

Hong Kong, Hangzhou sign agreement on education co-operation

The Education Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (February 15) signed an agreement on education exchange and co-operation with the Hangzhou Municipal Education Bureau to strengthen collaboration in education between the two places. In the presence of the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung; the Deputy Secretary of the CPC Hangzhou Municipal Committee, Mr Zhang Zhongcan; and the Director-General of the Department of Educational, Scientific and Technological Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Professor Li Lu, the agreement was signed by the Under Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, and the Deputy Secretary of the Hangzhou Municipal Education Bureau, Ms Zheng Limin.

The agreement provides a framework for exchanges and co-operation in education, with the aim of fostering professional collaboration between Hangzhou and Hong Kong. It covers initiatives including organising seminars and experience-sharing sessions on school management for teachers and school personnel to enhance the capacity and standard of education professionals in the two places; promoting exchanges of students through visits, competitions and activities amongst sister schools; and promoting exchanges and co-operation in the fields of talent nurturing, scientific research and social services, with a view to jointly raising the standard of teaching and research.

At the signing ceremony, Mr Yeung said that Hangzhou has always been a hot spot for exchanges for teachers and students of Hong Kong. The modes of exchanges are diverse, including the pairing up of sister schools and organisation of various visits and experience programmes. At present, the number of sister schools in the two places exceeds 70 pairs and various exchange activities have been conducted. There are also over 50 ongoing collaborative research projects jointly conducted by University Grants Committee-funded universities and Zhejiang academies.

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Mr Yeung said, "Both Hangzhou and Hong Kong have long attached great importance to education and the nurturing of talents. This shared vision has paved the way for the signing of the agreement today."

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He said he believes that the agreement will help boost professional collaboration between Hong Kong and Hangzhou, promote the development of education, and deepen and broaden co-operation between higher education institutions of the two places.

Public urged to take anti-mosquito actions early

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (February 15) that the monthly territory-wide ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for January this year remained at 0.1 per cent, as in December last year, indicating that the infestation of *Aedes albopictus* in the areas surveyed was not extensive. Nevertheless, the FEHD reminded the public to carry out early effective measures against mosquitoes as the warm and humid weather of spring is favourable for large-scale mosquito breeding.

"*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) and Zika virus. Although the ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* remained at a low level in the past few months, in view of the 29 local DF cases recorded in Hong Kong last year and that DF is highly prevalent in neighbouring areas, as well as an exceptionally warm January in Hong Kong while the weather will turn even warmer and more humid in spring which will be conducive to large-scale mosquito breeding in a short period of time, the community must remain vigilant and take effective mosquito control measures early," an FEHD spokesman said.

Among the 57 areas surveyed last month, a positive ovitrap index was recorded in Yau Tong only, which was 1.3 per cent. As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for January remained at zero.

"The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue to intensify their mosquito prevention and control work covering areas under their purview and strengthen publicity and education campaigns. The FEHD will conduct a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The first phase of the territory-wide campaign, lasting for four weeks, will start on February 25 and end on March 22. During the period, mosquito prevention and control work will be enhanced by the FEHD and relevant government departments. The district offices of the FEHD will target areas which have drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, and intensify mosquito prevention and control work at those places. The FEHD will, after the first and second phases of the campaign, conduct special territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control operations so as to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign," the spokesman said.

The department's Pest Control Inspection Teams have also stepped up inspection of construction sites and enforcement action against mosquito breeding. This year (as at February 10), the FEHD has instituted eight prosecutions for mosquito breeding found in relevant premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), mainly involving construction sites.

In order to keep the public abreast of the latest situation of mosquito infestation and assist them to take timely mosquito prevention and control measures, the FEHD is releasing additional results of the Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) for *Aedes albopictus* at two more stages every month, before the announcement of the monthly AOI and the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus*. The FEHD will follow the established practice of notifying relevant government departments of the aforementioned indices so that they can carry out targeted mosquito prevention and control work promptly to strengthen the anti-mosquito efforts.

The spokesman added that as *Aedes albopictus* breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing all the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surface as well as removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. He also advised the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

In addition, rural areas and the vicinity of shrubby areas are the natural habitats for mosquitoes, other insects and animals. Members of the public living in rural areas may install mosquito screens on windows and doors if necessary. Those staying in the natural environment should follow appropriate personal protective measures against mosquitoes, such as avoiding staying in the vicinity of shrubby areas for a long time, wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and applying DEET-containing insect repellent. Members of the public are reminded to make reports to the government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

The spokesman reiterated that effective mosquito control requires the sustained effort of all parties concerned. The community must work together with the Government to carry out effective mosquito control measures.

