

Preventive measures for COVID-19 by LegCo Secretariat

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

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong and quarantine arrangements announced by the Government, the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat announced today (March 18) that all persons who are subject to compulsory home quarantine will be denied entry into the LegCo Complex. For those persons seeking to enter the Complex who have had close contact with confirmed cases of COVID-19 or persons recently arriving in Hong Kong from other places, they are strongly advised not to enter the Complex.

The Secretariat will continue to implement the following disease prevention measures:

- (a) body temperature screening systems are installed at the designated entrances of the Complex to conduct body temperature checks for all persons entering the Complex. The Secretariat may deny entry to the Complex of any persons who refuse to undergo body temperature screening or whose body temperature is higher than 37.5 degrees Celsius;
- (b) cleaning and disinfection of the facilities in the Complex, including those in the Chamber and conference rooms, will be conducted more frequently;
- (c) the Complex will be closed from 8pm each day to 7am the following day. All Complex users must leave by 8pm;
- (d) Public Entrance 2 of the Complex will be open between 7am and 8pm from Monday to Sunday, or 30 minutes after the end of the last meeting of the day (whichever is later);
- (e) Members' Entrance 2 and the Footbridge Entrance of the Complex will be open between 7am and 8pm from Monday to Friday, or 30 minutes after the end of the last meeting of the day (whichever is later); and
- (f) a maximum of five members of the public will be admitted to observe each of the meeting of LegCo and its Committees.

For details of the infection control measures and special arrangements for the LegCo Secretariat, please refer to the announcement on the LegCo Website

(www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/sec/corg_ser/whats_on_20200318-e.pdf).

The Secretariat will review the aforementioned measures in accordance with the development of the epidemic and make further announcements in due course.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 is 108.1 (up 0.6 against yesterday's index).

LCQ18: Efforts on rodent control and epidemic prevention

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

Since the announcement by the Government in May last year that three cases of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus had been found, a total of eight such cases have been recorded in Hong Kong, with the death of one infected patient. Some members of the public are concerned about whether there has been a small outbreak of this infectious disease in the community. In addition, it has been reported that pneumonic plague cases have been found in recent months in various districts in the northern part of the Mainland, once triggering panic about human-to-human transmission of the disease. There are comments that as the residents of Hong Kong and the Mainland commute between the two places frequently, the risk of these epidemics being imported from the Mainland to Hong Kong cannot be ruled out, and that there is an immense need for the Government to improve its efforts on rodent control and epidemic prevention. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it has been reported that while the total number of rodent complaints received each year by the District Council members of various districts was between 300 and 900, the Rodent Infestation Rates (RIRs) compiled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) failed to reflect the actual situation as they all along indicated that rodent infestation in various districts was on the low side, and, of the latest progress of the Government's efforts in enhancing the sensitivity of RIRs;

(2) as the FEHD's annual reports have indicated that the number of rodents killed by the FEHD in each of the past 11 years was between 20 000-odd and 40 000-odd, and its annual average expenditure on rodent control was \$150 million (representing an average cost of more than \$4,000 for killing each

rodent), of the Government's new measures to enhance the cost effectiveness of the anti-rodent efforts;

(3) as a research report has pointed out that quite a number of "three-nil" buildings (i.e. buildings without owners' corporations, owners' committees or property management companies) are hygiene and rodent blackspots, how the Government will improve this situation;

(4) as there are comments that rodent infestation problems in public places often cannot be eradicated due to the lack of coordination among the various government departments, how the Government will strengthen the cooperation among the government departments concerned in their anti-rodent efforts;

(5) regarding the prevention of the aforesaid infectious diseases, whether the Government conducted last year any researches jointly with local and international academic institutions specialised in infectious diseases and public health; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) regarding the prevention of the import of plague from places outside Hong Kong, whether the Government will review its standing practices concerning epidemic prevention at the boundary control points, the Outbound Travel Alerts, etc., as well as introduce new measures for prevention of epidemics; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has formulated a comprehensive rodent control strategy targeting the three fundamental survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, i.e. to eliminate their food sources as well as hiding places and block their dispersal routes as fundamental measures, supplemented by direct control measures including poisoning and trapping. The Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) led by the Food and Health Bureau is responsible for formulating policies on pest control, promoting inter-departmental co-ordination and regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the measures carried out by bureaux and departments.

