

Director of Hong Kong Observatory highlights Observatory's latest developments (with photos)

The Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), Dr Cheng Cho-ming, hosted a press briefing today (March 23) to recap the weather in 2019 and elaborate on the weather outlook for Hong Kong this year as well as the HKO's latest developments.

Dr Cheng pointed out that the World Meteorological Organization had confirmed 2019 as being the second warmest year on record globally, with the five years from 2015 to 2019 being the five warmest on record.

Locally, with the annual mean temperature reaching 24.5 degrees, 2019 was the warmest year since records began in 1884. In particular, the autumn from September to November 2019 was the warmest on record, with the mean temperature reaching 26.1 degrees. There were 46 Hot Nights (with a daily minimum temperature at 28.0 degrees or above) and 33 Very Hot Days, marking the highest and the fourth highest on record respectively. In contrast, there was only one Cold Day (with a daily minimum temperature at 12.0 degrees or below) last year, the smallest annual number of Cold Days since records began in 1884. The winter from December 2019 to February 2020 was exceptionally warm in Hong Kong because there was relatively lesser cold air reaching the South China coast from the north. The mean maximum temperature of the whole winter was 21.5 degrees, the highest on record for the same period. The mean temperature of 18.7 degrees and the mean minimum temperature of 16.8 degrees were both the second highest on record for the same period. Dr Cheng emphasised that the persistent trend of climate change warrants serious attention from the public.

On the annual weather outlook for Hong Kong in 2020, the HKO predicted that the tropical cyclone season may start in or after June in Hong Kong this year. It is expected that there will be four to seven tropical cyclones coming within 500 kilometres of Hong Kong this year, which is normal. Under the effect of global warming, the annual mean temperature this year is expected to be above normal, with a high chance of reaching the warmest top 10 on record. The annual rainfall is expected to be normal to below normal, but Hong Kong may still be affected by heavy rain. Members of the public should be prepared for the rain and typhoon seasons.

Dr Cheng also highlighted the latest developments of the HKO's work. Starting from this rain season, the HKO will enhance the provision of thunderstorm-related information to alert the public of the high-impact weather induced by severe thunderstorms. Information such as "severe squally thunderstorms" and "violent gusts" will be incorporated in thunderstorm warnings and weather forecasts with regard to the circumstances.

In respect of the tropical cyclone forecast, the HKO will extend the

forecast area of the "Tropical Cyclone Track Probability Forecast" eastward this year, from the current boundary of 140 degrees east longitude to 180 degrees east longitude to cover the Central Pacific. When a tropical cyclone is named in the extended area, the automatic "Tropical Cyclone Track Probability Forecast" webpage will show the probability of the tropical cyclone track in the coming nine days. This will enable the public to appraise the trend of the tropical cyclone movement and be better prepared. Dr Cheng advised the public to make reference to this forecast when preparing to travel abroad in order to evaluate whether their destinations would be affected by tropical cyclones.

On the other hand, to facilitate hikers in planning their hiking routes, the HKO launched the "Hong Kong Hiking Trail Weather Service" webpage today. The new webpage provides automatic seven-day weather forecasts for the major hiking routes in Hong Kong. Upon selecting a specific hiking route, the webpage will show the approximate time required for the trip and the en-route hourly weather forecast. In addition, the HKO is collaborating with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in setting up QR codes on the information boards of some country parks. After scanning the QR codes, hikers can obtain the weather information of nearby hiking routes instantly, including the two-hour rainfall and one-hour lightning nowcast. These QR codes have been on trial at several spots in Sai Kung since January this year and will be progressively extended to other popular hiking routes in the country parks. Dr Cheng appealed to the public to stay tuned to the HKO's latest weather forecast when planning their hiking routes and during the hiking trips. The new services will provide hikers with the latest weather information and forecasts of nearby locations to minimise the impact of adverse weather on the hiking trips.

In respect of the tidal information service, two additional tide stations will be included in the "Tidal Information" webpage jointly operated by the HKO, the Marine Department, the Drainage Services Department and the Airport Authority Hong Kong this year. The two new stations are the one managed by the Marine Department at Sha Kiu Tau in Sai Kung and the one managed by the Airport Authority Hong Kong at the western end of Chek Lap Kok respectively. The additional information will provide ferry operators, coastal engineers, anglers and the general public with a more comprehensive picture of the real-time tide changes in Hong Kong.

