

CE to attend Boao Forum annual conference in Hainan

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, will depart for Hainan tomorrow (March 25) to attend the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025.

The theme of this year's conference is "Asia in the Changing World: Towards a Shared Future". Mr Lee will attend the opening plenary of the annual conference and deliver a speech at the Global Free Trade Port Development Forum. Additionally, the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, will attend and speak at the "Enhancing Digital Capacity Building & Bridging Digital Divide" Forum.

During his visit to Hainan, Mr Lee will also witness the signing of Memoranda of Understanding between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the People's Government of Hainan Province. The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, and the Under Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Clement Woo, will join relevant parts of the visit.

Mr Lee will return to Hong Kong on March 27. During his absence, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, will be the Acting Chief Executive.

CHP responds to media enquiries on cluster of students participating in exchange tour developed gastroenteritis symptoms

In response to media enquiries about a number of students of a secondary school in Tsing Yi developed gastroenteritis symptoms after joining an exchange tour to the Mainland, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health responded today (March 23) as follows:

"According to the information provided by the Education Bureau, the CHP yesterday (March 22) learnt of a suspected cluster case of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) in an exchange tour, and immediately commenced an epidemiological investigation. It was learnt that 135 teachers and students from a secondary school in Tsing Yi went on a three-day exchange tour to Zhaoqing on March 20. Subsequently, 20 students and one teacher developed

symptoms compatible with norovirus infection, including vomiting, diarrhea, and fever during the period from around 11am on March 21 to 8am the next day. Among them, 18 patients sought medical attention in Zhaoqing. All are in stable condition and have been discharged, and eight have tested positive for norovirus.

The CHP is investigating the possible source of this norovirus outbreak from different aspects, including the possibility of transmission through person-to-person, or contaminated food or environment. Preliminary investigations result revealed that all 21 affected persons had not consumed any common food items other than the group meals and there has not been any outbreak of AGE in the school recently. After analysis of the onset time of the cases, at this stage, the CHP could not preliminarily rule out that the cases were infected by consuming contaminated food. The CHP has notified the Guangdong health authority of the relevant information of epidemiological investigations, and has been informed that the Mainland has commenced investigation into the case.

The CHP has provided health advice to the affected school on the transmission, prevention and infection control measures related to AGE. The CHP will continue to follow up on the incident and conduct epidemiological investigations, including collecting stool specimens from the cases for laboratory testing. The CHP has also alerted the Education Bureau to the situation.

Apart from the Mainland, there have been recent outbreaks of AGE in other popular travel destinations for Hong Kong citizens. In Japan, the number of patients seeking medical attention for infective gastroenteritis has been at high level in recent weeks, and large-scale food poisoning outbreaks caused by norovirus have been reported in various places in recent months. In Singapore, the number of medical consultations related to acute diarrhoeal illnesses was higher than the same period last year. In Taiwan, the number of diarrhea outbreaks has remained highest in five years. Test results showed that the majority of the outbreaks were caused by norovirus. Members of the public should remain vigilant and maintain personal, environmental and food hygiene at all times to minimise the risk of being infected while travelling.

Locally, the activity of AGE has been on the rise since the end of December last year and has remained at a relatively high level in recent months. In January and February this year, there were 57 and 49 outbreaks of AGE cases respectively, and in March up to March 15, a total of 21 outbreaks of AGE cases were recorded. Most of these outbreaks were caused by norovirus.

Viral gastroenteritis is more commonly seen in cooler months and can be caused by a variety of viruses, most commonly norovirus and rotavirus. The main symptoms of viral gastroenteritis are diarrhoea and vomiting. Other symptoms include headache, fever, and abdominal cramps. In general, the symptoms begin one to two days following infection with a virus that causes gastroenteritis. Depending on the type of viruses causing the illness, the symptoms may last for one to 10 days.

Alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE, for example, norovirus. To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are advised to observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene. When eating out, the following points should be observed:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves and surgical mask when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

The public may visit the CHP's website for more information and preventive advice on [viral gastroenteritis](#)."

FS attends China Development Forum

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, continues his visit in Beijing today (March 23).

