

EPD responds to green group's survey result on marine refuse

Noting that a green group had released its survey findings on marine refuse yesterday (September 11), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) made the following response:

The Government has always attached great importance to the marine refuse problem. In the past few years, strategies and measures on tackling marine refuse have been implemented and the Inter-departmental Working Group has been set up to enhance collaboration with nearby places. The Hong Kong-Guangdong Marine Environmental Management Special Panel was set up by the two sides in October 2016. A notification and alert system on marine refuse was also launched to reinforce co-operation on the prevention and tackling of the marine refuse problem within the region.

In the survey conducted together with a beach clean-up activity from mid-July to early September this year, the number of plastic beverage bottles was counted according to brand names marked in traditional Chinese characters, simplified Chinese characters and other languages. The counting result was used to project the proportion of marine refuse that came from the Mainland. As the result only represents the plastic bottles picked up at individual beaches in 10 days during the summer period, with 1,800 bottles collected in total, the sample size is statistically too small for making the projection, considering that around 15,000 tonnes of marine refuse are recovered every year. As such, the survey result does not fully and thoroughly reflect the different types of marine refuse in different seasons and locations.

The United Nations has released the United Nations Environment Programme / Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNEP/IOC) Guidelines on Survey and Monitoring of Marine Litter in 2009 on the survey of marine refuse. The guideline pointed out that, given the increasing globalisation of product markets, tagging items with the point of manufacture or origin is not likely to provide a practical or functional approach to the management of marine refuse. In Hong Kong, there may be more than one possible source of refuse marked with simplified Chinese characters, and the different proportion of sources of origin of plastic bottles, as a single item, cannot reflect the overall proportion of sources of origin of all kinds of marine refuse.

In order to enhance shorelines cleanliness, the EPD conducted a Marine Refuse Study (the Study) in 2013 to investigate the sources, distribution and movement of marine refuse, and to support the development of strategies to combat the marine refuse problem. The consultancy, upon making reference to the above-mentioned United Nations guidelines and taking into account the marine refuse problem in Hong Kong and the methods of refuse collection adopted by the relevant government departments, conducted a 12-month on-site survey at various shoreline locations in Hong Kong to collect data based on a scientific method. During the on-site survey, the consultancy identified

those refuse with simplified Chinese characters as non-local sources and they accounted for about 5 per cent of all the marine refuse sampled.

Notwithstanding that, the result was only taken as a supplementary reference – they are not key data or determinants for formulation of measures for combating marine refuse. For those samples that were not marked with Simplified Chinese characters, there had been no objective method to estimate the percentage that was of non-local origins. As mentioned above, the United Nations guidelines have clearly stated that the points of manufacture or origin of tagged items would not provide useful information for the management of marine refuse.

The Government adopted a three-pronged strategy to address the marine refuse problem in Hong Kong based on the Study results, which includes reducing waste generation at source; preventing refuse from entering the marine environment and removing refuse from the marine environment. The EPD will continue to conduct publicity campaigns and education activities in order to raise public awareness in keeping shorelines clean, encourage the public to make habitual change to reduce waste generation at source and prevent refuse from entering the marine environment.

On regional co-operation, the Hong Kong-Guangdong Marine Environmental Management Special Panel was set up in October 2016 to enhance exchange and communication through regular meetings on various regional marine environmental matters. Both sides are responsible for cleaning up marine refuse under their respective jurisdiction and also enhancing collaboration in regional marine environmental issues, including the handling of marine refuse. If it is forecasted that a large amount of refuse may drift into Hong Kong waters from the Mainland, the Department of Environmental Protection of Guangdong Province will inform the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government as soon as practicable under the notification mechanism established under the Special Panel, with a view to enabling relevant departments to deploy resources timely for interception and clean-up work. The EPD has all along been reporting the progress of co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong on tackling marine refuse in a timely manner through issuing press releases and posting updates on the Clean Shorelines website.

The EPD spokesman stressed that regardless of the percentage of non-local items in marine refuse, the HKSAR Government will not take the issue of marine refuse lightly and will continue to enhance collaboration with Mainland in preventing and tackling the refuse problem.

For more details on the efforts of the Government and other organisations in tackling marine refuse, please visit the EPD's thematic website (https://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/clean_shorelines/index-2.html).

Inter-departmental meeting convened to review preparedness and contingency plan for tropical cyclone (with photos)

With the approach of Super Typhoon Mangkhut on the weekend, the Government this afternoon (September 12) convened an inter-departmental meeting to review the preparedness and contingency plan for tropical cyclones to ensure that suitable measures and co-ordinations are put in place to minimise the impacts brought by the inclement weather.

The Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, chaired the inter-departmental meeting this afternoon to strengthen co-ordination and communication among departments under the Emergency Response System. He also directed all emergency response departments to have their deployment and emergency response plans ready for the possible threats that may be brought to Hong Kong by Super Typhoon Mangkhut.

On the present forecast by the Hong Kong Observatory, Super Typhoon Mangkhut is expected to bring adverse weather to Hong Kong on Sunday (September 16), with frequent squalls and heavy rain. Together with the storm surge, seas will be very rough with swells and low-lying areas may have flooding or backflow of seawater.

