

Secretary for Health deeply concerned about management of public healthcare system

The Health Bureau (HHB) is deeply concerned about the multiple recent incidents in relation to caring procedures for patients and operation of equipment occurred in public hospitals. The HHB is of the view that such incidents reflect the dire need for improving the management of public healthcare system to ensure medical safety and the well-being of patients.

The HHB instructed the Hospital Authority (HA) today (June 21) to conduct a comprehensive review of the systemic issues and the need for reform with regard to the management of public hospitals while reviewing the causes of individual incidents and taking relevant improvement measures in a proactive manner. The HA is required to submit a report together with recommendations to the HHB within three months.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "Patients' safety should at all times be accorded the topmost priority in the healthcare system. In the light of the multiple recent incidents related to healthcare services of public hospitals, I have written to the Chairman of the HA to express serious concern, task the HA to follow up on the relevant incidents expeditiously, and instruct the HA to initiate with utmost intent a comprehensive and independent review regarding the associated systemic issues of public hospitals, including the monitoring mechanism for compliance with medical procedures, staff appraisal and accountability of the management, internal risk management systems, contingency response as well as arrangements of communication and announcements. I have demanded the HA to complete the review and submit a report covering recommendations on corresponding enhancement measures within three months. Subject to HA's report, the HHB will carefully examine HA's system and the need for reform.

"The HA is required to take every measure to ensure that patients of public hospitals receive the most optimal medical care, prevent the occurrence of medical and equipment incidents, and minimise the risks posed to patients and staff, with a view to maintaining the healthcare quality in Hong Kong and upholding public confidence in the public healthcare system."

HKSAR Government condemns Radio Free

Asia for its false report

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government strongly disapproved of and condemned the Radio Free Asia's misleadingly-headlined report of June 20 which makes untruthful and smearing remarks against the invalidation exercise of the old form of smart identity cards (ID cards), intending to mislead the public and defame the relevant measures and arrangements announced by the HKSAR Government and the Immigration Department (ImmD). The HKSAR Government considers it necessary to clarify to set the record straight.

By selectively quoting phrases announced by the ImmD at its press conference and elaborating unfounded speculation, the article headlined: "HKSAR government 'threatens' citizens to return to Hong Kong and renew their old ID cards – Will there be consequences for overseas Hong Kong residents failing to replace their ID cards?" falsely reported and maliciously distorted the original purpose of the ID card invalidation exercise. Not only did Radio Free Asia cite comments from a purported former immigration assistant who fabricated as an insider and misinterpreted relevant legal provisions and legal consequences, they also did not make any inquiries with the Government prior to publishing the article or conduct any fact checking. Radio Free Asia has completely violated media professional ethics and basic journalistic morality.

The HKSAR Government reiterated that the invalidation of old ID cards aimed to detect impersonation and possession of forged ID cards. The arrangements were in line with the previous replacement exercise, which does not involve any form of intimidation. According to section 7B(3) of the Registration of Persons Ordinance, any person without a reasonable excuse but fails to replace their ID cards during the specified call-up period is liable to a fine of \$5,000. Those who has been absent from Hong Kong during the replacement period will not commit an offence as long as they replace their ID cards within 30 days of their return to Hong Kong. The ImmD had set out clearly at the press conference on June 18 that the invalidation of old ID cards will not affect one's right of abode in Hong Kong and they could still travel in and out of Hong Kong as long as holding a valid travel document. Radio Free Asia's deliberate distortion on the Government's appeal into means of intimidating the public was an extremely irresponsible act.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government pointed out that any person who enters Hong Kong with an invalid ID card will have to surrender their cards and be ordered to apply for renewal within a specified period of time. According to section 19(4) of the Registration of Persons Regulations, failure to comply with the order to apply for renewal may result in a maximum fine of \$25,000 and two years' imprisonment. Not to mention that without proper verification of facts, the report of the Radio Free Asia had misled the members of public by conflating the two provisions and relevant legal consequences.

The Radio Free Asia had disregarded journalistic ethics and distorted

the Government's policies and measures in an utterly irresponsible manner. The Government's good intent in appealing public members for ID card replacement has been manipulated into a conspiracy to suppress Hong Kong people. The report is a piece of scaremongering fake information that smears the HKSAR Government. The HKSAR Government strongly condemns and calls on members of the public to ignore false information and discern the facts.

