

Ombudsman announces results of direct investigation operation into LCSD's handling of obstructions to passageways by bicycles owned by operators of bicycle rental services (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, today (November 21) announced the completion of a direct investigation operation into the handling of obstructions to passageways by bicycles owned by operators of bicycle rental services of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), and made eight recommendations to the Department.

A total of 14 recreational venues managed by the LCSD have bicycle rental services provided by operators engaged by the Department for members of the public to rent bicycles for leisure or short-distance travel.

Contract terms of the relevant business permit (permit) issued by the LCSD explicitly forbid placing bicycles and articles relating to bicycle rental services outside the permit area. However, Ombudsman investigations have revealed that it is common for operators to place their bicycles outside the permit area in violation of contract terms. The Ombudsman also found that the existing enforcement mechanism of the LCSD against operators is not consistent.

Mr Chan said, "The LCSD, as the venue manager and permits issuer, is duty-bound to monitor the operators of bicycle rental services. Operators placing their bicycles outside the permit area in violation of regulations not only causes an obstruction to passageways and affects members of the public to access and use recreational facilities, but may also pose safety hazards. Our multiple site inspections found that it seems to be a common practice for operators to leave bicycles lying around in contravention of the regulations, and this has invited doubts as to whether the LCSD had reminded the operators of the irregularities or has taken enforcement action against them in the past."

LCSD staff issue reminders or warning letters to operators based on the gravity of the irregularities found. If no improvement is evident after the third warning letter, the LCSD can consider suspending the operator's business or terminating the contract. However, the current guidelines do not clearly specify how many verbal and written reminders would warrant a warning letter, or whether written reminders and warning letters have a validity period. The Ombudsman is of the view that in order to carry out enforcement more efficiently and fairly, the LCSD should enhance the current enforcement

regime and the relevant guidelines, for example, by specifying clearly that the Department will issue a warning letter if a cumulative number of verbal or written reminders are given within a certain period of time, and that the criteria for the issuance of a warning letter should be made public.

On the other hand, it has been noted that operators display bicycles of various models outside bicycle kiosks for customers to choose and try. This is not unreasonable, and may even have a practical need. The Ombudsman considers that while the LCSD has a duty to monitor compliance with permit contract terms, it should, as the department responsible for promoting recreational activities, also conduct a review on whether the current regulatory regime is too restrictive for the operators in the business. If necessary, the Department should examine whether operators can be allowed to use the space outside the permit area as long as the relevant regulations are complied with. In the long run, the LCSD should consider including part of the venue as the permit area when drafting new contracts for bicycle rental services in the future for better management.

The Ombudsman has made a total of eight improvement recommendations to the LCSD, including:

- keep monitoring the operator concerned closely. Should it continue to occupy the space outside the permit area in violation of contract terms, decisive enforcement action must be taken;
- strengthen monitoring of bicycle rental services operators, and take decisive enforcement action against irregularities pursuant to permit contract terms;
- step up staff training on the enforcement of permit contract terms and relevant procedures to ensure that enforcement actions are taken rigorously, accurately and effectively;
- examine how to enhance the current enforcement regime and relevant guidelines to carry out enforcement work in a more efficient and fairer manner in accordance with consistent standards;
- conduct a comprehensive review on the operation of bicycle rental services at venues under its purview, and to examine the feasibility of allowing operators to use areas outside the permit area for placing bicycles, subject to compliance with the relevant requirements;
- consider revising the terms of future permit contracts to suitably include a certain area outside the bicycle kiosk as part of the permit area for better management;
- collect information on the performance of operators (especially irregularities and their approach to complying with reminders and warning letters, etc) and include such information into the LCSD database as the basis of reference in approving new permits in the future; and
- step up publicity to encourage members of the public to monitor operators' performance and report irregularities to the LCSD at once.

The Office is pleased to note that the LCSD has accepted all the

improvement recommendations made.

The full investigation report is available on the website of the Office of The Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.hk for public information.



[Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute officially opened in Hong Kong Park of Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone](#)

The Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute (GBAICTI), established and wholly owned by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, was officially opened today (November 21) in the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone (HTCZ). The Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trials Center of the Shenzhen Municipality was also officially opened in the Shenzhen Park on the same day. The establishment of "one institute, one center" marked the first benchmark for co-ordinated development under "one zone, two parks" of the HTCZ.

The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing; the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau; Deputy Director of the Public

Hygiene and Health Commission of Shenzhen Municipality Mr Li Jieyun; and the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Health), Dean of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and representative of the GBAICTI's operator, Professor Lau Chak-sing, officiated at the opening ceremony of the GBAICTI.

