

Postal services to Serbia subject to delay

â€‹Hongkong Post announced today (November 17) that, as advised by the postal administration of Serbia, due to a local strike at the destination, mail delivery services to Serbia are subject to delay.

DH and HKMA urge proper use of antibiotics in support of World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 17) held a joint press conference with the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) to urge members of the public to use antibiotics properly in support of the World Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Awareness Week starting tomorrow (November 18) to November 24 in order to participate in the fight against the threat of AMR.

The World Health Organization has declared AMR as one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity. "AMR is a situation when microorganisms evolve and become resistant to previously effective medications, with misuse and overuse of antimicrobials being the major factors in the development of drug-resistant pathogens. AMR causes a significant global burden on public health. Medical literature revealed that there were approximately 1.27 million deaths in 2019 worldwide attributed to AMR, while deaths attributable to AMR will be as high as 10 million in 2050 according to an estimation by an overseas study, which is even higher than the number of deaths caused by cancer," the Consultant (AMR) of the Infection Control Branch of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH, Dr Edmond Ma, said at a press conference today.

Dr Ma introduced a number of resistant bacteria that present an urgent and serious threat to public health (including Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales and *Candida auris*). He quoted the report on [General Public's Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey on Antibiotic Resistance 2022](#) published by the CHP this April and again reminded the public on the risk of resistant bacteria and knowledge about the proper use of antibiotics. In addition, he alerted the public on the risk of AMR in food, as reflected by the rising trend of antibiotic-resistant bacteria detected in ready-to-eat (RTE) foods by surveillance data in recent years. Also attending the press

conference, the President of the HKMA, Dr Cheng Chi-man, explained common conditions that may require/do not require antibiotics. Taking the opportunity, he also explained some common myths by the public on antibiotics, and called on healthcare professionals to work together with members of the public against AMR.

With a view to enhancing public knowledge on AMR, the DH launched a new government TV Announcement in the Public Interest themed as "[Use Antibiotics Properly, Always Consult a Doctor](#)" for this year's World AMR Awareness Week, on different platforms (including social media and public transportation) to encourage the public to take appropriate actions in combating the threat of AMR.

Members of the public are reminded to use antibiotics properly (e.g. not to self-purchase antibiotics at community pharmacies without a prescription, not to request unnecessary antibiotics from doctors, and adhere to doctors' instructions when taking antibiotics). They are also urged to receive seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines as effective means to prevent secondary bacterial infection, hence reducing the use of antibiotics and occurrence of AMR. They should be aware of the risk of AMR in food: cook food thoroughly before consumption; avoid raw or undercooked RTE foods if one belongs to high-risk groups (such as pregnant women, infants and young children, the elderly and people with weakened immunity); and observe good hygienic practices in the kitchen when handling food to minimise the risk of cross-contamination by resistant bacteria.

AMR is considered one of the greatest threats to global health and economies. The Government has all along attached great importance to tackling the issue of AMR. Relevant bureaux/departments and organisations, including the Health Bureau, the DH, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Hospital Authority will continue to keep abreast of international and local developments and maintain close liaison with private hospitals, professional bodies, academia and other stakeholders to combat the challenge of AMR through cross-sector co-ordination and collaboration.

The CHP will continue to enhance the public education on appropriate use of antibiotics. For details of the survey report and other information about antimicrobial resistance, please visit the CHP [thematic website](#) and the CHP [Facebook Page](#).



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 November 16 to noon today (November 17), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 168 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 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 14 769 samples of food imported from Japan (including 9 721 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 4 210 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Composite Interest Rate: End of October 2023

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (November 17) the composite interest rate at the end of October 2023 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 8 basis points to 2.76 per cent at the end of October 2023, from 2.68 per cent at the end of September 2023 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The increase in composite interest rate reflected an increase in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of October 2023 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and

rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.

[FS attends APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting \(with photos\)](#)

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, yesterday (November 16, San Francisco time) attended the 30th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting (AELM) on behalf of the Chief Executive to exchange views on issues such as promotion of regional connectivity and economic prosperity, climate change and green transformation, digital economy, realisation of greater inclusiveness and sustainable development.

The AELM this year was divided into two sessions. The first session featured discussions on combating climate change and green transformation. To effectively combat this global issue that the world must look squarely into, Mr Chan said during the meeting that apart from the individual efforts of each economy, the more important key lies in international co-operation and implementation of strong and constructive policies. Hong Kong has set targets to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and reduce the total carbon emission by half before 2035, as compared to the level of 2005. To that end, Hong Kong set up the Office of Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality. The office, on the premise of ensuring that energy supply is abundant, safe, reliable and reasonably priced, increases the ratio of zero-carbon energy to 60 to 70 per cent within the energy supply structure, and is prepared to provide the necessary resources in combating climate change. Hong Kong is also formulating a strategy of hydrogen development.

Mr Chan pointed out that global green transformation requires policy co-ordination, as well as funding and technical co-operation and support, hence bringing along immense business opportunities. Hong Kong is an international financial centre and Asia's green financial hub, with a green technology ecosystem that has been growing vibrantly in recent years. Hong Kong, together with the sister cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, will make concerted efforts in developing into an international centre of green technology and green finance. Mr Chan said Hong Kong looks forward to enhancing co-operation with other APEC members to achieve high-quality development that is sustainable, green and more inclusive.

Afterwards, Mr Chan attended the opening of the dialogue session with

members of the APEC Business Advisory Council. In the evening, he joined the APEC Economic Leaders' Dinner.

Mr Chan will attend the second session of the AELM on November 17 (San Francisco time) and will depart for Hong Kong at night.