[DH's operation against illegal sale of alternative smoking products \(with photo\)](#)

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) today (June 21) conducted an enforcement operation against the illegal sale of alternative smoking products (ASPs). A heated tobacco device and a batch of 6 000 suspected ASPs were seized during the operation.

Through intelligence analysis and in-depth investigations, officers of the TACO today conducted a decoy operation by posing as customers to contact people suspected of selling ASPs illegally. In the operation, officers also initiated investigation against a 41-year-old man for suspecting of selling ASPs and possessing ASPs for commercial purposes. Charges will be laid against offender(s) when sufficient evidence is found.

The Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) prohibits the promotion, manufacture, sale and possession for commercial purposes of ASPs. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the DH said that the department will continue to take stringent enforcement action. The spokesman also cautioned against the use of any ASPs and stressed that these products contain amounts of nicotine similar to those of conventional cigarettes in order to sustain addiction. In addition, health hazards of long-term exposure to these new products are unknown. The Government appeals to smokers to quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. They are encouraged to call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183. The hotline is operated by registered nurses and provides professional counselling services on smoking cessation. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk/en/index.html.



[Speech by SFST at Partners Group Hong Kong Office Grand Opening Event \(English only\) \(with photo\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, at the Partners Group Hong Kong Office Grand Opening Event today (June 21):

Chairman Meister (Executive Chairman of Partners Group, Mr Steffen Meister), Mrs Zilweger (Deputy Consul-General of Switzerland in Hong Kong, Mrs Francoise Madeleine Killias Zillweger), Mr Jaeggi (Co-President of Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Mr Benno Jaeggi), Dr Lu (Partners Group's Chairman of Asia, Dr Kevin Lu), Mr Chui (Head of Private Wealth Asia Pacific and Office Head of Partners Group Hong Kong, Mr Henry Chui), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

It is my distinct pleasure to be here tonight at this cocktail ceremony. I feel deeply honoured to join you all in celebrating Partners Group's exciting new expansion in Hong Kong. As one of the leading global firms in the private markets industry, Partners Group is a listed company on the SIX Swiss Exchange, managing nearly US\$150 billion across 21 global offices with 1 900 dedicated employees.

I am delighted that Partners Group has chosen Hong Kong as the destination for its expansion, further strengthening our strategic position in the Asian market. Your presence here will enrich Hong Kong's offerings for global investors, as you bring with your new presence expertise and experience in managing private equity, private credit, infrastructure, real estate, and royalties.

Indeed, this is an opportune moment for asset and wealth management businesses to establish themselves or expand in Hong Kong. We have emerged as the primary investment hub for global wealth and asset owners. Our competitive advantages include abundant investment opportunities, an unparalleled financial and professional services sector, and unwavering

support from the Government. As of the end of 2022, our assets under management reached an impressive US\$4 trillion, with 64 per cent of funds originating from non-Hong Kong investors. Additionally, Hong Kong now stands as the second-largest cross-border wealth management centre globally, and we are poised to become the largest booking centre by 2027 for wealth management business, according to industry research.

Across the globe, investors are diversifying and seeking better returns by allocating capital to alternative asset classes such as private equity, hedge funds, real estate, private credit, commodities, infrastructure, and virtual assets. In Hong Kong, alternative investments have experienced remarkable growth, with the city managing the lion's share of alternative assets within the Asia Pacific region. Over half of the major hedge funds in Asia call Hong Kong home. We boast approximately 650 private equity and venture capital firms, with nearly 60 per cent serving as regional headquarters. Collectively, they oversee assets worth US\$228 billion, second only to Mainland China. Notably, almost 90 per cent of high-net-worth investors in Hong Kong intend to increase their allocations to alternative assets, signalling immense potential for our market.

The Hong Kong Government remains committed to creating an enabling environment for asset and wealth managers. In the past years, we introduced various measures to enhance our holistic offerings for global wealth owners. Tax and financial incentives for funds and single-family offices, the diversified open-ended fund company and limited partnership fund regimes—and a complementing re-domiciliation mechanism for funds—all underscore our strategic commitment to support the industry's development. Furthermore, the New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, launched in March 2024, aims to inject more capital into Hong Kong's market and empower investors to seize opportunities and pursue development in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong abounds with quality investment projects. Our recent focus on innovation and technology has led us to prioritise four key sectors: artificial intelligence and data analytics, life and health technology, fintech and advanced manufacturing, and new energy and materials. The Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises actively attracts outstanding companies from these sectors to settle in Hong Kong, while our Science Park and Cyberport serve as nurturing grounds for technology startups.

