

LegCo Public Accounts Committee to hold public hearing tomorrow

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will hold a public hearing on "Provision and monitoring of Rehabus services" (Chapter 5) of the Director of Audit's Report No. 82 tomorrow (May 21) at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1 of the LegCo Complex.

Seven witnesses have been invited to appear before the above hearing to respond to points raised in the Report and answer questions asked by PAC members.

The programme for the public hearing is as follows:

Subject: Provision and monitoring of Rehabus services
(Chapter 5 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 82)
Date: May 21 (Tuesday)
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: Conference Room 1

Witnesses:

Mr Chris Sun
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Miss Vega Wong
Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Susan Chan
Assistant Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Angela Lee
Commissioner for Transport

Ms Louisa Fung
Assistant Commissioner/
Management and Paratransit
Transport Department

Mr Curtis Chiu
Principal Transport Officer/
Ferry and Paratransit
Transport Department

Ms Christine Yuen
Chief Transport Officer/

The PAC is chaired by Mr Shiu Ka-fai, and its Deputy Chairman is Mr Paul Tse. Other members are Ms Yung Hoi-yan, Mr Luk Chung-hung, Mr Edmund Wong, Mr Louis Loong and Ms Carmen Kan.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 20) 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 12 to 18, the CHP recorded two community-acquired LD cases:

1. A male patient, aged 67 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wong Tai Sin District; and
2. A female patient, aged 65 with good past health, who lives in Southern 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 May 18, 33 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.

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 (μm) 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.

â€‹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.

CSSA caseload for April 2024

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in April showed a drop of 365 cases, representing a decrease of 0.2 per cent compared with that of March, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (May 20).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of April stood at 198 840 (see attached table), with a total of 270 618 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 1.1 per cent to 1 513 cases. Unemployment cases decreased by 0.4 per cent to 16 879 cases. Old age cases, permanent disability cases and single parent cases all decreased by 0.2 per cent to 111 425 cases, 17 072 cases and 20 148 cases respectively.

Ill-health cases remained steady at 27 862 cases.

Public urged to keep up anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (May 20) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in April was 4.2 per cent. The index in April remained at the lowest Level 1, indicating that the distribution of *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in the areas surveyed was not extensive.

In April, among the 64 survey areas, there was only one area (Hung Hom) with the area gravidtrap index exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. Positive gravidtraps in the district concerned were mostly located in the vicinity of private residential areas, public housing estates, schools, recreational and sports facilities and public places. The FEHD has collaborated with relevant government departments by taking immediate action to strengthen mosquito prevention and control work in the area concerned.

Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* in April was 1.2, which represented that an average of 1.2 *Aedes albopictus* adults were found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was not abundant in the survey areas. The gravidtrap and

density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different survey areas as well as information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "As summer is approaching, the FEHD reminds members of the public to carry out early effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes as mosquitoes breed quickly in the hot and rainy weather. The Government has long been concerned about mosquito infestation. The FEHD has continued to intensify the mosquito prevention and control work with relevant government departments in areas under their purview, 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 site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support to assist them in formulating and implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. At the same time, the FEHD has strengthened publicity and education. Under the concerted efforts and collaboration of various parties, the index in April remained at a low level. The FEHD will continue to monitor the mosquito infestation in all districts, and will conduct prompt and effective mosquito prevention and control work. At the same time, members of the public are advised to continue the routine mosquito prevention and control work, especially the repair and maintenance of structures. Cracks and dents which may accumulate water and become potential breeding grounds should be filled and levelled to reduce the chance of mosquito breeding."

In view of a local dengue fever (DF) case earlier, the FEHD has immediately conducted surveys of mosquito infestation and has carried out additional targeted mosquito prevention and control work (including conducting fogging operations, applying larvicides and placing mosquito trapping devices) 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 has also stepped up inspections and taken enforcement actions where necessary.

The FEHD will conduct a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The second phase of the territory-wide campaign was launched on April 15 and will run until June 16. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD will target areas that have drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, to remove accumulated water and carry out mosquito prevention and control work. To further enhance the effectiveness of mosquito control, the FEHD and relevant government departments have carried out the second phase of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations since May 2 to focus on eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, and called on property managements to arrange necessary repairs to their premises so as to minimise mosquito breeding places. Furthermore, intense adult control has been conducted by means of regular ultra-low volume fogging operations after the onset of the rainy season.

The FEHD appeals to members of the public to work together to carry out

mosquito prevention and control measures early, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing water in vases and scrubbing their inner surfaces, removing water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. The FEHD also advises members of the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit DF. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high and Hong Kong has recorded 22 imported DF cases and one local DF case so far this year. Members of the public should stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for February – April 2024

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for February – April 2024) released today (May 20) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.0% in February – April 2024, same as that in January – March 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1% in the two periods.

Comparing February – April 2024 with January – March 2024, 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 5 700 from 3 688 400 in January – March 2024 to 3 694 100 in February – April 2024. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 7 700 from 3 800 100 to 3 807 800.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 2 000 from 111 700 in January – March 2024 to 113 700 in February – April 2024. The number of underemployed persons in February – April 2024 was 40 500, about the same as that in January – March 2024 (40 000).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour

and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at a low level of 3.0% in February – April 2024, same as January – March 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1%. The labour force increased further by 7 700 to 3 807 800, and the total employment bounced back by 5 700 to 3 694 100. The number of unemployed persons increased slightly by 2 000 to 113 700."

The unemployment rates of various sectors remained low in general in February – April 2024, mostly showing only small changes compared with the preceding three-month period.

Looking ahead, Mr Sun said, "Continued economic growth is expected to keep the labour market tight in the near term."

In February – April 2024, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 75 425 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year decrease of 29.2% and a decrease of 2.7% over the average figure in January – March 2024.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Embracing New Opportunities Job Fair at the Southorn Stadium in Wan Chai on May 30 and 31, 2024. About 60 employers will participate, offering a large number of vacancies. Job-seekers may also make use of the LD's Interactive Employment Service website, for obtaining more information on available vacancies.

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 February – April 2024 covered a sample of some 26 000 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 February to April 2024.

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 October – December 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter January –

March 2024 will be available by end May 2024. 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).