In the morning, Mr Chan attended the opening ceremony of the China Development Forum. In the afternoon, he delivered a keynote speech at the afternoon session on the Symposium on Igniting Growth Momentum through Reform". In the speech, he pointed out three major trends that are profoundly impacting the global political landscape and economic development. They include: (1) the rise of protectionism and unilateralism is bringing uncertainty and instability to the global economy, while the trend of regionalisation is reshaping international economic and trade relations and the global trading system; (2) the emergence of economies in the Global South is becoming a new engine and driving force for economic growth; and (3) technological innovation, particularly the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), is triggering changes in production models, business models and consumption patterns.

Mr Chan emphasised that in the face of a complex and changing global situation, the country remains steadfast in embracing true multilateralism, and works with countries to promote inclusive economic globalisation. The

country has also stressed the need to expand high-level opening-up and advance institutional innovation, deepen reforms in the technology sector, and nurture new quality productive forces in accordance with local conditions.

Mr Chan also mentioned that Hong Kong, under the "one country, two systems" arrangement, has unique advantages and can play a special role in deepening international exchanges and co-operation, contributing to the country's high-level opening-up and quality development while creating greater business opportunities for global economies and enterprises. First, Hong Kong will leverage its advantage of connecting with both the Mainland and the world. It will strengthen ties with traditional markets in Europe and the Americas, while exploring new markets, and developing high-value multinational supply chain management and trade financing services to support Mainland enterprises in going global. Second, Hong Kong is actively supporting the financing needs of enterprises and projects in areas such as tech development and climate change through financial empowerment. It will continue to enhance the breadth, depth and efficiency of its financial markets to promote mutual benefit between finance and the real economy. Third, Hong Kong will drive technological innovation with a particular focus on AI. Leveraging its strengths in innovation and technology, international capital, data and talent, along with the innovative capabilities, depth of industries and wide scope of application scenarios of sister cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Hong Kong is committed to becoming a hub for international exchange and co-operation in the AI industry. At the same time, it aims to support the growth of technological innovation and future industries by building an ecosystem of "patient capital".

Mr Chan will return to Hong Kong tomorrow morning (March 24).

DH's response to media enquiries about water seepage in operating theatre of private hospital

â€œIn response to media enquiries about water seepage from the ceiling of an operating theatre at CUHK Medical Centre (CUHKMC) during an operation, the Department of Health (DH) today (March 23) gave the following reply:

The DH received a media enquiry on March 21 about water seepage from the ceiling of an operating theatre at CUHKMC and immediately contacted CUHKMC to investigate and follow up on the incident.

It was noted that the hospital had conducted an eye surgery on a patient on March 10 and, towards the end of the surgery, water started dripping from

the ceiling towards the end of the operating table. The hospital staff immediately used a cloth to stop the dripping and at the same time covered the patient's head and surgical instruments with a sterile surgical drape. The surgery was completed uneventfully. So far, the patient's condition has been stable and no complications have been reported.

The hospital has immediately suspended the use of the operating theatre in question and has identified the source of the water seepage. Repair work has been conducted.

The DH regulates licensed private hospitals in accordance with the Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance (Cap.633) (the Ordinance), and monitors their compliance with the Ordinance, conditions of licence and the Code of Practice for Private Hospitals (CoP), which sets out licensing standards related to the operation of private hospitals, including relevant requirements for facilities, equipment and arrangements for responding to emergencies. Private hospitals are required to notify the DH on reportable events in accordance with the CoP, namely sentinel events, serious untoward events and other reportable events (such as events of public health significance, serious incidents affecting the operation of the hospital, and unusual clustering of communicable diseases etc).

While the water seepage incident is not a reportable event under the CoP, for the sake of prudence, the DH has requested the hospital concerned to submit an investigation report. The DH will assess the findings of the investigation and the actions taken by the hospital, and take appropriate follow-up actions to prevent recurrence of similar incidents and enhance protection of patient safety.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cannabis buds worth about \\$2.2 million at airport \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 22) detected a drug trafficking case involving baggage concealment at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 10 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$2.2 million.

A male passenger, aged 47, arrived in Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday. During customs clearance, Customs officers found the batch of suspected cannabis buds inside his check-in suitcase. The man was subsequently arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs will continue to step up enforcement against drug trafficking activities through intelligence analysis. The department also reminds members of the public to stay alert and not participate in drug trafficking activities for monetary return. They must not accept hiring or delegation from another party to carry controlled items into and out of Hong Kong. They are also reminded not to carry unknown items for other people.

Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/en).

