

Hong Kong Customs in joint operations with FEHD seizes 826 suspected smuggled hairy crabs (with photo)

The Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) mounted joint operations at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point yesterday (October 18) and seized a total of 826 suspected smuggled hairy crabs with a total estimated market value of about \$49,000.

Based on risk assessment, Customs officers yesterday intercepted an incoming goods vehicle declared as carrying a batch of cross-boundary merchandise including food items at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point. Upon inspection, the batch of suspected smuggled hairy crabs was found concealed inside the cargo compartment of the vehicle. The seized hairy crabs did not come with health certificates issued by the relevant authorities of the exporting economies, and failed to comply with the requirements of the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit. A male driver suspected to be connected with the case and the seized hairy crabs were handed over to the FEHD for follow-up investigation.

To combat illegal importing of hairy crabs at sea, land and air control points, the C&ED and the CFS have commenced a three-month joint operation this September 1. As of yesterday, the C&ED has referred 35 cases to the CFS for follow-up action. Among which, 17 cases, involving about 7 800 hairy crabs with a total weight of about 1 400 kilograms, were not covered by any health certificates.

Customs reminds members of the public that 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.

Customs also reminds the trade not to import or put on sale hairy crabs with an unknown origin, and consumers should make purchases at reputable shops with the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit or relevant written permission granted by the FEHD.

According to the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations, any person who imports game, meat, poultry or eggs should produce a health certificate issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtain prior permission in writing from the FEHD. Offenders are liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

According to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, all food available for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. Moreover, under the

Food Safety Ordinance, any person who, without reasonable excuse, does not register but carries on a food importation or distribution business commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customs and the CFS will keep up close co-operation and intelligence exchanges, while joint operations will be conducted to combat illegal food import activities.

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).



[Case of invasive Haemophilus influenzae type b infection under CHP investigation](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 19) investigating a case of invasive Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) infection, and hence urged the public to maintain good personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene.

The case involves a 4-year-old girl with good past health. She presented with fever, vomiting and a decreased oral intake since October 11 and also developed neck stiffness later. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Kwong Wah Hospital on October 13 and was admitted for treatment on the same day. The patient is now in stable condition.

Her blood sample tested positive for Hib upon laboratory testing. Her clinical diagnoses were meningitis and septicaemia.

The patient had no recent travel history and her home contacts remain asymptomatic. Investigations are ongoing.

Invasive Hib infection has been a statutorily notifiable infectious disease since July 2008. Invasive Hib infection commonly presents clinically as an infection of membranes covering the brain (meningitis), often accompanied by bacteria entering the bloodstream. It may also affect other parts of the body such as the lungs, the upper part of the throat (epiglottis), joints and bones. Prompt antibiotic treatment is necessary.

"Hib infection can be spread by contact with the nose or throat secretions of a patient. If a persistent fever, unusual changes in behaviour or other deteriorating conditions develop, or if in doubt, seek medical attention immediately," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Members of the public are advised to observe personal hygiene and take heed of the preventive measures below:

- Maintain hand hygiene and clean hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are soiled with respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing or coughing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal discharge and sputum properly;
- Do not share eating and drinking utensils, and wash them thoroughly after use;
- Avoid going to crowded places if not feeling well; and
- An effective vaccine against Hib is available. For personal protection, seek advice from a healthcare professional.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's invasive Hib [page](#) for more information.

CSSA caseload for September 2023

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in September showed a drop of 1 283 cases, representing a decrease of 0.6 per cent compared with that of August, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (October 19).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of September stood at 201 977 (see attached table), with a total of 276 591 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 2.2 per cent to 1 658 cases. Single parent cases decreased by 1.5 per cent to 21 126 cases. Unemployment cases decreased by 0.9 per cent to 17 473 cases. Old age cases declined by 0.5 per cent to 112 996 cases. Permanent

disability cases dropped by 0.3 per cent to 17 204 cases. Ill-health cases slightly decreased by 0.2 per cent to 27 583 cases.

Composite Interest Rate: End of September 2023

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (October 19) the composite interest rate at the end of September 2023 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 13 basis points to 2.68 per cent at the end of September 2023, from 2.55 per cent at the end of August 2023 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The increase in composite interest rate reflected increases in the weighted funding cost for deposits and interbank funds 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 September 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.

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for July – September 2023

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for July – September 2023) released today (October 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in July – September 2023, same as that in June – August 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing July – September 2023 with June – August 2023, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but the magnitudes were generally not large.

Total employment increased by around 5 800 from 3 714 500 in June – August 2023 to 3 720 300 in July – September 2023. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 7 700 from 3 826 600 to 3 834 300.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 1 900 from 112 100 in June – August 2023 to 114 000 in July – September 2023. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons decreased by around 1 000 from 38 900 to 37 900.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed low at 2.8% in July – September 2023, same as the level in June – August 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0%. Both the labour force and total employment increased further, by 7 700 and 5 800 to 3 834 300 and 3 720 300 respectively. The number of unemployed persons stayed low at 114 000."

The unemployment rates of the various sectors stayed low in general in July – September 2023, mostly showing only small changes compared with the preceding three-month period.

Looking ahead, Mr Sun said, "The continued growth of consumption- and tourism-related activities would continue to support the labour market."

On large-scale job fairs, the Labour Department (LD) will organise the "Seizing New Opportunities Job Fair" at Dragon Centre in Sham Shui Po on November 8 and 9, 2023. Over 40 employers will participate, offering a large number of vacancies. In July – September 2023, LD recorded a monthly average of 101 420 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year decrease of 8.2 % and a decrease of 3.6 % over the average figure in June – August 2023. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms, such as the Interactive Employment Service website, for obtaining such vacancy information.

Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for July – September 2023 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 69 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of July to September 2023.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html). More detailed analysis of the labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the report contains statistics for the quarter April – June 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2023 will be available by end November 2023. Users can also browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the General Household Survey Section (3) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).