With the efforts of the PCSC, the Government launched a territory-wide cleaning campaign in May 2019 with focus on enhanced prevention, co-ordination and surveillance as well as raising public awareness of maintaining environmental hygiene. The Government will continue to intensify its efforts in this aspect.

In consultation with the Security Bureau (SB), my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) At present, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) conducts Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) surveys by setting baits in selected areas. The percentage of baits bitten will be used to infer the distribution of rodents in public places. There is no internationally adopted RIR. The FEHD devises

the RIR with reference to overseas practices and the actual situation of Hong Kong.

The FEHD is studying the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function for monitoring the areas and extent of rodent activities. Initial test results have shown that the data can quantify and assess the effectiveness of anti-rodent work by directly comparing the rodent population density before and after anti-rodent operations. The technology can also be used to identify rodents' entry points, travel routes and areas they frequently visit, so that rodenticides and trapping devices can be placed in a more effective manner and more targeted rodent control measures can be implemented. The FEHD has further conducted field trials in the Kowloon City district in early 2020 with a view to assessing the feasibility of quantifying rodent surveillance by the technology.

In devising and implementing rodent control work, the government departments concerned will, apart from making reference to the RIR surveys, pay attention to complaint figures and reports, views of the local community and trails left by rodents found during inspections, in order to have a comprehensive assessment of the rodent problem in the district concerned and carry out targeted operations in problematic areas.

(2) The annual average expenditure of the FEHD's rodent control work was about \$150 million in the past 11 years. In addition to trapping and poisoning, rodent control work also includes inspecting rodent black spots, taking enforcement actions, providing technical support for various departments/organisations, conducting joint inspections, carrying out publicity and education work as well as following up on complaints about rodent infestation. The mere dividing of the expenditure on rodent control by the number of rodents trapped and poisoned in public places is therefore a sweeping generalisation that cannot fully and truly reflect the outcome and effectiveness of the FEHD's rodent control work.

(3) and (4) With the efforts of the PCSC, various government departments have strengthened their cleaning and anti-rodent work as well as inter-departmental co-ordination. Among these, the FEHD, the Home Affairs Department and the Highways Department have, through intelligence exchanges, carried out improvement works and enhanced cleaning at back alleys where hygiene is relatively bad. The Hong Kong Housing Authority, with technical support from the FEHD, has installed rodent-proofing structures in public housing estates. The Buildings Department and the Architectural Services Department have also promulgated guidelines on incorporating rodent-proofing design in new buildings for building professionals' reference. These guidelines will also serve as reference for renovation of old buildings. In addition, the FEHD has stepped up enforcement against irregularities of food premises such as food preparation at rear lanes.

These efforts have yielded positive results. In 2019, the numbers of enforcement actions taken against rodent infestation and rodents caught increased, whereas the number of rodent-related complaints recorded a decrease. A comparison of the figures on rodent control work conducted in

2019 and 2018 is at Annex.

Moreover, an inter-departmental platform has been set up to facilitate communication between the front-line staff of the FEHD and other departments on the execution of specific rodent control work. This includes monitoring and eliminating the survival conditions of rodents in venues/sites under the purview of various departments, and disseminating anti-rodent messages to the community through respective networks. The FEHD will continue to provide technical support and professional trainings to various government departments.

The FEHD will conduct anti-rodent operations in designated target areas on a regular basis. The eight-week anti-rodent operations in designated target areas will be carried out in May and November 2020. The FEHD will identify target areas in each district by taking into account factors including the RIR, the number of complaints received, views of the local community, the number of food premises and "three-nil" buildings. The FEHD will also consider the views of District Councillors and step up its work on environmental hygiene, street cleansing and rodent control in a targeted manner. In addition, the FEHD will collaborate with District Councils and District Offices to organise anti-rodent promotional activities and encourage active participation of the community in anti-rodent work.

