the trade and promote the development of relevant local production.

Upon signing the Cooperation Agreement, the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will discuss with the GACC the operational details of the Cooperation Agreement, including the food standard, testing method, sampling methodology and the template of the official certificates, and make necessary preparation for the implementation of relevant measures. The new measure is expected to commence in the first half of next year.

Cluster of COVID-19 cases in Kowloon Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Kowloon Hospital (KH) made the following announcement today (November 27):

Fourteen patients (aged 23 to 55) in a male psychiatric ward of KH have

been presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms and have tested positive for COVID-19 since November 23, 2023. All patients are being treated in isolation and are in stable condition, and one patient was transferred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Admission and visiting arrangements for the ward have been suspended. Thorough cleaning and disinfection measures have been conducted in the ward. Infection control measures have been stepped up according to established guidelines.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up.

Operation of HKeToll at Tate's Cairn Tunnel generally smooth

The Transport Department (TD) said today (November 27) that the operation of the HKeToll has been generally smooth since its implementation at the Tate's Cairn Tunnel from 5am yesterday (November 26).

The TD's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre has been closely monitoring the traffic situation at the Tate's Cairn Tunnel. The overall traffic flow has been smooth in general. During today's morning peak hours, the traffic queue towards Kowloon was at the College of International Education of Hong Kong Baptist University (Shek Mun Campus), which is similar to that before the implementation of the HKeToll, and generally motorists can adapt to the new traffic arrangements.

From 0.00am to 5pm today, a total of 40 281 vehicles passed through the Tate's Cairn Tunnel. Among them, about 90 per cent of the vehicles were detected with vehicle tags installed, and about 70 per cent of the vehicles used an automatic payment means. With the progressive implementation of the HKeToll in government toll tunnels, the TD once again appeals to vehicle owners who have received vehicle tags to complete the three steps for the HKeToll service as soon as possible: (1) install a vehicle tag, (2) open an HKeToll account and (3) set up an automatic payment means, so as to fully enjoy the convenience of the HKeToll.

The TD reminds that vehicle owners must pay the toll within 14 business days after passing through the tunnel. They can log on to the HKeToll website (hketoll.gov.hk) or mobile app to check and pay the outstanding tolls. The HKeToll website provides a video to guide vehicle owners on how to set up the automatic payment means and pay tolls online. Payments of tolls can also be made at the four customer service centres and four service outlets. If vehicle owners have any enquiries about setting up an automatic payment

means, paying a toll or the other HKeToll services, they can call the 24-hour customer service hotline at 3853 7333 or visit the customer service centres, service outlets or consultation counters at designated MTR stations. The staff will provide appropriate assistance. The locations and service hours of the above-mentioned facilities are in the Annex.

Motorists should note that late payments will incur a surcharge of \$175, and that the maximum penalty for evading tolls is a fine of \$5,000 (per trip), and the license of the vehicle concerned will not be renewed.

Following the Tate's Cairn Tunnel, the HKeToll will be extended to the Aberdeen Tunnel in December this year. Details and exact dates will be announced separately.

[Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 27) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From November 19 to 25, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 56 with underlying illnesses, who lived in Hon Chung House, Wan Hon Estate, Kwun Tong; and
2. A male patient, aged 79 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Shek Ho House, Shek Wai Kok Estate, Tsuen Wan.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of November 25, 113 LD cases had been reported this year. In 2022 and 2021, there were 80 and 69 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in

warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;

3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.