

FHB's Health and Medical Research Fund subsidises COVID-19 research

The Research Council chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health has approved total funding of \$111 million today (April 27) to support the two medical schools, the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, to conduct 26 medical research studies on COVID-19 under the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF).

In recognition of the importance of a scientific basis in the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak, the Chief Executive has pledged strong support for research to enhance the capability of the healthcare system in preventing and treating the disease. Administered by the Food and Health Bureau, the HMRF is going to support 26 research studies under its commissioned research programme which cover a wide range of topics including development of vaccines and novel antiviral drug candidates; sero-epidemiological studies of COVID-19 in the community; investigation of the properties, characteristics, spread, infection and effective therapeutic interventions of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19); and investigation on Hong Kong's system of early detection, assessment and response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

These studies address important research areas in transmissibility and infectability of the virus, effective detection and surveillance and prevention strategies of the disease and development of treatments and therapies. The vaccine candidates will be manufactured in bulk and tested for safety and tolerability in healthy adult volunteers. The real-time population-based sero-epidemiological studies of COVID-19 in the community will help identify the number of asymptomatic people with COVID-19, map the emergence of population immunity, define the duration of immune responses, and develop a transmission model of COVID-19, which will advise policymakers on control measures such as relaxing or continuing social distancing measures and help estimate the need/demand for vaccines when they become available. The studies will last from 12 months to 24 months.

"The Government has been supporting specific commissioned research programmes to address emergent health threats such as the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003 and human swine influenza in 2009. Riding on previous research experience and Hong Kong's world-class expertise in medical research, the commissioned research studies on COVID-19 should be able to generate timely scientific knowledge and evidence in battling the pandemic," the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said.

As much is still unknown about the spread and diagnostics of COVID-19, the Food and Health Bureau will continue to invite new research proposals to address important research questions from other universities in addition to the two medical schools.

The HMRF supports studies and projects initiated by individual

investigators as well as those commissioned by the Food and Health Bureau to build research capacity, fill knowledge gaps, support policy formulation, address specific issues, assess needs and threats, conduct health promotion, and more. For commissioned studies and projects, based on the research expertise, relevant institutions will be specially invited by the bureau to submit a portfolio of research/projects for consideration. Information about the HMRF is available at rfs.fhb.gov.hk.

SHA visits Wan Chai Home Affairs Enquiry Centre (with photos)

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, visited the Wan Chai Home Affairs Enquiry Centre this morning (April 27) to learn more about the daily operation of the Centre and the anti-epidemic measures taken by the Centre in response to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Accompanied by the District Officer (Wan Chai), Mr Rick Chan, Mr Tsui visited the Wan Chai Home Affairs Enquiry Centre to understand the services provided by the Centre to the public, which include answering public enquiries about information on government services and administration of declarations and oaths for private use. Mr Tsui also inspected the precautionary measures adopted by the Centre in view of the epidemic, such as enhanced disinfection, conducting body temperature checks for all persons entering the Centre and providing hand sanitisers as well as surgical masks and eye goggles to front-line staff for the health of the public and the staff.

Mr Tsui said it is crucial for various sectors in the community to fight the epidemic as one and get through the difficult times together. He thanked the staff of the Home Affairs Department for standing steadfast at their posts to serve the public during this period.



Firing practice for May 2020

Firing practice will take place at two military sites, namely the San Wai/Tai Ling Firing Range and the Tsing Shan Firing Range, next month (May).

Red flags or red lamps will be hoisted at the firing areas before and during firing practice. For their safety, people are advised not to enter the firing area.

Following are the dates and times for the firing practice sessions in May 2020:

San Wai/Tai Ling Firing Range

Date	Time
May 4 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 5 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 6 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 7 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 8 (Friday)	8am-9pm
May 11 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 12 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 13 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 14 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 15 (Friday)	8am-9pm
May 18 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 19 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 20 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 21 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 22 (Friday)	8am-9pm
May 25 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 26 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 27 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 28 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 29 (Friday)	8am-9pm

Tsing Shan Firing Range

Date	Time
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May 4 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 5 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 6 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 7 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 8 (Friday)	8am-9pm
May 11 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 12 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 13 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 14 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
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May 20 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 21 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 22 (Friday)	8am-9pm
May 25 (Monday)	8am-9pm
May 26 (Tuesday)	8am-9pm
May 27 (Wednesday)	8am-9pm
May 28 (Thursday)	8am-9pm
May 29 (Friday)	8am-9pm

Parking fees of government public car parks managed by TD frozen for one year

The Transport Department (TD) today (April 27) announced that the parking fees of 12 government public car parks under its management will be frozen at their existing levels for one year with effect from June 1 this year.

"In reviewing the parking fees, we have taken into account a number of factors, including the inflation rate since the last parking fees adjustment, the charges of nearby public car parks operated by the private sector and the utilisation of the government car parks, etc. Having considered the impact on the economy brought by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the associated impact on the utilisation of the car parks, the TD has decided to maintain the parking fees at their existing levels," a spokesman for the TD said.

The 12 car parks are Kennedy Town Car Park, Rumsey Street Car Park, Star Ferry Car Park, City Hall Car Park, Tin Hau Car Park, Shau Kei Wan Car Park, Aberdeen Car Park, Yau Ma Tei Car Park, Sheung Fung Street Car Park, Wong Tai Sin Public Transport Terminus Car Park, Kwai Fong Car Park and Tsuen Wan Car Park. Details of the existing parking fees are available at TD's website (www.td.gov.hk/en/transport_in_hong_kong/parking/carparks).

The last adjustment to the parking fees of the 12 car parks was

implemented from June 1 last year.

Police appeal to public not to participate in prohibited group gathering

Police noticed that some netizens are calling for participation in a public event this evening (April 26) around Cityplaza in Quarry Bay.

According to Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap 599G), from March 29 to May 7, group gathering of more than four persons is prohibited in any public place.

Rumours suggest that there is no violation of the regulation under Cap.599G as long as a person participates in a public event in a group of no more than four persons and such group distances itself 1.5m from other persons participating in the same event. Police sternly clarify that as long as the persons gather for a common purpose in public place, it is irrelevant whether the participants have kept a distance of 1.5m from each other or between each small group of four; such public event consisting of more than four persons is still a prohibited group gathering and all the participants will commit the offence under Cap.599G.

Police emphasise that during this period, any group gathering may increase the risk of spreading the virus. Members of the public are advised not to participate in any prohibited group gathering. Police have zero tolerance against any violation and will take strict enforcement action. Police may issue fixed penalty tickets to fine offenders \$2000.