

SED to visit Croatia

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, will begin her visit to Dubrovnik, Croatia, on November 27 (Dubrovnik time) to promote Hong Kong's education strengths.

Dr Choi will attend the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Governing Board Meeting organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to discuss the current status of and future planning for PISA with representatives from other regions. She will also speak at the PISA Conference to promote Hong Kong's quality education and exchange insights with global education experts on the use of PISA data for enhancing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics) education.

During her visit, Dr Choi will discuss education issues with OECD leaders, officials from the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of Croatia, and education officials from other regions.

Dr Choi will return to Hong Kong on November 30 (Dubrovnik time). During her absence, the Under Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, will be the Acting Secretary for Education.

Hong Kong Customs alerts public to two models of unsafe external power banks (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs today (November 26) alerted members of the public to the potential thermal burn injury posed by two models of external power banks and advised them to stop using the products for safety's sake.

Customs officers recently conducted spot checks and test-purchased nine models of external power banks for safety testing. Test results revealed that two of the models failed the thermal burn injury test when using the wireless charging function if an object was placed between the power bank and the device being charged. Therefore, the products did not comply with the relevant international product safety standard, and were suspected to be in contravention of the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO).

Customs officers later conducted operations and searched two retailers and one wholesaler involved in the case. A total of 437 pieces of the two models of external power banks were seized. Prohibition notices were also

served on the retailers and wholesaler concerned, prohibiting the continued sale of the two suspected unsafe external power banks.

Furthermore, Customs officers have conducted spot checks and inspections in various districts and have not found any sales of the two external power banks concerned so far. An investigation is ongoing.

Customs reminds members of the public to observe the following safety tips when purchasing and using external power banks:

- Purchase external power banks manufactured by reputable brands and equipped with short circuit protection devices, including overcharging, overcurrent and battery temperature protection devices, and choose charger cables produced by original manufacturers;
- External power banks in use should be placed in an environment with good ventilation so not to obstruct heat dissipation from the batteries and to minimise the risk of a short circuit. Devices being charged should not be placed near inflammable substances such as clothes;
- Keep the external power bank and the chargers clean;
- Avoid prolonged charging and unplug the external power bank immediately after it is fully charged;
- Place the external power bank and chargers in use within sight;
- When charging the external power bank, do not use it to charge mobile phones or other devices to avoid overloading or combustion; and
- Avoid putting any objects between the wireless power bank and the device being charged while conducting wireless charging.

Customs is committed to the protection of consumer interests and regularly conducts spot checks and safety tests on consumer goods to ensure that they are reasonably safe for use by consumers.

Customs also reminds traders to comply with the statutory requirements of the CGSO to protect the safety of consumers. Under the CGSO, it is an offence to supply, manufacture or import into Hong Kong consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on subsequent conviction.

Members of the public with information relating to unsafe consumer goods may make a report via Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or by filling in an online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).



[Housing Authority respects Court of Final Appeal's judgment concerning rights of same-sex spouses under public rental housing and Home Ownership Scheme policies](#)

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

Today (November 26), the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) handed down a judgment in *Nick Infinger v The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA)* (FACV No. 2 of 2024) and *Li Yik Ho (in substitution for Ng Hon Lam Edgar, deceased) v HA* (FACV No. 3 of 2024). The two cases are judicial reviews lodged by applicants Infinger and Li concerning the rights of same-sex spouses under the HA's public rental housing (PRH) and Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) policies, respectively. The CFA dismissed the appeal lodged by the HA and held that the HA's policies that same-sex couples are ineligible for PRH application as "Ordinary Families"; and to exclude same-sex spouses of owners of HOS flats from addition as authorised occupants of HOS flats and receiving transfer ownership without the payment of premium as "spouses" under "family members" are unlawful and unconstitutional.

"The HA respects the CFA's judgment. We will study the judgment seriously and shall seek legal advice as necessary on follow-up actions," a spokesman for the HA said.

[AFCD announces new quarantine arrangements for imported cats and dogs](#)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (November 26) that new quarantine arrangements for imported cats and dogs will be implemented starting from December 1. The AFCD will introduce Group IIIA for exporting countries/places, thereby increasing the number of groups from three to four. The quarantine period for cats and dogs imported from Group IIIA countries/places will be significantly shortened from the current 120 days to 30 days upon their arrival in Hong Kong, provided that they meet the relevant quarantine requirements. The Macao Special Administrative Region is the first place to be included in Group IIIA. The AFCD is currently discussing with Mainland authorities the implementation details of including the Mainland in Group IIIA. Announcements will be made in due course.

Applicants for importing cats and dogs from Group IIIA countries/places should ensure that the requirements are met and provide relevant proof to the AFCD, including that the animals must be implanted with a conforming microchip, accompanied by valid vaccination certificates against rabies and other specified infectious diseases, have a satisfactory rabies neutralising antibody titre test result from a laboratory recognised by the AFCD, and an animal health certificate issued or endorsed by a government veterinary officer of the country/place of export. Details about the new quarantine arrangements and the application procedure for importing cats and dogs, including the reservation of quarantine facilities and information on the recognised laboratories, are available on the AFCD website: www.afcd.gov.hk/english/quarantine/qua_ie/qua_ie_ipab/qua_ie_ipab_idc/qua_ie_ipab_idc_Group_IIIa.html.

