

## Updates on cluster of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus cases in Kwong Wah Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority.

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) carriers in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), the spokesperson for Kwong Wah Hospital made the following updates today (April 15):

In accordance with the prevailing infection control guidelines, the hospital has enhanced its surveillance and one more patient, an 18-day-old boy, was confirmed as an MRSA carrier without clinical symptoms. The patient is in stable condition and is being treated in isolation.

The hospital has performed enhanced medical surveillance and screening of the patients in the NICU. The following infection control measures have been stepped up according to established guidelines:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the NICU, including the environment, incubators, equipment and instruments;
2. Enhanced medical surveillance of the patients and environmental screening procedures in the NICU; and
3. Applied stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff. Family members are reminded that infection control measures must be implemented when visiting their babies.

The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up.

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## SED to visit Malta and Germany

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, will visit Malta and Frankfurt, Germany, from April 16 (Malta time).

In Malta, Dr Choi will attend the Programme for International Student Assessment Governing Board Meeting, speak at a related forum and discuss education issues with participating officials from other regions. She will also visit local schools and meet education experts.

Dr Choi will depart for Frankfurt on April 20 (Malta time) to learn

about the local developments in vocational and professional education and training, and exchange views with Hong Kong students studying there.

Dr Choi will conclude her visits and return to Hong Kong on April 23 (Germany time). During her absence, the Under Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, will be the Acting Secretary for Education.

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## **Hong Kong Customs and Centre for Food Safety join hands to continue vigorously combating illegal importing or smuggling of regulated food**

Hong Kong Customs and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 15) stated that both departments will continue to work closely in combating the illegal import or smuggling of regulated food on all fronts.

After the resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland since February 6, 2023, Customs has detected about 400 cases of illegal imports of regulated food in the first quarter of this year, which amounts to about 40 per cent of the approximately 1 100 similar cases detected last year. This reflects that there has been an increasing trend in this type of case recently. Of the cases detected by Customs, more than 80 per cent were detected from incoming passengers. No large-scale regulated food smuggling cases have been detected during the same period.

The CFS said illegally imported food may come from unknown sources and may not be under regulatory control, making it difficult to guarantee the safety of consumption. Also, the food concerned might have been exposed to dangerous temperatures and environments with unsatisfactory hygiene during the smuggling or delivery process, largely increasing food safety risks and threatening the health of the public.

With the Labour Day Golden Week approaching, Customs and the CFS reminded members of the public not to import regulated food illegally from the Mainland or overseas for the sake of convenience. It is best to avoid criminal liability and not affect one's health.

According to the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK), it is an offence to bring any game, meat, poultry or eggs into Hong Kong without a health certificate issued by an issuing entity of the place of origin and/or without prior written permission granted by the FEHD. An offender shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months.

Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Customs and the CFS will maintain close co-operation, while joint operations will be conducted to combat illegal food import activities.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002)).

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## **Imported frozen confection samples detected with coliform bacteria exceeding legal limit**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (April 15) that samples of a kind of frozen confection imported from Thailand were found to contain coliform bacteria exceeding the legal limit. The affected product has been marked and sealed, and has not entered the market. The CFS is following up on the case.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Milk Ice (Frozen Confection)  
Brand: After You Dessert Cafe  
Place of origin: Thailand  
Net weight: 1 700 grams  
Importer: Skyfair Trading Limited  
Use by date: December 8, 2024

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected samples of the above-mentioned frozen confection at the import level for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that two samples contained 250 and 260 coliform bacteria per gram respectively, exceeding the legal limit."

"The CFS has informed the importer concerned of the irregularities. The affected product has all been marked and sealed, and has not entered the market. The CFS will temporarily suspend the permission to import for sale of the product concerned granted earlier to the importer," the spokesman said.

Under the Frozen Confections Regulation (Cap. 132AC), frozen confection for sale should not contain more than 100 coliform bacteria per gram. The maximum penalty for offenders is a fine of \$10,000 and three months'

imprisonment upon conviction. The fact that the coliform count exceeded the legal limit indicated that the hygienic conditions were unsatisfactory, but did not mean that consumption would lead to food poisoning.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the case and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health.

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## **Opening remarks by SED at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting**

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 15):

Chairman,

Education is the key to nurturing talent. Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure, world-renowned universities, outstanding research talents, as well as diverse and quality basic education. The quality of our teaching and learning is ranked among the top in various international comparative studies. Building on our unique status and advantages under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong will better integrate into the overall development of the country and contribute to the development of the country and Hong Kong. In future, the Government will continue to make plans for education development from a holistic and long-term perspective to develop an international education hub, nurture and attract talent, and enhance Hong Kong's impetus for growth. In line with the national strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, we will foster new quality productive forces and strive for high-quality development, thereby contributing to the building of a leading country in education as well as a nation strong in science and technology.

