

# Pest Control Steering Committee reviews progress of anti-mosquito and anti-rodent work implemented by departments (with photo)

The interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) held its 18th meeting today (June 3) to review the latest situation of mosquito infestation and the anti-mosquito work taken by departments. Furthermore, the PCSC also examined the work progress of departments under the Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action (the Action) and planned their anti-rodent work for the future.

## Mosquito control

In view of a local Dengue Fever (DF) case recently, the representatives of the Department Health (DH) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reported the follow-up work to the PCSC.

The Centre for Health Protection of the DH had immediately conducted epidemiological investigations and questionnaire surveys with neighbouring residents, as well as provided free DF antibody tests for people in the district with relevant symptoms. The FEHD had also immediately conducted mosquito infestation surveys and carried out additional targeted mosquito prevention and control work in areas within a 250-metre radius of the residence and workplace of the patient, as well as places he had visited during the incubation and infectious period. The FEHD also stepped up inspections and took enforcement actions where necessary. To date, no other local infection cases have been found, and no DF virus has been detected in the collected mosquitoes.

Based on the latest surveillance data, the representative of DH reported that there has been an increase in DF cases in some places in Asia thus far, compared with the corresponding period of last year. The Americas (including Brazil, Argentina and Peru) have even recorded over 8 million cases, which is a record number, since the beginning of 2024.

After the World Health Organization's announcement in May 2023 that the COVID-19 epidemic situation no longer constitutes a "public health emergency of international concern", the inbound and outbound passenger traffic has become busy. Local mosquitoes may carry the virus and spread it to local residents as they bite imported DF patients, resulting in local infections and an increased risk of further local transmission. Furthermore, patients who have a second infection with a different type of DF virus are more likely to result in a serious complication, i.e. dengue hemorrhagic fever, which can lead to death. Therefore, members of the public should stay alert.

The representative of the FEHD reported to the PCSC the situation of mosquito infestation this year thus far. Similar to previous years, the Gravidtrap Indices started to rise since the rainy season commenced in April. As rainfall in April this year had more than doubled compared with the corresponding period last year, the FEHD immediately stepped up mosquito prevention and control work, including eliminating mosquito breeding places, applying larvicides, conducting fogging operations to eradicate adult mosquitoes, and placing mosquito trapping devices at suitable locations. The FEHD has also conducted on-site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support.

The increasingly hot and rainy weather in Hong Kong in recent years has provided favourable conditions for mosquito breeding, while busier inbound and outbound passenger traffic may lead to an increasing risk of local transmission of DF. As such, the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, and the Chairperson of the PCSC, Miss Diane Wong, specifically reminded all departments not to let their guard down in the coming months, and that they should continually strengthen mosquito prevention and control work, such as conducting inspections of their venues and the surrounding environment, removing stagnant water, and adopting appropriate mosquito control devices, etc. All departments should also step up the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations to reduce the risk.

#### Rodent control

Under the Action, the FEHD will continue to implement a series of targeted rodent prevention and control measures, including continuing overnight anti-rodent operations and the application of new anti-rodent technologies and tools. The FEHD will also continue to conduct anti-rodent operations targeting 97 priority rodent black spots with a view to achieving the key performance indicator of reducing the number of black spots by 60 per cent by end 2024 as set out in the 2023 Policy Address. District Environmental Hygiene Offices of the FEHD will also extend the scheme of allowing food premises to place large-sized refuse bins at rear lanes to more appropriate locations, and encourage relevant food premises to participate.

Furthermore, from this year, the FEHD has fully adopted thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology to conduct the Rodent Activity Survey (RAS) in each district for formulation of the Rodent Absence Rate. The FEHD will plan rodent prevention and control work, and deploy more effective anti-rodent actions in blackspots accordingly. Surveillance points with thermal imaging cameras installed cover various locations, including rear lanes, planter areas and other places where rodents may be present. In addition to adjusting the surveillance points based on investigation results, the FEHD is also co-ordinating with relevant departments to extend the RAS to venues managed by other departments (including the Housing Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) next year to make the investigations more representative.

Representatives of relevant departments also reported their work taken under the Action. Apart from continuing to implement the Anti-rodent Action

in Estates in the Hong Kong Housing Authority's public rental housing estates (PRHEs), the HD has reported the latest progress of rodent control in PRHEs, including strengthening daily cleaning and anti-rodent work, installing mobile surveillance systems in locations with serious rodent infestations to detect rodent activities, as well as adopting other new anti-rodent devices, etc. District Offices have incorporated anti-rodent services into the service contracts for providing cleaning services to the common areas of "three-nil" buildings on a need basis. The FEHD will continue to provide training and technical support on pest control to other departments responsible for managing public venues, aiming to strengthen their supervision of contracted service providers and enhance the level of pest control services.

All departments agreed to continue to strengthen rodent prevention and control measures in premises under their respective management, to strengthen internal monitoring and assessment of the outcome of rodent control work, and to actively encourage relevant sectors and stakeholders to co-operate with the Government's work, eliminating rodents' fundamental survival conditions of food, harbourage and passages from their respective areas. Furthermore, the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the FEHD are proactively following up on the second-stage amendment work of environmental hygiene-related legislation with a view to more effectively handle rodent infestation and other environmental hygiene issues.

The meeting was chaired by Miss Wong. Participants of the meeting came from three policy bureaux and 20 government departments and organisations.