The ovitrap index is divided into four levels, reflecting the infestation level of *Aedes albopictus*. Level 1 (< 5 per cent) indicates that infestation of the mosquito is not extensive in the area surveyed. Level 2 (5 per cent – < 20 per cent) indicates that infestation of the mosquito is slightly more extensive in the area surveyed. Level 3 (20 per cent – < 40 per cent) indicates that infestation of the mosquito exceeds one-fifth of the area surveyed. Level 4 (\geq 40 per cent) indicates that almost half of the surveyed area is infested with the mosquito. The Government will step up the scale of anti-mosquito operations according to the level of infestation as well as reports from front-line staff and the public.

As *Aedes albopictus* can transmit DF and Zika virus, ovitraps are set in 57 areas in Hong Kong for monitoring the breeding of *Aedes albopictus*, which is only one of the mosquito species commonly found in Hong Kong and is active only in the daytime. The index only indicates the extensiveness in

distribution of *Aedes albopictus* within the 57 areas but does not capture its activity outside these areas and it also does not measure the prevalence of other kinds of mosquitoes.

The ovitrap indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

Special arrangement for first year of Fujian Scheme to expire at end of March

A spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (February 15) reminded elderly persons that the special one-off arrangement for the first year of the Fujian (FJ) Scheme will expire on March 31, 2019. Eligible elderly persons who wish to apply for the FJ Scheme under the special one-off arrangement are advised to submit their applications as early as possible.

The spokesman pointed out that the FJ Scheme was launched on April 1, 2018. In its first year of implementation (i.e. April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019), a special one-off arrangement was put in place to allow elderly persons who do not meet the requirement of residing in Hong Kong continuously for one year immediately before the date of application (the one-year of continuous residence in Hong Kong requirement), but have already resided in FJ and satisfied all other eligibility criteria, to benefit from the Scheme without the need to return and stay in Hong Kong. These applicants must have resided in FJ for at least one year immediately before the date of application, and they have to provide their residential address in FJ and relevant documentary proof (such as rental receipts, electricity bills, etc) for application.

Upon the expiry of the special one-off arrangement on March 31, applicants must satisfy all eligibility requirements, including the one-year continuous residence in Hong Kong requirement, in order to be eligible for the allowance.

The spokesman said that the FJ Scheme provides the Old Age Allowance for eligible Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above who choose to reside in FJ. Currently, the rate of allowance is HK\$1,385 per month.

Elderly persons who wish to apply for the FJ Scheme can obtain the application form and guidance notes from the SWD's FJ Scheme website (www.swd.gov.hk/fjs) or from the Social Security Field Unit (Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme) (SSFU) by phone (3105 3266) or by post (address: Unit

2110-2111, 21/F, Landmark North, 39 Lung Sum Avenue, Sheung Shui, Hong Kong). Applicants are required to return the completed application form, together with copies of relevant supporting documents and two recent photos, to the SSFU by post for application.

The spokesman added, "Elderly persons who wish to make applications before the expiry of the special one-off arrangement can call the enquiry line at 3105 3266 for details of the application procedures. For those who wish to submit their applications by post, they should be mindful of the delivery time to ensure that their mail can be sent to the SWD with a postmark date on or before March 31."

For eligibility criteria and frequently asked questions on the current FJ Scheme, please visit the SWD's FJ Scheme website (www.swd.gov.hk/fjs) or call 3105 3266 during the office hours (Monday to Friday at 8.45am to 1pm and 2pm to 6pm).

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session after attending the Legislative Council Panel on Transport meeting today (February 15):

Reporter: Was there any negligence on the part of the Highways Department over its monitoring role? And also was there any cover-up at all as it hasn't come to light until there's a media report?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: I would say that it's far too early to speculate whether (there is) any kind of wrong-doing like this. Of course, there is natural expectation of such. I think we need to take into account the fact, record, as well as subsequent investigation. If there is anything that's gone wrong, we would tackle it.

Reporter: Is there any negligence on the part of the Highways Department over its monitoring?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: As Director Chan (Director of Highways, Mr Jimmy Chan) has just mentioned, if the staff or the team who's looking after this particular project could have been more sensitive to the report from their engineering consultant, the situation could have been better.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Temporary closure of some LCSD leisure and sports facilities

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (February 15) that the following leisure and sports facilities will be temporarily closed:

(a) The Spiral Lookout Tower in Tai Po Waterfront Park will be temporarily closed from February 18 to April 17 for maintenance works.

(b) The squash courts and table tennis rooms at Tai Po Sports Ground Squash and Tennis Centre will be temporarily closed from February 19 to August 25 for refurbishment works. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Tai Po Sports Centre, Tai Wo Sports Centre, Fu Heng Sports Centre, Fu Shin Sports Centre or Tai Po Hui Sports Centre in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venues or contact venue staff directly.