

Extension of statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks to help encourage working women to breastfeed

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, welcomed the passage of the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Amendment Bill) by the Legislative Council today (July 9). The Amendment Bill will increase statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, which will support and encourage working women to adopt breastfeeding for a longer period of time and thus improve the health and development of their children.

Professor Chan said, "Breastfeeding brings immediate and long-term benefits to both mothers and babies. The World Health Organization recommends exclusively breastfeeding babies up to about 6 months of age and gradually introducing appropriate solid food while continuing breastfeeding until 2 years old or beyond. Such benefits from breastfeeding are proportional to duration and exclusiveness."

The Government has all along endeavoured to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. In 2014, the Food and Health Bureau set up a Committee on Promotion of Breastfeeding, chaired by the Under Secretary for Food and Health, to provide specific recommendations on strategies and action plans to strengthen the promotion, protection and support for breastfeeding. Its objective is to enhance the sustainability of breastfeeding and promote breastfeeding as a norm for baby care widely accepted by the general public.

The Department of Health (DH) will continue to promote and protect breastfeeding through a multi-pronged approach, including strengthening publicity and education on breastfeeding; encouraging the adoption of the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace policy to support working mothers to continue breastfeeding after returning to work; encouraging public places to become Breastfeeding Friendly Premises so that the breastfeeding mothers can breastfeed their children or express milk anytime; imposing a mandatory requirement for the provision of baby care rooms and lactation rooms in the sale conditions of government land sale sites for new commercial premises; promulgating guidelines on the provision of baby care rooms and lactation rooms in suitable new government premises; implementing the voluntary Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Formula Milk and Related Products, and Food Products for Infants & Young Children; and strengthening surveillance on the local breastfeeding situation.

More information is available at the DH's Family Health Service designated webpage on breastfeeding (www.fhs.gov.hk/english/breastfeeding/).

Update on Candida auris cases in Kowloon West Cluster

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Candida auris carrier cases in Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), the spokesperson for Kowloon West Cluster (KWC) gave the following update today (July 9):

According to the contact tracing result, one more 54-year-old male patient who had stayed in the same Medicine and Geriatrics ward in PMH has been confirmed as carrying Candida auris while not having signs of infection. The patient was transferred to North Lantau Hospital (NLTH) for further care earlier. He is being treated under isolation and is in stable condition. In accordance with the prevailing guidelines, NLTH has continued contact tracing for the patient. The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures; and
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients.

KWC will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

SCS visits LCSD's facilities on anti-epidemic measures (with photos)

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, visited the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC) and the Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMoA) today (July 9) to learn about the implementation of various anti-epidemic measures by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) at its cultural facilities and to meet frontline colleagues to better understand their work.

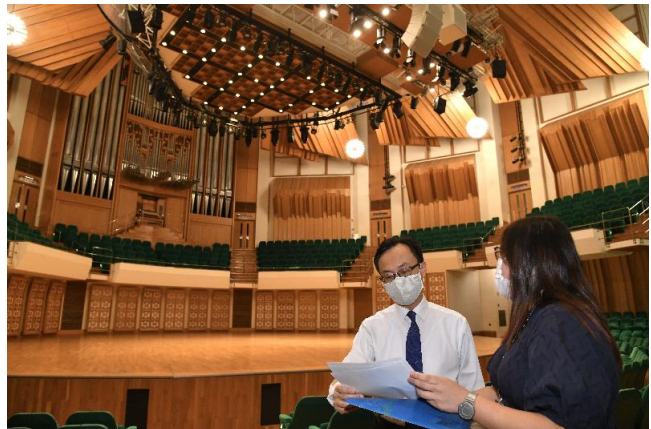
Accompanied by the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, Mr Vincent Liu, Mr Nip first toured the Grand Theatre and the Concert Hall of the HKCC and was briefed on the anti-epidemic measures being implemented to safeguard the health of staff members and the public. Such measures include restricting the numbers of audience members and users in all performance venues,

requiring all visitors to wear masks and have body temperature checks before admission, and stepping-up disinfection and cleaning work after each performance or event.

Mr Nip said he was pleased to know that a large-scale cleaning exercise and refurbishment work were carried out in the HKCC during its closure earlier. For instance, the ceiling and acoustic panels of the Concert Hall have been cleaned up and sensor-activated hand-washing and flushing facilities have been installed in toilets to further reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.

Mr Nip then proceeded to the exhibition galleries at the Lab and the Wing of the HKMoA to learn about the prevention measures implemented at the HKMoA upon the resumption of normal opening hours. Apart from limiting the flow of visitors and conducting regular disinfection of all public areas of the museum, the HKMoA also applied anti-microbial coating on interactive exhibits to provide long-lasting protection and surface disinfection against microbial contamination to further protect the health of staff members and the public.

Given the volatility of COVID-19, Mr Nip reminded colleagues to stay vigilant and be prepared for the changing circumstances in combating the epidemic to protect the public and enable them to enjoy the leisure and cultural facilities in a safe manner.





Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

An 86-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for five days by the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (July 9) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap 599C).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at home for 14 days. When the Police were deployed at the scene on March 26 upon receipt of a report, he was found to have left the place of quarantine several times on the same day without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer before the expiry of the quarantine order. He was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for five days.

Pursuant to the Regulation, save for exempted persons, all persons who have stayed in the Mainland, Macao or Taiwan in the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of their nationality or travel documents, will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Moreover, pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap 599E), starting from March 19, all persons arriving from countries or territories outside China would also be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. The Department of Health (DH) solemnly reminds persons under quarantine to comply with the statutory requirements and conduct quarantine for 14 days.

A spokesman for the DH said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching the Regulation is a criminal offence and that the Government will not tolerate such actions. As of today, a total of 30 persons have been convicted by the courts with imprisonment sentences of up to three

months or a fine of \$10,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the Regulation.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (July 9), nine COVID-19 confirmed patients (case numbers: 1084, 1176, 1184, 1186, 1188, 1193, 1194, 1227 and 1248) were discharged from hospital in the past 24 hours. So far, a total of 1 176 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 595 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 148 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 149 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in eight hospitals, among which two patients are in critical condition (case numbers: 595 and 1315), two are in serious condition (case numbers: 1269 and 1306) and the remaining 145 patients are in stable condition.

In view of the recent developments of the pandemic, all public hospitals will suspend the service of Geriatric Day Hospitals and Psychiatric Day Hospitals starting from tomorrow (July 10).

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.