To make sharing of weather observations more convenient for the public, Dr Cheng said that the HKO would launch a trial function named "My Weather Observation" on the MyObservatory mobile application so that the public can instantly share observed weather phenomena such as nearby rainbows, thunderstorms and hail. The HKO has also invited about 100 active members of the Community Weather Observing Scheme to become "Met Talent" to share their weather photos and videos with the trial function. This kind of crowdsourced information enables the public to observe weather conditions in different areas and also widen their weather knowledge.

Moreover, the HKO launched the trial version of the "Dr Tin" chatbot on the Chinese version of the MyObservatory mobile application in February this year. The chatbot adopts artificial intelligence technology to provide

information on local weather observations, weather forecasts, weather warnings, tidal information, Hong Kong Standard Time, as well as the weather forecasts and sunrise or sunset times of world cities to the public in text-based dialogues. The HKO will make further enhancements to the chatbot service progressively this year by making the service available via the HKO's Facebook page and the HKO's website, as well as providing climate information and supporting English dialogue.

Lastly, Dr Cheng mentioned that in view of the latest development of the COVID-19 infection, the HKO's Open Day, which is held annually in March, would be postponed this year in order to reduce social contact. Detailed arrangements will be announced in a timely manner.

Dr Cheng's speech at the press briefing is available at www.hko.gov.hk/en/dhkovoice/files/speech20200323e.pdf.



Cluster of Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae cases in Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital made the following announcement today (March 23):

Four patients (aged 55 to 87) in a male Integrated Medical & Geriatric ward have been confirmed to have Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) since March 17. Three patients concerned are still hospitalised and being treated under isolation with stable condition. The remaining patient had been discharged.

The Hospital Infection Control Team has followed up with the concerned departments and experts of the Centre for Health Protection. The following

enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the ward:

1. Enhance patient and environmental screening procedures
2. Apply stringent contact precautions and enhance hand hygiene of staff, patients and visitors
3. Enhance cleaning and disinfection of the ward

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the ward. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

PYNEH announces case of confirmed COVID-19 patient visiting hospital canteen

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) made the following announcement today (March 23):

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) informed the hospital today that a 32-year-old male patient was confirmed positive with COVID-19. The patient came to the Accident and Emergency Department of PYNEH in the afternoon of March 21 to return a deep throat saliva specimen. He then visited the hospital canteen for a meal and had a brief stay at the dining area for 20 minutes.

Upon receipt of such notification from the CHP, the hospital has immediately arranged for cleansing and disinfection of the hospital canteen. All hospital staff have been informed of the arrangement. PYNEH will maintain close communication with the canteen services vendor and monitor the health condition of canteen staff.

The hospital appealed to members of the public to avoid dining out if they have a travel history, fever and upper respiratory symptoms.

Arrangements and agenda for Council

meeting to be held on March 25

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong, to minimise the risk of infection among people who need to perform duties in the Legislative Council (LegCo) Complex and having regard to Members' views, the President of LegCo, Mr Andrew Leung, has decided that the scheduled regular Council meeting on Wednesday (March 25) will not be held.

As LegCo had yet to complete the consideration of the proposed resolution moved under the Public Finance Ordinance (the Vote on Account resolution) at its last week's meeting, and the funds to be sought are time-critical, the President of LegCo has decided to call a Council meeting on the same day at 11am in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex to continue to consider the Vote on Account resolution and related matters (the VoA item).

The Vote on Account resolution is moved by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (SFST) under the Public Finance Ordinance to seek the Council's approval to give for a sum not exceeding \$215,865,713,000 to be charged on the general revenue for expenditure on the services of the Government in respect of the financial year commencing on April 1, 2020. The proposed resolution is set out in Appendix 1.

Dr Fernando Cheung, Mr Wu Chi-wai and Mr Andrew Wan will move four separate amending motions to SFST's proposed resolution. The motions are set out in Appendices 2-5 respectively.

If the consideration of the VoA item cannot be completed at the meeting on Wednesday (March 25), the meeting will resume at 9am on Thursday (March 26).

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo Website (www.legco.gov.hk). Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting via the "Webcast" system on the LegCo Website. To observe the proceedings of the meeting at the LegCo Complex, members of the public may call 3919 3399 during office hours to reserve seats.

Labour Department highly concerned about today's fatal work accident

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a work accident that happened at a slope in Kowloon Tong this morning (March 23), in which a

male worker fell to his death from the slope while conducting slope maintenance work. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victim's family.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors concerned, suspending making access to/egress from and maintaining the slope. The contractors cannot resume the work process until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risk have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and safe systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and email, providing a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and properly use provided personal protective equipment to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.