For those seeking to invest in the next wave of unicorns, Hong Kong is the place to be. Whether you're considering IPOs (initial public offerings) or exploring investment opportunities, our stock market offers an ideal avenue. Thanks to a series of listing reforms, our platform has become even more competitive, facilitating the listing of new economy companies, pre-revenue biotechnology firms, and specialist technology enterprises.

I've only scratched the surface of the initiatives we're diligently working on. These policies and plans underscore our commitment to continuously enhance Hong Kong's ecosystem as a thriving international financial centre.

Partners Group's expansion stands as a testament to Hong Kong's pivotal

role in the global financial world. Your dedication, along with that of other wealth managers, will significantly shape the evolution of private markets into a mainstream asset class.

Once again, my heartfelt congratulations to Partners Group, and a warm welcome to you as you join our vibrant asset and wealth management ecosystem. May this evening be enjoyable, and may your success continue to flourish in the years ahead.



[CHP reports investigation of leprosy case](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (June 21) reported an investigation of a leprosy case, and reiterated that the transmission risk of leprosy in Hong Kong is low and the disease does not spread easily among people.

The case involved a 30-year-old woman with good past health, who developed a skin rash on her arm since early May. She attended Tseung Kwan O Hospital for medical attention on May 23 and was admitted for treatment. Her skin biopsy specimen was positive for leprosy upon laboratory testing. She is in stable condition. Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient stayed in the Philippines during the incubation period before arriving in Hong Kong in late April. Her home contacts in Hong Kong are currently asymptomatic and under medical surveillance. Further assessments will be provided for the home contacts. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

Leprosy (Hansen's disease) is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* which can be transmitted by nasal droplets or by close skin contact.

A spokesman for the CHP stressed that the disease will only be transmitted through prolonged and close contact over months to years with leprosy patient not being treated at all. The disease does not spread easily

between people through casual contact with a leprosy patient, such as shaking hands or hugging, sharing meals or sitting next to each other. Also, the disease does not spread through sex or pass to the fetus during pregnancy. The patient stops transmitting the disease as soon as they started treatment.

The disease affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and the eyes of infected persons. Symptoms may occur within one year after infection but can also take as long as 20 years or even more to occur. Without treatment, loss of sensation and disability can occur. The spokesman reiterated that leprosy is curable and early treatment can prevent disability. Antibiotics used for effective treatment of leprosy in form of multi-drug therapy (rifampicin, clofazimine and dapsone) are readily available in Hong Kong.

Leprosy is a notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. The number of cases reported has declined significantly from above 100 in the early 1970s to between 20 and 30 in the early 1990s. This can be attributed to improvements in the health of the general population and better health and sanitation facilities. The number of cases reported ranged from one to nine cases annually between 2014 and 2023. Among them, the majority (above 80 per cent) were imported cases with a history of prolonged stays outside Hong Kong, and the remaining cases were either relapses of past infections or older adults who acquired the infection decades ago. Among the new cases, none were found to lead to disabilities. The CHP will continue to monitor the situation.

Globally, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), leprosy occurs in more than 120 countries, with more than 200 000 new cases reported every year. Although there has been a gradual reduction in the number of cases globally, Brazil, India and Indonesia still reported more than 10 000 new cases each year from 2018 to 2022, while some countries like the Philippines, Nepal, Myanmar, etc reported 1 000 to 10 000 new cases each year during the same period. Therefore, early diagnosis, especially for people with prolonged stays in leprosy prevalent countries, is crucial.

According to the WHO, there is strong evidence that Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccination is effective in preventing leprosy and has contributed to the decline in the incidence of the disease globally. In Hong Kong, BCG is given at birth with very high coverage rates approaching 100 per cent all along. With the high coverage of BCG vaccine in the local population and being a disease that does not spread easily among people, the transmission risk of leprosy in Hong Kong is low.

For more information, please visit the CHP webpage featuring leprosy at (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/107984.html).