

Import of poultry meat and products from Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County in Hungary suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (November 17) that in view of a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County in Hungary, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with Hungary for the import of poultry meat but not for poultry eggs. According to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 270 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Hungary in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Hungarian authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health 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.

Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 17) 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 November 10 to yesterday (November 16), the CHP recorded one imported DF case. The patient had been to Taiwan during the incubation period.

As of yesterday, 47 imported cases of DF had been recorded in 2023. In 2022, 26 imported cases of DF were recorded.

The latest surveillance data shows that there is an increase in DF cases noted in some places in Asia (such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand) compared to the same period last year. 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.

* 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](#).

[Hong Kong Customs detects sea smuggling case with market value of about \\$8 million \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs on November 9 detected a suspected case of using an ocean-going vessel to smuggle goods to Vietnam at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. A large batch of suspected smuggled electronic goods, including cameras, monitors, routers and speakers, with a total estimated market value of about \$8 million was seized.

Through risk assessment, Customs discovered that criminals may use ocean-going vessels to smuggle goods to Southeast Asian countries. Then, Customs formulates strategic plans to select and inspect containers from high-risk regions. A container, declared as carrying electronic components, prepared to be shipped to Vietnam by an ocean-going vessel, was identified at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals.

Upon inspection, Customs officers found a lot of wooden boxes inside the container and seized the batch of suspected smuggled electronic goods therein.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs arrested two persons suspected to be connected with the case. They comprised a 56-year-old female director of the consignor company and a 57-year-old female staff member of a shipping agent. The container involved was also detained.

An investigation is ongoing. The two arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Being a government department specifically responsible for tackling smuggling, Customs has all along been combating various smuggling activities proactively at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form

(eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



[Secretary for Justice reviews Fire Services passing-out parade](#)

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, reviewed the Fire Services passing-out parade for 22 station officers, 146 firemen and 50 ambulancemen at the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy today (November 17).

Speaking at the parade, Mr Lam commended the Fire Services Department (FSD) for forming the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region search and rescue team with members from other government departments to carry out search and rescue work in quake-stricken areas in Türkiye in February and successfully rescuing four survivors. The team was awarded the inaugural Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance in July. Hong Kong people took pride in the team's selfless devotion, which has also enhanced Hong Kong's international reputation.

He said, "To strengthen the graduates' understanding of the country, the FSD organised the National Studies Course in which the graduates were given

an opportunity to exchange views with the Fire and Rescue Corps of Guangdong Province and learn about the Mainland's advanced equipment and new technologies. Graduates are encouraged to continue to actively participate in the exchange sessions organised for fire and ambulance personnel of both Hong Kong and Guangdong Province to foster closer co-operation between the both sides. Such sessions would also enhance the professional and technical standards of both sides, and further contribute to strengthening the emergency response and rescue capabilities of the Greater Bay Area."

Mr Lam pointed out that the FSD has been actively taking part in the education on the rule of law, including instilling positive values and law-abiding spirit among the youth through the Fire and Ambulance Services Teen Connect and social media platforms.

He added that to safeguard national security and prevent terrorist attacks, the FSD has formulated operation strategies and conducted joint operations and interdepartmental counter-terrorism exercises with other relevant departments in order to enhance emergency response capabilities.

The parade was followed by a demonstration of firefighting and rescue techniques by the graduates. The 218 graduates will be posted to various fire stations and ambulance depots.

HA relaxes mortgage arrangements for subsidised sale flats

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

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) today (November 17) endorsed the relaxation of the mortgage arrangements for subsidised sale flats (SSFs) by extending the maximum mortgage default guarantee period and mortgage repayment period under the Deeds of Guarantee (DoGs) being provided to purchasers of SSFs and authorised financial institutions participating in the provision of mortgage loans for such flats (participating financial institutions). Details are at the Annex.

For SSFs sold on the primary market, the maximum mortgage default guarantee period will be extended from 25 years to 30 years for Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) flats; and the maximum mortgage repayment period from 25 years to 30 years for new Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) projects and TPS flats sold on the primary market. The relaxation will be applicable to new HOS and GSH projects and TPS flats sold on the primary market with the completion date of the sale and purchase, and the relevant legal charge falling on or after January 1, 2024. New HOS/GSH projects refer to the HOS/GSH projects with occupation permit issued on or after December 1, 2023.

Regarding SSFs sold on the secondary market, the maximum mortgage default guarantee period will be extended from 30 years to 50 years for HOS/GSH flats; and from 25 years to 50 years for TPS flats, counting from the date of the first assignment of individual flats. For the first 40 years, the HA will provide a mortgage default guarantee to participating financial institutions for a mortgage loan up to 95 per cent and 90 per cent of the assessed value or purchase price of the flat (whichever is the lower) respectively for Green Form (GF) and White Form (WF) applicants. From 40 years onwards to 50 years the mortgage default guarantee provided to participating financial institutions for mortgage loans will be up to 80 per cent of the assessed value or purchase price of the flat (whichever is the lower) across all types of SSFs for GF and WF purchasers alike. In case the loan-to-value (LTV) ratio required is above 80 per cent, the prospective mortgagor may apply for and join the Mortgage Insurance Programme (MIP) of the HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI). To this end, the HA has reached an agreement with the HKMCI that the latter will allow SSF purchasers on the secondary market to join the MIP to obtain mortgage loans up to an LTV ratio of 90 per cent for WF applicants and 95 per cent for GF applicants. The detailed arrangements will be announced later.

Meanwhile, the maximum mortgage repayment period for HOS/GSH/TPS flats sold on the secondary market will be extended from 25 years to 30 years.

The HA will liaise with participating financial institutions and the HKMCI on the implementation arrangements, and the extension of the maximum mortgage default guarantee period and repayment period regarding the SSFs sold on the secondary market is scheduled to take effect on March 1, 2024. It will be applicable to all new mortgage loans drawn down on or after the launch date to finance the purchase of HOS/GSH/TPS flats transacted on the secondary market.

"With the extension of the maximum mortgage default guarantee period to 50 years for SSFs sold on the secondary market, the number of flats with a residual guarantee period of more than 10 years will increase substantially from about 14 per cent to about 98 per cent for HOS/GSH flats; and from about 24 per cent to 100 per cent for TPS flats. Together with the extension of the maximum mortgage repayment period, this should help SSF purchasers to secure mortgage loans of a longer tenor and facilitate the circulation of SSFs on the secondary market," a spokesman for the HA said.

To encourage banks and authorised financial institutions to provide mortgage loans and better mortgage terms for purchasers of SSFs, the HA provides a mortgage default guarantee for the participating financial institutions. In accordance with the DoGs entered between the HA and the participating financial institutions, the HA undertakes to meet the shortfall in a repayment in the event of default by the mortgagors of SSFs, under specified circumstances during the mortgage default guarantee period as set out in the applicable DoGs. The mortgage default guarantee applies to HOS, GSH, as well as TPS flats sold on the primary market and the secondary market where a premium payment is not required.