An AFCD spokesman noted that as biotechnology has developed in recent years, the AFCD has conducted a risk assessment earlier on and considered that the quarantine period for cats and dogs imported from certain Group III places could be shortened by measures such as rabies vaccination and rabies neutralising antibody titre tests. The new arrangement aims to optimise the quarantine requirements for importing cats and dogs, helping pet owners bring cats and dogs to Hong Kong.

Under the new arrangement, the AFCD will approach countries/places that do not meet the requirements to be included in Group II but have satisfactory regulation of veterinary services and official controls on health certification for quarantine arrangements. Upon reaching agreements, these countries/places will be categorised as Group IIIA to shorten the quarantine period for importing cats and dogs upon their arrival in Hong Kong. The original Group III will be renamed as Group IIIB. Since the incubation period of rabies can be up to several months, the quarantine period for importing cats and dogs from Group IIIB countries/places will remain no less than 120

days.

To effectively prevent the transmission of rabies into Hong Kong, the AFCD classifies places into different groups according to different risks of rabies, with reference to information about the surveillance of animal diseases from the World Organisation for Animal Health. Group I includes rabies-free places (i.e. where rabies has been absent for a long time); Group II includes places where rabies cases are few and under effective control; Group IIIA includes places that do not meet the requirements to be included in Group II but have satisfactory regulation of veterinary services and official controls on health certification; and Group IIIB includes places where rabies cases are reported and not under effective control. In general, places that do not meet the requirements of Group I, II or IIIA (or cannot be assessed) will be included in Group IIIB.

[Health Bureau organises Health Research Symposium to showcase achievements of advancing health through research and technology \(with photos\)](#)

The Health Research Symposium, organised by the Health Bureau, was held today (November 26). The Symposium attracted enrolment from over 850 medical and healthcare practitioners, researchers, academics, and community and government representatives to share the research findings of projects funded by the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) as well as to exchange experiences.

With this year's theme set on "Advancing Health through Research and Technology", the Symposium provided a networking platform for healthcare experts and relevant personnel to share knowledge and achievements in promoting excellence in health and medical research. Four world-renowned experts, namely Professor Anthony Jorm, Dr Alexander Ng, Professor Chen Zhengming and Professor Corinne Faivre-Finn, were invited to deliver keynote lectures at the Symposium to enlighten the attendees with their experiences and insights on mental health, the application of big data in primary healthcare, precision medicine, and real-world research, respectively.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, attended the opening ceremony of the Symposium. Professor Lo said, "The Government has been striving to promote and encourage the translation of medical and health research by researchers

and the healthcare sector by funding and supporting medical and health research as well as training through the HMRF, with a view to benefitting citizens' well-being and advancing medical innovation development. Since the establishment of the HMRF in 2011, the Government has committed over \$4 billion and funded over 2 000 investigator-initiated research projects, more than 90 research fellowship awards, and close to 300 commissioned studies.

"The HMRF attaches great importance to the translation of research findings of funded projects with a view to facilitating the formulation of healthcare policies, strengthening the healthcare system and boosting the standard and quality of healthcare services, thereby attaining the goal of enhancing public health. I am pleased to see that many HMRF-funded projects have provided researchers with effective support for them to create new knowledge in the healthcare field and yielded fruitful results in translating research into evidence-based application, with significant contribution to promoting citizens' health. I call for local researchers to continue to make good use of the HMRF to accelerate the translation of research results, unleash new quality productive forces in medical innovation, and push forward Hong Kong's development into an international health and medical innovation hub."

According to the surveys conducted by the Government on 145 HMRF-funded projects and with technology/knowledge transfer offices of universities this year, 78 per cent of the funded projects had their research findings published in peer-reviewed journals, creating new knowledge in the biomedical field; whereas 42 per cent of the funded projects received additional funding for further research, with each project receiving an additional funding amounting to five times that of the HMRF grant on average. In terms of progress towards industrialisation, the HMRF-funded projects have filed 162 patent applications in different places (including the Mainland, Hong Kong, Europe, the United States and Japan), established 15 spin-out companies/joint ventures/incubation programmes, and signed 11 collaboration agreements of various types. Moreover, some HMRF-funded studies have brought positive impact on the formulation of healthcare policies and practices in areas such as infectious diseases and cancer treatment.

To recognise the excellent research efforts and outstanding contributions of researchers in the areas of medical and health, health promotion and COVID-19, awards were presented to 13 researchers at the Symposium today. The awardees are listed as below:

Excellent Research Awards

Professor Richard Choy Kwong-wai
Professor Han Quanbin
Professor Margaret Ip
Professor Cindy Lam Lo-kuen
Professor Simon Ng Siu-man

The Most Promising Young Researcher Awards

Dr Shara Lee Wee-yee
Professor Wang Zixin

Excellent Health Promotion Project Award
Professor Winnie Mak Wing-sze

Outstanding Project Team on COVID-19 Research Awards
Professor Francis Chan Ka-leung
Professor Philip Li Hei
Professor Leo Poon Lit-man
Professor Yuen Kwok-yung
Professor Zhang Tong

At the Symposium today, 28 local project teams funded by the HMRF and four recipients of the Research Fellowship Scheme were invited to share their research findings and translation results, covering research in areas including advanced medical technologies, primary healthcare and preventive medicine, non-communicable diseases, mental health and infectious diseases. Nearly 80 HMRF-funded projects were also displayed at a poster exhibition at the Symposium to showcase the achievements.