(5) and (6) Plague is a notifiable disease under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap 599). The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) detects plague cases through a communicable disease surveillance system. All suspected or confirmed cases must be notified to the CHP for further investigation. For plague cases that occur in the Mainland, the CHP will contact the National Health Commission under the notification mechanism to obtain the latest information of the cases concerned for risk assessment. Besides, the Port Health Division of the CHP carries out regular inspections at boundary control points (BCPs) to ensure good environmental hygiene. Routine health surveillance at all BCPs using infrared thermal imaging systems to check the body temperature of inbound travellers is ongoing. Suspected cases of serious infection will be referred to public hospitals for isolation treatment immediately.

Furthermore, the CHP closely monitors the global situation of plague and disseminates outbreak news of other places through the website of the Travel Health Service. If necessary, the CHP will timely step up risk communication, for example, by issuing press releases and alerting local doctors and hospitals to the latest situation of plague. The CHP also disseminates relevant health information, including travel advice, to the public and stakeholders through various means. Besides, the CHP has developed contingency plans and regularly conducts exercises and drills with a view to enhancing the overall preparedness and response.

To help the public better understand the possible public health risks, the Government has since 2015 enhanced the Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) to issue travel alert on public health ground. Should there be such reasons, based on the advice from the Food and Health Bureau, the SB will issue an OTA

on countries/territories seriously affected by infectious diseases to help the public to better understand the possible health risks. The Department of Health will also disseminate travel health advice to the public under the OTA webpage including providing specific advice corresponding to different health risks, so as to assist the public and the travel industry in getting a clearer grasp of the possible health risks involved and to make corresponding arrangements.

To monitor and assess plague risk in Hong Kong, the FEHD regularly conducts rat-flea surveys at all BCPs and specific areas, such as markets, industrial areas, and rear lanes. Subject to the findings of the surveys, the FEHD will carry out corresponding rodent and flea control work so as to mitigate plague risk in Hong Kong.

LCQ19: Promoting development of innovation and technology

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

As a major initiative of the Government, InnoHK aims at developing Hong Kong as the hub for global scientific research collaboration. This involves the establishment of world-class research clusters at the Hong Kong Science Park (HKSP) with research and development (R&D) laboratories set up by world-renowned institutions and commercial entities to conduct collaborative scientific researches. On the other hand, the Government indicated in October last year that it was pressing ahead with the establishment of two world-class research clusters at HKSP, with one being Health@InnoHK focusing on healthcare technologies and the other being AIR@InnoHK on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies, and that it had already received 65 proposals from world-renowned universities and research institutes. On promoting the development of innovation and technology, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective progress in the establishment of the aforesaid clusters; the number of admission applications received, approved and rejected by the authorities to date in respect of each cluster, as well as the average amount of subsidy granted to those institutions/entities whose admission and subsidy applications have been granted;

(2) among the admission applications (i) received and (ii) approved in respect of each cluster, of the respective numbers of those submitted by

world-renowned institutions and commercial entities, and set out the name of the world-renowned institutions and commercial entities whose applications have been approved;

(3) given that the authorities will adopt the seven criteria set out in the Guidance Notes for Admission to Health@InnoHK & AIR@InnoHK (the Guidance Notes) when vetting and approving applications for admission to the clusters, of the weighting of each criterion in the assessment, and whether the criteria include "peer assessment"; as the Guidance Notes stipulate that the proposed R&D programmes must "have a reasonable likelihood of being adopted or commercialised, if the R&D programme is successful", whether those admission applications with R&D programmes not involving commercialisation will be considered;

(4) given that non-profit-making R&D laboratories set up by non-profit-making institutions at the aforesaid clusters may only get R&D subsidy for a period of four to five years in respect of each R&D programme, how the Government ensures that such institutions will still be able to continue taking forward the relevant R&D programmes upon expiry of the subsidy period;

(5) of the strategy formulated by the Government to dovetail InnoHK with Hong Kong's re-industrialisation;