To provide better education for children, the current-term Government strives to enhance the quality of education to better prepare for the future. It is our goal to nurture young people to become virtuous, knowledgeable and responsible lifelong learners with global perspectives, positive values and attitude, love for the country and the city, who are ready for future challenges and opportunities. The Government's expenditure on education will be \$115.7 billion in the 2024-25 financial year, accounting for about 15 per cent of the total government expenditure. The recurrent expenditure on education has, over the past 10 years, increased by 48 per cent with an average growth rate of around 4.4 per cent per annum. This demonstrates the Government's determination and commitment to investing in education.

To further enhance the quality and diversity of education, as well as

strengthen support for students, we implement various new initiatives in the 2024-25 financial year. Measures for post-secondary and Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) include –

(a) Supporting potential self-financing post-secondary institutions to form an alliance of universities of applied sciences (UAS). The Government announced on March 21, 2024, that the Hong Kong Metropolitan University had fulfilled the relevant criteria and successfully qualified as the first UAS in Hong Kong. We have set aside a start-up fund of \$100 million to support the formation of the alliance of UAS, and to support joint promotional activities of the alliance in the next five to 10 years, to instil in students, parents and the community better appreciation of the importance of VPET.

(b) Providing additional subsidies for full-time students pursuing designated applied degree programmes under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors to encourage institutions to offer more applied degree programmes and to enhance enrolment incentive.

(c) Supporting the Vocational Training Council to further strengthen its efforts on VPET, including extending the Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers under the Training and Support Scheme as well as the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part time Programmes for five years, further supporting student exchange activities, enhancing support for students with special educational needs, encouraging employers to provide workplace learning, and strengthening the promotion of VPET.

(d) Gradually increasing the quota of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme from 300 to 400 places per academic year, to attract more outstanding talent to study and conduct research in Hong Kong.

For students' physical and psychological well-being, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides each publicly funded primary and secondary school and their Parent-Teacher Associations the One-off Grant for Mental Health at School of \$60,000 and the One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students of \$20,000 to help schools organise related programmes or procure related services or materials for promoting mental health of students, teachers and parents in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years. We launch "Mental Health Literacy" resource packages for students at different learning stages in phases starting from the 2023/24 school year, so as to facilitate the school in promoting mental-health literacy in class, thereby strengthening students' awareness of mental health. We also provide a series of intensive workshops for teachers and school guidance personnel to enhance their knowledge and skills in caring for students with mental-health needs.

For supporting students with special educational needs, the EDB enhances the existing staff provision of resource teachers for students comorbid with autism spectrum disorder in primary and secondary sections of aided special schools and extend it to schools for social development starting from the 2024/25 school year.

For primary and secondary education, the EDB launches a five-year "Greater Bay Area Career Exploration Tours" programme starting from the 2023/24 school year with a view to deepening senior secondary students' understanding of the latest developments of various industries in the Greater Bay Area through personal observation and experience. The programme will provide around 700 tour quotas for public sector schools (including special schools) and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools operating senior secondary curriculum from the 2024-25 to 2028-29 financial years. Together with the Mainland exchange programmes provided for primary and secondary students on a regular basis and Mainland study tours for the senior secondary subject of Citizenship and Social Development implemented since the 2022/23 school year, students will have ample opportunities to visit the Mainland and gain a first-hand understanding of our country's development and achievements. In addition, we implement the subject on science in primary schools starting from the 2025/26 school year with a view to strengthening students' scientific and creative thinking. The final version of the curriculum framework was announced in March 2024. We also provide a one-off grant of \$350,000 for each publicly funded primary school to kick-start the subject. Upon enacting legislation for safeguarding national security on Article 23 of the Basic Law by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, we will, building upon our foundation, step up the support for schools to integrate relevant topics into learning and teaching, with a view to enhancing students' awareness of safeguarding our national unity and ethnic solidarity, as well as maintaining the security, sovereignty and development interests of our nation.

For kindergarten education, we increase the one-off provision of the Grant for Promotion of Chinese Art and Culture to enable kindergartens to organise more school-based activities of Chinese culture to further enhance students' understanding of traditional Chinese culture, cultivate their national identity and sense of belonging to our country, and nurture their love to our country as well as their sense of national pride. We also increase the one-off provision of the Professional Capacity Enhancement Grant with expanded usage scope to further strengthen the capacity and professional development of kindergarten teachers, including arranging exchange activities or sharing of good practices with kindergartens on the Mainland, with a view to fostering collaboration among kindergartens and enhancing the quality of kindergarten education.

In the coming year, echoing the strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, we will build on our achievements and consolidate our experiences to proactively take forward the work on various fronts in order to contribute to the development of our country and Hong Kong and at the same time tell good stories of Hong Kong's education. Mr Chairman, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer further questions from Members. Thank you.