Issues on response plans of emergency, monitoring and co-ordination, preventive measures, information flow and public announcement, as well as logistic support were discussed in the meeting. Representatives from relevant bureaux and departments also reported their preparatory work and contingency plans, particularly on measures in the prevention and handling of flooding, backflow of seawater and emergency plans for high-risk locations, in response to the tropical cyclone.

Mr Lee reminded that all departments should take timely precautions and maintain close liaison and co-ordination while the Security Bureau would closely monitor the situation. Depending on the prevailing situation, the Security Bureau may escalate the emergency response level and activate the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre. He also asked all departments, especially emergency rescue departments and related units, to get prepared for the tropical cyclone.

The Government will convene another inter-departmental meeting on Friday (September 14) to evaluate the latest situation. All departments will also report their preparatory work and operational arrangements under contingency plans.

Today's meeting was attended by representatives from 30 government

bureaux, departments and organisations including Buildings Department, Civil Aid Service, Civil Engineering and Development Department, Drainage Services Department, Education Bureau, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Fire Services Department, Home Affairs Department, Housing Department, Highways Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Hong Kong Observatory, Information Services Department, Transport Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Marine Department, Social Welfare Department and Water Supplies Department.

The Hong Kong Observatory is closely monitoring the movement of Super Typhoon Mangkhut as well as weather conditions, and will issue relevant warning promptly. Members of the public are advised to pay attention to the latest information on the super typhoon.



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Tenders invited for Kwai Tsing District Health Centre

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) today (September 12) invited open tenders from non-public entities to provide services for the operation of the Kwai Tsing District Health Centre (DHC), marking a step forward in strengthening the district's primary healthcare services.

The Kwai Tsing DHC will be a hub comprising a Core Centre serving as the DHC headquarters, supplemented by five Satellite Centres in Kwai Tsing sub-districts and a network of medical and healthcare practitioners providing multiple access and service points.

"We aim to establish the DHC in Kwai Tsing District around the third quarter of next year with a brand new operation mode and funding support from the Government. Through public-private partnership and medical-social collaboration, the centre will provide district-based primary healthcare services which cater for the needs and characteristics of the district and enhance public awareness of disease prevention and their ability in self-management of health," said a spokesman for the FHB.

The successful tenderer (i.e. the future operator of the DHC), upon being awarded the service contract in early 2019, will gear up for the targeted commissioning of the Kwai Tsing DHC and service network as from October 2019 for a three-year operation period.

The operator will be responsible for recruiting:

(a) a Core Team (with an Executive Director and a Chief Care Co-ordinator as key personnel, along with a minimum of 19 other healthcare workers, social workers, administrative staff, etc). The key personnel should commence service within three months upon contract award, and the rest suitably before the targeted DHC commissioning in October 2019;

(b) a network of medical and healthcare professionals (at least 10 medical practitioners, and at least 20 healthcare professionals including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists and Chinese medicine practitioners) from Kwai Tsing and its adjoining districts to support the DHC operation. Network services should be available by October 2019.

The operator will have to fit out a Core Centre for service by October 2019, and arrange for the commissioning of five satellite centres in different parts of Kwai Tsing, for service no later than 12 months after October 2019.

The basic services to be operated by the DHC are set out in the tender

document. The services are to be subsidised by the Government and the charges which the operator may impose on DHC clients cannot exceed the prescribed ceilings set out in the tender document.

"Strengthening primary healthcare services is a key priority for the FHB. For this purpose, we have established the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development to review comprehensively the planning of the existing primary healthcare services and to develop a blueprint for the sustainable development of primary healthcare services for Hong Kong. The Steering Committee also makes recommendations on the Government's strategy towards developing primary healthcare services. Steering Committee members comprise medical professionals, academics, non-government organisations (NGOs) and partners in the community. In view of the experience of the DHC in Kwai Tsing District, we shall gradually set up DHCs in all 18 districts."

On the advice of the Steering Committee, the Kwai Tsing DHC will accord priority to the management of common chronic diseases, including hypertension, diabetes mellitus, musculoskeletal disorder, as well as community rehabilitation services for post-acute myocardial infarction, stroke and hip fracture patients.

To prepare for the establishment of the DHC, the FHB has organised 12 consultation sessions with different parties and stakeholders, including medical professionals and NGOs, from this March to August to collect the views of different sectors.

The tender notice has been uploaded to the FHB website: https://www.fhb.gov.hk/en/tender/180912_ktdhc/index.html. Interested bidders can send representatives to attend a briefing at the Central Government Offices from 11am to 1pm on September 26 (Wednesday) and a site visit to the Core Centre in October (details to be announced). Details are set out in the tender documents.

"The Kwai Tsing DHC is to provide quality services to the community and safeguard public health. The quality of services will be the major consideration in the evaluation of tenders, accounting for 70 per cent of the total score. The Government is committing substantial resources for the contract under this new mode of primary healthcare service delivery, within a budgeted annual operating expenditure of \$100 million and a total contract sum of \$350 million. To ensure effective use of public funds, price assessment will account for 30 per cent of the total score," added the spokesman.

Tenderers must submit their tenders by placing them in the Government Logistics Department Tender Box situated on the Ground Floor, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong, before noon on November 16, 2018 (Friday). Late tenders will not be accepted.

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