

Hong Kong is prime platform and key link for Belt and Road Initiative (with photos)

Hong Kong is the prime platform and a key link for the Belt and Road Initiative, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said in Davos, Switzerland, this morning (January 24, Davos time). Speaking at the 3rd Belt and Road Davos Forum, Mr Yau pointed out that Hong Kong is best placed to be the platform for provision of professional and comprehensive services for Belt and Road-related projects as well as in facilitating capital flows and financing.

The forum was hosted by Tsinghua University, the International Cooperation Center of the National Development and Reform Commission, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and co-organised by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. Mr Yau took part in a panel discussion entitled "Building the Belt and Road and Sharing the Benefits of the Economic Globalisation".

Mr Yau said Hong Kong has a rich pool of professionals who are experienced in project financing and funding, bond issuing, legal and dispute resolution, accounting, insurance, business consultancy, risk assessment and management, construction, architecture, transport and more, and they are prepared to offer their expertise in professional services for Belt and Road-related countries as well as enterprises seeking to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative.

He added that Hong Kong boasts internationally geared business and professional services that are benchmarked against international standards and practices.

Following the forum, Mr Yau attended a lunch hosted by the Washington Post, Slate and Foreign Policy where international political and economic leaders shared their views on current trade issues.

In the afternoon, he will join the Stewardship Board Meeting on International Trade and Investment under the World Economic Forum where ministers of different countries and economies and global business leaders will discuss the long-term vision for improving the trade and investment architecture, short- or mid-term priorities for advancing policy reform and avoiding disruption, and opportunities to deepen public-private co-operation.

Mr Yau will attend the World Trade Organization Informal Ministerial Gathering and the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Electronic Commerce tomorrow morning (January 25, Davos time).



Government announces early Lunar New Year holidays for kindergartens and child care centres

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today (January 24) chaired an inter-departmental meeting to review the latest situation of seasonal influenza and assess the need to strengthen control measures. Representatives from the Education Bureau (EDB), the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Department of Health, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hospital Authority participated in the meeting.

During the inter-departmental meeting, the attendees reviewed the latest local influenza situation and noted that the outbreak of influenza-like illness (ILI) in kindergartens and child care centres had reached a very high intensity level and the influenza-associated hospitalisation rate among children aged less than six years in this season had reached a high intensity level. Furthermore, the number of paediatric influenza-associated severe complications and the ILI attendance rate of children aged between 0 and 5 at Accident and Emergency Departments were higher than those of last year. In addition, the overall occupancy rate of paediatric wards of public hospitals in the past week ranged from 90 to 100 percent.

After considering a number of factors including the latest surveillance figures and trend, the pressure on healthcare services provided by public hospitals, the concern of the society and parents as well as the approaching Lunar New Year, the Government announced that all kindergartens and child care centres will start their Lunar New Year holidays early on January 26 (Saturday) until the end of their originally scheduled Lunar New Year holidays.

The attendees of the inter-departmental meeting agreed that the additional mitigation measure in relation to kindergartens and child care centres could reduce the chance of transmission of influenza among children

in school settings as well as the risk of acquiring influenza infection, and also indirectly relieve the pressure on demand for healthcare services provided by public hospitals.

EDB and SWD will inform kindergartens and child care centres about the detailed arrangement for advancing the Lunar New Year holidays.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the following measures are advised to prevent influenza and respiratory tract infections:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70-80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Put on a surgical mask when respiratory symptoms develop;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When influenza is prevalent, avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks in such places; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#). As for vaccination, the public may call the CHP's hotline at 2125 2125 or visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#).

Government spokesman's response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the meeting between the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council today (January 24), a Government spokesman responded as follows:

The Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, and representatives from relevant government departments this afternoon met pan-democratic members of the

Legislative Council for 1 hour 15 minutes and had a candid dialogue to clarify misunderstandings on the measure to adjust the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from 60 to 65.

The Government spokesman reiterated that the aim of adjusting the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 is not to cut expenses, but to encourage able-bodied adults aged up to 64 to engage in employment by extending CSSA employment support services to them. The Government will introduce a new Employment Support Supplement under the CSSA Scheme to provide able-bodied adult recipient aged 60 to 64 with a monthly sum of \$1,060 per recipient to encourage them to join the labour market and remain in employment. The Government will closely monitor the implementation of the measure, continuously listen to different views and explore areas for improvement during the process.

Moreover, the Social Welfare Department will assist these CSSA recipients to participate in the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs will assist these recipients in a caring manner, help them get access to up-to-date labour market information, arrange job matching, assess their needs and provide them with tailor-made and focused employment assistance services. The main objective of the above arrangement is to assist the able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 in joining the workforce, not forcing them to find jobs.

The Government spokesman also clarified that all persons with disabilities or persons in ill health and their family carers, or single parents and child carers with their youngest child aged below 12, do not have to participate in the employment support programme. Persons aged 60 to 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1, 2019, or had received elderly CSSA before and re-apply for CSSA also do not have to participate in the programme.

CFS follows up on prepackaged lemon juice concentrate suspected to contain undeclared preservative incident

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (January 24) that according to the latest information provided by the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission, the recall of the prepackaged lemon juice concentrate produced in Italy which was suspected to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the product's food label had been expanded. The CFS' follow-up investigation found that the importer concerned had imported another four

batches of the affected lemon juice. The CFS advised consumers who are allergic to sulphur dioxide to refrain from consuming the affected products. The trade should also stop using or selling the products concerned immediately.

Product details are as follows:

(1) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice/Zitronensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrilemon
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 200 millilitres per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(2) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice/Zitronensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrilemon
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 1 litre per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(3) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice-Lime/Limettensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrigreen
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 200 millilitres per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

(4) Product name: Dressing Lemon Juice-Lime/Limettensaftkonzentrat
Product brand: Piacelli Citrigreen
Place of origin: Italy
Packing: 1 litre per bottle
Best-before dates: July 14 to December 17, 2020

A CFS spokesman said, " The CFS announced earlier that a batch of the abovementioned brand of lemon juice was suspected to contain sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the food label. According to latest information on the expansion of recall of the product concerned provided by RASFF, CFS conducted follow-up investigation and found that the importer concerned, Coils Electronic Co. Ltd, had also imported the above four batches of affected lemon juice which contained sulphur dioxide but undeclared on the food labels and some of them were sold. The CFS has instructed the importer concerned also to initiate a recall of the affected batches of the products. Members of the public may call the importer's hotline at 3960 9349 during office hours for enquiries about the recall."

Sulphur dioxide is a water soluble preservative of low toxicity. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is on-going.

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 24) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection.

The case involves a two-year-old boy with long-term medical condition, who has presented with fever since January 15 and developed cough, runny nose, decreased appetite and irritability since January 21. He was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for medical attention today and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit there for management. He was transferred to Queen Mary Hospital for further management this evening.

His nasopharyngeal swab tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with septic shock. He is now in a critical condition.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had not received seasonal influenza vaccination for the current season and had no travel history during the incubation period. His mother and elder brother had developed upper respiratory tract infection symptoms and are in a stable condition. His other home contact has remained asymptomatic so far.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"The latest surveillance data indicated that the local seasonal influenza activity may continue to rise in the period ahead. We urge the community to continue heightening its vigilance against seasonal influenza. As young children are particularly affected in this influenza season, we appeal to parents who have not yet arranged vaccination for their children in this season to do so as soon as possible to strengthen their personal protection," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Apart from children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are also urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. Medical advice should be sought promptly if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people," the spokesman added.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and

environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).