(6) as the Chief Executive indicated in last year's Policy Address Supplement that the Government would examine the establishment of the third InnoHK research cluster, (i) of the progress and timetable of the relevant work, (ii) the area of focus of that cluster, and (iii) whether its mode of operation will be different from that of the aforesaid two clusters; and

(7) as a think tank has suggested the Government to set up mega research institutes similar to the Broad Institute of the United States and the Francis Crick Institute of the United Kingdom to encourage intensive collaboration among researchers from different disciplines and institutes across the world and conduct cutting-edge research programmes, whether the Government will consider the suggestion; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

We have allocated \$10 billion for the establishment of the first two InnoHK research clusters, namely Health@InnoHK focusing on healthcare technologies and AIR@InnoHK focusing on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies, in the Hong Kong Science Park.

Our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The InnoHK initiative has received enthusiastic response, with a total of 65 proposals from world renowned universities and research institutes. After a rigorous assessment process, we are following up with the institutions concerned. As discussion is still in progress, we are unable to

announce for now the number and the list of laboratories that will be set up in the two research clusters and the funding amount involved.

(3) The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) has considered a basket of factors holistically when assessing the proposals. The major factors considered include the scientific merits of the research programmes, the impact of the research (if successful), the academic standing and research achievements of the collaborating institutions and the key research personnel in the relevant research areas, track record of research achievements, past experience of research collaboration, experience and the capability of technological adoption/ commercialisation, local talent development, benefits and contributions to the local community, etc. We have also consulted the InnoHK Steering Committee on the assessment of the proposals.

The Government hopes that the research programmes under the InnoHK research clusters will bring about benefits and contributions to the society if they are successful. Therefore, whether the funded research programmes will have reasonable opportunities to be applied or commercialised when the research is successful is one of the assessment criteria.

(4), (6) and (7) Through the establishment of InnoHK research clusters, the Government's vision is to develop Hong Kong as the hub for global research collaboration and to converge top-notch researchers from around the world to conduct world-class and impactful collaborative researches. Non-profit-making research centres can receive Government funding for five years under the InnoHK initiative. During this five-year period, the centres need to submit regular progress reports to ITC. The research centres may continue to receive funding if they have good governance and research progress. As compared to the establishment of a single research institute, this arrangement allows the Government and the relevant research institutes to maintain flexibility. On the one hand, the Government can provide research funding for world top-notch global research collaboration in the medium to long term. On the other hand, subject to the latest trend of research and technological development, the research focus of InnoHK research clusters can be adjusted.

The Government is committed to the InnoHK initiative in the long term. The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement has mentioned examining the setting up of the third InnoHK research cluster so as to further promote global research and development (R&D) collaboration in Hong Kong. We will review factors including the strengths of Hong Kong and the global technological development in considering the research focus of the third InnoHK research cluster. There is no fixed timeline for now.

(5) Encouraging R&D is key to innovation and technology development and an important part in the promotion of re-industrialisation. The Government believes that the InnoHK research clusters will not only help capture and consolidate Hong Kong's R&D strengths, but also promote the development of advanced technology and the relevant industries locally, thereby fostering the development of advanced manufacturing industries that are based on new technologies and smart production in Hong Kong in the long run.

LCQ20: Images or videos captured by CCTV systems

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

At present, disciplined services such as the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Immigration Department (ImmD), as well as government departments such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department, have installed closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera systems in areas under their purview or in public places, or provided their staff with body-worn video cameras (BWVCs). As the authorities may identify the individuals recorded by comparing their facial features recorded by CCTV cameras with the personal data in relevant databases, some members of the public are worried that law enforcement agencies may use the CCTV cameras in public places for recording large quantities of video clips, possibly intruding on personal privacy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the existing CCTV cameras installed by each of the government departments concerned (set out in the table below);

