

# DH reports suspected intrusion into laboratory contractor server

The Department of Health (DH) today (August 1) reported that a computer server of a laboratory contractor under the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP) was suspected to be intruded by ransomware. The server, containing test results of the participants of the CRCSP, had been suspended with immediate effect.

The DH was notified by the laboratory contractor yesterday (July 31) that its server using to upload laboratory reports of Faecal Immunochemical Test results of the CRCSP was suspected to be intruded by ransomware and relevant reports were encrypted. The laboratory contractor started investigation immediately and reported to the Police for investigation today. It is not certain at this stage whether personal data of the participants in the laboratory reports has been leaked. Investigations are continuing.

"We attach great importance to the incident. The DH has also reported it to the Police, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, and is now assisting the Police's investigations. The DH has already asked the laboratory contractor to review its existing information security measures to avoid the recurrence of similar incidents in future," a spokesman for the DH said.

"The analysis of the specimens collected under the CRCSP will continue," the spokesman added.

For enquiries, members of the public may call 3565 6288, which will operate from 9am to 5.45 pm on Mondays to Fridays to liaise with the DH.

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## Government statement

On recent moves by some people to issue anonymous open letters in the name of civil servants, and the plans by some people to organise a political assembly and a strike in the name of civil servants and call on civil servants to participate, a Government spokesman made the following solemn statement today (August 1):

Civil servants have all along been upholding the principle of political neutrality and serving the public in a dedicated and professional manner. Civil servants should be dedicated; be committed to the rule of law, objectivity and impartiality; and at all times ensure that their behaviour would not impede their performance of official duties in a fair and professional manner. These values are what the public expects of them.

Government colleagues must maintain political neutrality regardless of their personal thoughts on recent events. The Government has all along been listening to views of colleagues through various established internal channels. Colleagues can make use of these channels to express their views.

Any acts to undermine the principle of political neutrality of the civil service are totally unacceptable to the Government as this will damage the public's confidence in the political neutrality of the civil service and give a wrong impression to the public that civil servants are unable to discharge their duties in an impartial manner. Such acts will also cause the public to mistakenly believe that these individuals are representing the 180 000-strong civil service or their respective departments, and think that civil servants are acting against the Government. These acts will also create division and conflicts within the Government, and seriously affect the Government's effective operation and implementation of policies and the delivery of services to the public.

In fact, it is difficult to determine the real identity of those who issued anonymous open statements.

According to the Civil Service Code, civil servants shall uphold the principle of political neutrality, meaning that civil servants shall serve the Chief Executive and the Government of the day with total loyalty and to the best of their ability, no matter what their own political beliefs are. The Government will, in accordance with the established mechanism, seriously follow up on any violations of regulations by civil servants.

At this difficult moment, government colleagues have to stay united and work together to uphold the core values of the civil service and not to affect the effective operation of the Government because of personal beliefs as this may undermine public confidence in the impartial discharge of duties by civil servants.

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## **Marine Department announcement (2)**

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following message as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

As Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 1 has been issued, the Marine Department reminds vessel owners, masters and persons-in-charge of vessels that they should take precautionary measures immediately and properly secure their vessels at safe locations.

In case of an accident, a report should be made immediately to the Vessel Traffic Centre at 2233 7801.

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## Relief fund for farmers affected by Tropical Cyclone Wipha

Local farmers who suffered serious losses caused by the Tropical Cyclone Wipha can register with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) from tomorrow (August 2) to August 12 for assistance from an emergency relief fund.

An AFCD spokesman said today (August 1) that an appropriate amount of the relief fund would be released to affected farming households according to established criteria.

The department's preliminary investigation has revealed that about 300 hectares of farmland in the New Territories were affected by the typhoon.

"After each typhoon or natural disaster, our staff will inspect farmland areas in the New Territories to assess the resultant damage," the spokesman said.

"Depending on the gravity of the damage, we may launch an operation to provide some relief to affected farmers."

Applicants for the fund should register at the office of the Department's Agricultural Extension Section at 5/F, Yuen Long Government Offices, 2 Kiu Lok Square, Yuen Long, or call 2476 2424 for enquiries.

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## CFS finds traces of malachite green in grass carp sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (August 1) announced that a trace amount of malachite green was found in a grass carp sample. A follow-up is in progress.

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS collected the abovementioned grass carp sample from a stall in Kowloon City Market for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained a trace amount of malachite green at a level of 1.7 parts per billion."

The spokesman said the CFS had informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed the vendor to stop the sale of the affected

product. Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be initiated. The CFS is also tracing the source of the product concerned.

Malachite green is a type of industrial dye and has been used for treating infections in fish. Malachite green is possibly both genotoxic and carcinogenic. According to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives, there is no safe level of residues of malachite green or its metabolites in food that represents an acceptable risk to consumers. Currently, malachite green has been prohibited for use in food-producing animals in many countries. According to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap 132AF), no food sold in Hong Kong is allowed to contain malachite green. Offenders will be prosecuted and will be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. An investigation is ongoing.