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## [Environment and Conservation Fund 30th anniversary "Let's Grow for Green" launching ceremony held \(with photos\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee:

The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) 30th anniversary "Let's Grow for Green" launching ceremony was held today (June 3) at the Hong Kong Productivity Council Building in Kowloon. As officiating guests, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Chairman of the ECF Committee, Dr Eric Cheng; and the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, witnessed the important milestone of the 30th anniversary of the ECF.

Officiating at the ceremony, Mr Chan said that the Government had been formulating, implementing and enhancing various environmental protection-related policy initiatives to reduce the city's total carbon emissions by half before 2035 from the 2005 level and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The ECF plays a constructive role in bringing together the wisdom and strength of all sectors of society to support the Government's implementation of environment protection-related policies and encourage the public to practise low-carbon living.

Mr Chan added that he looked forward to the ECF continuing to discharge its mission steadfastly, jointly with various stakeholders in society, to cooperate with the Government in such key tasks as strengthening public education and expanding recycling facilities in an all-round manner. The overall objective is to cultivate and practise green culture in the whole community and build Hong Kong into a sustainable and beautiful city.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Cheng expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Government for its generous injection of funds and its long-term commitment to protecting the environment and nature conservation in Hong Kong. He also anticipated that eligible organisations in Hong Kong would continue to make good use of the ECF to organise various environmental protection and nature conservation projects, with effective utilisation of innovative solutions and environmental protection technologies, to achieve goals such as "cherishing resources", "conserving environment", and "achieving carbon neutrality".

Other officiating guests of the launching ceremony included the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Environment), Miss Janice Tse, and the Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Samuel Chui. About 200 guests, including Legislative Council Members, district council members, social elites, and representatives of the recipient organisations, community organisations and green groups, attended the ceremony.

Both online and offline promotional activities with the theme of "Let's Grow for Green" will be kicked off in June this year to encourage all sectors of society and the general public to have a deeper understanding and make good use of the ECF through application for organising and participation in environmental protection and nature conservation projects and activities, with the objective of promoting emission reduction and carbon reduction in the community, thereby facilitating Hong Kong's attainment of carbon neutrality by 2050.

The ECF is a statutory trust fund established in June 1994 under the ECF Ordinance (Cap. 450). From its establishment to 2012, the ECF received six government injections totalling about \$1.7 billion to support local eligible organisations in implementing various environmental protection and nature conservation projects and activities. Later in 2013, the Government injected an additional \$5 billion into the ECF as its long-term commitment, which serves as seed money to generate an investment return for sustained support for environmental protection and nature conservation projects in the community.



## [Four persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operation \(with photo\)](#)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted an anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Netstrike" today (June 3) by deploying officers-in-disguise to contact a Mainland cleaning service company, which arranged for illegal workers to work in Hong Kong. During the operation, one person-in-charge of the Mainland cleaning service company and three Mainland illegal workers were arrested.

Recently, social media platforms have been utilised by Mainland companies to advertise cleaning services in Hong Kong. After in-depth investigation and intelligence analysis, the Special Investigation Section of

the ImmD identified a Mainland company arranging for illegal workers to perform domestic and office cleaning work in Hong Kong. During the operation, officers disguised themselves as customers to enquire about the cleaning services with the Mainland company. The person-in-charge of the Mainland cleaning company aged 28 and three Mainland illegal workers aged from 19 to 30 were arrested while they were performing cleaning work in Hong Kong.

"The ImmD will continue to strengthen enforcement actions against illegal employment and seek various means to publicise the serious consequences of employing illegal workers in order to raise public awareness of the issue. The ImmD will conduct target-oriented cyber patrols and take prompt enforcement actions if any person is found organising, arranging or instigating others to commit serious crimes such as employing illegal workers," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him/her shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties. As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute

enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



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## [Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 3) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From May 26 to June 1, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case and one imported LD case:

1. A male patient, aged 71 with underlying illnesses, who lived on the Mainland during the incubation period and was classified as an imported case; and
2. A female patient, aged 74 with underlying illnesses, who lives in

Kowloon City District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of June 1, 37 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

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â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically



according to the manufacturer's recommendations;

- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 µm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

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## [Mainland male jailed for making false representation and other offences](#)

A Mainland male was charged at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts with making false representation to an Immigration Department (ImmD) staff member, breaching the condition of stay and failing to register and apply for an identity card, and was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and fined \$800 on May 31.

The 39-year-old defendant was granted entry to work in Hong Kong as an imported worker. Subsequently, the contract was prematurely terminated but the defendant did not depart Hong Kong within 14 days after the contract was terminated. The defendant was intercepted when he presented himself for departure clearance at a control point on May 26, during which the defendant claimed to the ImmD staff that he had no idea about the termination of his contract. The ImmD staff cast doubt on his explanation and thus began an investigation against the defendant.

In the course of the investigation, the defendant admitted under caution that he was well aware of the termination of his contract and he was required to leave Hong Kong within 14 days after the termination, but he did not depart before the limitation of stay expired because he wished to sightsee in Hong Kong. Moreover, records revealed that the defendant failed to register and apply for an identity card. The defendant was subsequently charged with the offences of making false representation to ImmD staff, breaching the condition of stay and failing to register and apply for an identity card. The defendant pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to a total of four months' imprisonment and fined \$800 by the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts on May 31.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years."

The spokesman warned, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties."

Under the Registration of Persons Ordinance, all Hong Kong residents aged 11 or over (including those who have been permitted to stay in Hong Kong for more than 180 days) are required to register for an identity card within 30 days of his entering Hong Kong, except those who are exempted or excluded. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine at level 3 and imprisonment for one year.