	Government department		
Details of CCTV camera systems	HKPF	...	LCSD
(i) Installation location(s) and quantity of cameras			
(ii) Use(s) of video clips			
(iii) Brand(s) and model(s) of camera lenses			
(iv) Resolution of cameras			
(v) Retention period of video clips			
(vi) Date of installation/ updating of system			
(vii) Procurement date and amount of expenditure			
(viii) Name of supplier and the country to which it belongs			

(ix) Whether auto-tracking function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)			
(x) Whether face detection function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)			
(xi) Whether pickup function is available (if so, whether the function has been activated)			

(2) of the number of occasions last year on which HKPF requested other government departments to provide the CCTV video clips recorded by them, with a tabulated breakdown by (i) the month in which the request was made, (ii) the name of the department concerned, (iii) the date on which the video clip was recorded, (iv) the location where the video clip was recorded, (v) the length of the video clip, and (vi) whether the request was acceded to;

(3) of the number of video clips recorded last year during public events by police officers using BWVCs and hand-held video cameras, with a tabulated breakdown by the month in which the video clip was recorded and the public event concerned; the current storage details of such video clips, including the respective numbers of video clips which (i) have been retained due to their evidential value, (ii) will be produced in court as evidence, (iii) have been destroyed, and (iv) have been retained for more than 31 days; the number of requests, made under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap 486) by persons recorded in such video clips, for access to the relevant video clips, and the number of such requests acceded to; and

(4) whether HKPF has, since January last year, (i) made use of software such as video explorer, advanced image processing and facial recognition to identify individuals in the video clips recorded by CCTV cameras, and (ii) sought other government departments' permission for using the personal data in the databases under such departments' purview (e.g. the Smart Identity Card database under ImmD) for making comparisons with the facial features recorded by CCTV cameras for the purpose of identification of individuals?

Reply:

President,

The Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap 486) (PDPO) is applicable to public and private organisations as well as government departments. All organisations/departments are required to comply with PDPO and its relevant Data Protection Principles when collecting and using personal data. From the perspective of safeguarding personal data privacy, government departments will make reference to internal guidelines when capturing images or videos and using closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems in public spaces. These

guidelines state that only authorised officers are allowed to use the systems, and seek to ensure that the use of the systems, the collection of recorded images, and the handling of data are in compliance with PDP0, so as to safeguard the protection of citizens' personal data privacy.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Charles Mok is as follows:

(1) The Government does not maintain statistics on the details of the CCTV systems of each department.

Furthermore, information on CCTV systems involve security matters, disclosing detailed information of the systems may reveal to criminals relevant government departments' security arrangements, as well as the capabilities and investigatory techniques of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, it is not appropriate to disclose such information.

(2) One of the statutory duties of the Police is crime prevention and detection. Personal data collected by the Police in the course of case investigation will only be used for the purposes of crime detection and prevention, the collection of which must also be in compliance with the law. The personal data will be retained by the Police having regard to the purpose of data collection and the required period of data retention. Once the personal data is no longer necessary for the particular purpose, the data will be destroyed within a reasonable time unless further retention is otherwise required by law. The Police have not maintained the statistics as requested in the question.

(3) The Police have clear and strict guidelines and procedures for handling video clips captured by body-worn video cameras (BWVCs) and digital camcorders. Video clips with investigative or evidential value will be classified as evidence and be retained until the relevant investigation or judicial procedures are completed. Video clips carrying no investigative or evidential value, or constituting no other legitimate purpose, will be deleted after 31 days from the date of recording.

In 2019, the Police recorded 160 clips and 5 347 clips using BWVCs and digital camcorders respectively at public order events, among which 25 clips and 3 804 clips respectively with investigative or evidential value were retained. The remaining clips have been deleted in accordance with the established mechanism.

The Police do not maintain the statistics of requests to review video clips made under PDP0.

(4) The Police have always been proactively applying any technology that can assist law enforcement and investigation, and have from time to time reviewed the effectiveness of various types of investigation tools and equipment. Should there be a need to obtain any data from other departments in the course of case investigations, the Police will do so in compliance with the law. As for the other information requested in the question, it is not

appropriate for disclosure lest it compromises the Police's technologies and capabilities in the prevention and detection of crime.