Mr Cheuk said that the National 14th Five-Year Plan indicated clear support to develop Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub. The Development Plan for Shenzhen Park of Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone also expressed staunch support for the co-ordinated development of technological innovation of Shenzhen and Hong Kong. With its strategic location in the Hetao area, the GBAICTI officially opened today will bring into full play Hong Kong's unique advantages of a high degree of internationalisation, high-level healthcare professions and scientific research. Joining hands with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), the GBAICTI will spare no effort to develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions by promoting clinical trials and development of the biomedical technologies industry, hence serving the nation's needs with the strengths of Hong Kong.

The Director General of the Public Hygiene and Health Commission of Shenzhen Municipality, Ms Wu Hongyan, in her video speech congratulated on the official establishment of the GBAICTI in Hong Kong, and expressed her hope for close integration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen to capitalise on the strengths of the two places in the areas of industry, translation, market, talent and scientific research through the establishment of "one institute, one center", building together a high-level clinical trial service platform.

The GBAICTI will co-ordinate clinical trial resources in local public and private sectors, including those from the Hospital Authority (HA), private healthcare institutions and universities, serving as a one-stop clinical trial support platform for medical research institutions while streamlining workflow, driving training for talent and collaboration across the GBA on all fronts. Multiple projects will be rolled out in phases, including establishing the Hong Kong Clinical Trial Digital Portal, founding the Clinical Trial Academy, collaborating with the Department of Health (DH) and the HA to have the time for approval and application of drugs reduced to a level with competitiveness in the world. At the same time, the GBAICTI will establish strategic partnerships with healthcare and biomedical institutions, including the Hong Kong Genome Institute, to leverage its genome database primarily acquired from the Southern Chinese population, spur the opening up of the HA's medical databases to support clinical trials, and attract enterprises of advanced biomedical technologies (such as gene therapy, cell therapy, radioligand therapy and new vaccine technology platforms) within and outside of Hong Kong to set up their operations in Hetao for research and development (R&D), and translation.

The GBAICTI will be a key hub for clinical trial network co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland. The GBAICTI will establish the GBA Clinical Trial Collaboration Platform under the "one zone, two parks" model together with the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trials Center, which was officially opened today in the Shenzhen Park under the operation of

the Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation, to extend the research and development network and expedite clinical trials. With a population base of over 86 million within the GBA, the platform will provide support to medical research institutions within and outside Hong Kong and co-ordinate the launch of multicentre cross-boundary clinical trials that can meet both national and international standards.

Through open tender, The HKSAR Government has designated the LKS Faculty of Medicine of the HKU, which has extensive international experiences in clinical trials, to operate the GBAICTI. The temporary office of the GBAICTI is located at the Central Government-Aided Emergency Hospital in the Hetao area, covering nearly 7 000 square feet and equipped with an affiliated biobank managed by the HA and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Having two liquid nitrogen storage systems and 11 ultra-low temperature freezers set up, the biobank has a capacity to store over 400 000 samples (such as tissues, blood, cells and DNA).

In the days to come, the GBAICTI is expected to move into one of the wet laboratory-enabled buildings in the Hong Kong Park (i.e. the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park) to provide a platform with more diverse and comprehensive clinical trial facilities and services. The GBAICTI will have a better integration with the complete biomedical technologies R&D and technology industry chain in the GBA, and capitalise on the nation's special policy initiatives that are favourable to Hong Kong, such as the measure of using Hong Kong-registered drugs and medical devices used in Hong Kong public hospitals in the GBA and relevant cross-boundary facilitation measures. That will help Hong Kong to fully leverage its role as a "super connector" enjoying strong support of the Motherland and being closely connected to the world, and promote the Hetao area as a window for translation of innovative biomedical research results to attract overseas enterprises and facilitate Mainland enterprises to go global, thus expediting patients' access to advanced treatments in the GBA and promoting new quality productive forces.

Also attending today's opening ceremony were the Permanent Secretary for Health and Director of the GBAICTI Limited, Mr Thomas Chan; the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee; the Chairman of the HA, Mr Henry Fan; the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko; and the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the CUHK, Professor Allen Chan.

[Red flags hoisted at some beaches](#)

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (November 21) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

CFS urges public not to consume a kind of imported carrots with possible Shiga toxin-producing E. coli 0121 contamination

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 20) urged the public not to consume a kind of prepackaged carrots imported from the United States (US) due to possible contamination with Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) 0121. The trade should stop using or selling the affected product immediately if they possess any of it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Organic Whole Carrots

Manufacturer: Grimmway Farms

Brand: Bunny Luv

Place of origin: US

Net weight: Two pounds per pack

Importer: PARKnSHOP (HK) Limited

Available for sale: Since August 23, 2024 from PARKnSHOP, Taste, Fusion and Great supermarkets

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS noted a notification from the Food and Drug Administration of the US that the above-mentioned product is being recalled in the US due to possible contamination with STEC 0121. The CFS immediately contacted local importers for follow-up. A preliminary investigation found that the above-mentioned importer had imported into Hong Kong the affected product concerned."

