

Operator and manager of unlicensed guesthouses sentenced to imprisonment and fined

Two women were charged with contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (July 17). One woman was sentenced to four weeks' imprisonment, and the other woman was fined \$10,000.

The courts heard that in December last year and January this year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected two suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Portland Street in Mong Kok. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms in these guesthouses on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's records, these guesthouses did not possess licences under the Ordinance on the days of inspection. The women responsible for operating and managing the premises were charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and will lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaeng@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

Funding results of Theme-based Research Scheme 2019/20 announced

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) announced today (July 17) the funding results of the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS) 2019/20 (Ninth Round). Five proposals were awarded total funding of \$224 million, of which \$200 million will be provided by the RGC and \$24 million will be matched by the

universities concerned. The list of awarded projects is set out in the Annex.

The Chairman of the RGC, Professor Benjamin Wah, said, "I am delighted to announce the successful completion of the TRS 2019/20. After a series of vigorous peer reviews, five outstanding projects have been selected for funding. One of the funded projects falls under 'Artificial Intelligence', the new grand challenge topic that has been first introduced in this round of the exercise. These five projects cover the areas of influenza control, liver transplantation, wastewater treatment and recycling, firefighting and neurocognitive disorders diagnoses. We look forward to the positive societal and economic impacts brought about by these projects to the future development of Hong Kong."

Professor Wah added, "With the forthcoming government injection of \$20 billion to the Research Endowment Fund, the RGC has decided to increase the budget of the TRS by about 10 per cent, from \$180 million to \$200 million, for the 2019/20 exercise to meet the expectation of researchers." He expressed gratitude to the panel members and international experts for their valuable time in providing peer reviews for the proposals, and to the local research community for its continued support for the TRS.

Details of the approved projects have been posted on the RGC website (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funded_research/layman/theme/trs9.html) for reference.

Labour Department investigates fatal work accident in Tuen Mun

The Labour Department (LD) is investigating a fatal work accident that occurred in Tuen Mun this morning (July 17), in which a man died.

The LD immediately deployed staff to the scene upon receiving a report of the accident, and is now conducting an investigation to look into its cause.

Update on latest MERS situation in Saudi Arabia

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is

today (July 17) closely monitoring 14 additional cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by Saudi Arabia from May 1 to 31. The CHP again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit.

According to the WHO, of the additional cases, 10 were male patients and four were female patients, with ages from 22 to 80. Among them, three had exposure to camels, two had contact with previously confirmed patients and one was a health care worker. Eleven had underlying illnesses and five have passed away.

According to the latest information, 2 442 cases have been reported to the WHO, including 2 223 in 10 Middle East countries comprising 2 051 in Saudi Arabia, 87 in the United Arab Emirates, 28 in Jordan, 24 in Oman, 19 in Qatar, six in Iran, four in Kuwait, two in Lebanon, and one each in Yemen and Bahrain.

"We will maintain close communication with the WHO and relevant health authorities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"As countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, continue to report MERS cases from time to time, travellers should refrain from going to farms, barns or markets with camels and avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry. Most of the cases reported in the Middle East had history of exposure to camels, consumption of camel milk or contact with other MERS patients," the spokesman said.

"Scientific evidence showed that camels are reservoirs for MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Camels infected with MERS-CoV may not show any signs of infection. Infected animals may shed MERS-CoV through nasal and eye discharge and faeces, and potentially in their milk and urine. The virus may also be found in the raw organs and meat of infected animals. Therefore, the best protection is to practise good hygiene and avoid direct contact with all of these," the spokesman added.

From time to time, suspected MERS cases reported to the CHP for investigation involve patients with history of contact with camels in the Middle East. The CHP strongly advises travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS page of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the WHO's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, July 17, 2019 is 105.1 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).