As a precautionary measure, the importer concerned has stopped selling and removed from shelves the affected product upon the CFS's instructions and has initiated a recall. Members of the public may call the importer concerned at 2606 8658 during office hours for enquiries about the recall.

Some strains of E. coli, e.g. E. coli 0121, can cause diseases through the production of a toxin called Shiga toxin. These strains are called STEC. STEC infection is transmitted by faecal-oral route through contaminated food

and water, or direct contact with STEC carrying animals. Moreover, due to poor personal hygiene, person-to-person transmission of this pathogen is possible through oral-faecal route. Symptoms of STEC infection include abdominal pain and watery diarrhoea that may in some cases progress to bloody diarrhoea. Fever and vomiting may also occur. Intestinal bleeding and serious complications such as hemolytic uraemic syndrome may also develop in some people. E. coli, including STEC, cannot survive under high temperature and can be killed by thorough cooking.

The spokesman urged consumers not to consume the affected product if they have bought any. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected product immediately if they possess it.

The CFS will alert the trade to the incident, and will continue to follow up and take appropriate action. The investigation is ongoing.

HKSAR Government strongly condemns and opposes smears on fair and open Court sentencing

Regarding the untruthful smearing and unscrupulous attacks made by some government authorities and officials of Western countries (including the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), the European Union, Australia, Canada and more), anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians and foreign media on the sentences handed down by the court yesterday (November 19) to 45 convicted individuals in a case of conspiracy to commit subversion in accordance with law, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (November 20) strongly condemned and opposed such acts.

A spokesman for the Government said that, "Following as many as 118 days of open hearings and thorough considerations of the relevant legal principles, a massive amount of evidence and submissions from the prosecution and the defence, the Court of First Instance of the High Court had earlier delivered the reasons for verdict which comprises over 300 pages, as well as two annexes totalling over 400 pages which summarised the evidence of the prosecution and defence witnesses, detailing the courts' analysis of the law and evidence as well as the reasons rendering the verdict of conviction. Similarly, the court has also clearly listed out its reasons and considerations in sentencing in its 82-page reasons for sentence. All relevant information is open and can be downloaded from the webpage of the Judiciary.

"Any reasonable and fair person, upon reviewing the court's judgment, would be convinced of the severity of the crime and the guilt of the

convicted individuals, supported by irrefutable evidence. Despite these ironclad facts, Western countries, anti-China organisations and politicians, and foreign media continue to distort the truth and maliciously attack. The HKSAR Government must again firmly refute these claims to set the record straight."

The spokesman pointed out, "Evidence adduced in the court revealed that the persons concerned conspired to indiscriminately vote down the Government's budget and public expenditure proposals after securing a majority in the Legislative Council (LegCo) through the so-called 'primary election', such that the Chief Executive would be required to dissolve the LegCo in accordance with Article 50 of the Basic Law; and after re-electing the LegCo, vote down the Budget again, forcing the Chief Executive to resign, thus paralysing the Government. At the same time, they sought to bring Hong Kong society to a standstill through large-scale street riots and other means. Coupled with international political and economic sanctions, causing endless harm and suffering to Hong Kong society and members of the public.

"The objective of the whole scheme was to exert a severe impact on society, the economy and people's livelihood and create a constitutional crisis in the HKSAR. The court stated in its reasons for sentencing that had the so-called 'Project 35+' been carried out to the very end, the adverse consequences would be far reaching and no less serious than overthrowing the Government of the HKSAR. Such an attempt to subvert the state power is indeed a serious act endangering national security and has nothing to do with freedom and democracy.

"The proposed imposition of the so-called 'visa restrictions' on HKSAR officials by the US Government smack of despicable political manipulation to intimidate People's Republic of China and HKSAR officials who resolutely safeguard national security. These grossly interfere in China's internal affairs and Hong Kong's affairs, and violate the international law and the basic norms governing international relations. The HKSAR despises such threats and will not be intimidated by such despicable behaviour. The HKSAR will continue to resolutely continue to discharge the duty of safeguarding national security.

"In accordance with international law and international practice based on the Charter of the United Nations, safeguarding national security is an inherent right of all sovereign states. Many common law jurisdictions, including the US, the UK and Canada, have enacted multiple pieces of legislation to safeguard national security. Turning a blind eye to the facts and making exaggerated remarks, the US and some Western countries, anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians, foreign media, and more, have demonstrated typical despicable political manipulation and hypocrisy with double standards. The HKSAR Government strongly urges them to stop interfering in China's internal affairs and Hong Kong affairs, and stop any untruthful reporting on and malicious smearing of the relevant judgment," the spokesman reiterated.